

Three Roads to Power

By RICHARD LOWENTHAL

THE Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party saw the first attempt since Lenin's time to systematize the experience of communism as an international movement. Never before have the Soviet leaders cast a theoretical eye on the Communist victories in China and Yugoslavia as well as on their own successes in Eastern Europe, viewing them as historical events from which new lessons can be learned by Communists everywhere. Never before have they told the Communist parties all over the world that there are other models to be followed than the Soviet.

In Western comment on the Congress, the importance of this new departure has tended to be overshadowed by the sensational reassessment of Stalin's role in Communist history and by the major changes in Soviet domestic politics connected with it. Yet the renewal of serious interest in the problems of "world revolution" is itself one of the major aspects of the breach with the Stalin tradition—an aspect which in the minds of Mr. Khrushchev and his team clearly forms a necessary complement to the diplomacy of "peaceful coexistence" and to the attempt to consolidate the CPSU's domestic position by a series of major reforms.

A Road Paved With Bad Intentions

THE one element in the reformulation of revolutionary theory which has so far aroused some discussion among non-Communists is the Soviet leaders' recognition that a "peaceful" or "parliamentary" road to "socialism" is possible under certain conditions. This has been widely interpreted as an attempt to trick Western Democratic Socialists and Asian nationalists into alliances of the "Popular Front" type. But while this interpretation is correct as far as it goes, most commentators seem to have missed the really new element in the theory. Namely,

the earlier "Popular Fronts" of the 1930's were explicitly confined to the purpose of "defending democracy within the capitalist framework," *i.e.*, of creating governments friendly to the Soviet Union; this limitation was still implicit in Stalin's attempt to revive the popular front strategy in his 1952 speech to the Nineteenth Party Congress. Today, however, the "parliamentary road" is advocated as a means to achieve "socialism", *i.e.*, full Communist power.

It is true that Soviet spokesmen at the Twentieth Congress cited examples of past successful application of the strategy for this end. But they could find them only among countries where Soviet military pressure had played the decisive role in achieving this sort of "socialism" (as Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states)—the only condition in which Stalin had ever sanctioned the seizure of power. By contrast, at the Twentieth Congress the proximity and assistance of Soviet power were no longer mentioned as a condition for the future success of the "peaceful road"; in principle, attempts by the Communists to seize full control by this method are therefore henceforth permissible anywhere on the globe.

Because the revival of interest in world revolution has been widely overlooked, the importance of the dissolution of the Cominform has been equally underestimated. Observers have rightly recognized that this demolition of an outworn facade will not weaken the secret liaison machinery linking the Russian Communists with Communist parties in other countries. But there has been scarce comment on the reception given this demonstrative gesture by such gifted and ambitious leaders as Palmiro Togliatti in Italy, who see in it the green light for independent experiment in seeking the right road to power. It has also been overlooked that one of the effects of the move is to enable Soviet diplomacy to disclaim responsibility for such experiments more effectively. The years between the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 and the formation of the Cominform in 1947 saw the greatest expansion of Communist power since the Russian Revolution; the period of the Cominform, for all its

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sharpening of conflict between East and West, saw in fact the freezing of the borderline of Communist rule in Europe.

Lenin's Great Error

WHEN Messrs. Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Suslov and Shepilov reviewed the conditions of Communist victory at the Moscow Congress, they took a decisive step to free communism from a doctrinaire prejudice which had dogged its steps since the early days of the Comintern. For up to then, the only theoretically recognized model of the Communist seizure of power had been Lenin's October Revolution—a model that has never been successfully imitated in a period of almost 40 years.

Lenin and his contemporaries sincerely believed that their conquest of power had in its social essence been a working class revolution against the bourgeois state, and they tended to regard its most striking political features—the taking of local power by Soviets and the uprising of armed workers in the capital—as the necessary requisites for revolutionary success. The Soviets were organs for direct mass activity, analogous to the Paris Commune admired by Karl Marx. In the Bolshevik view only these organs could paralyze the bourgeois state machine and destroy it at its roots, while only an armed uprising could overthrow the bourgeois-democratic government and seize power. The example of the German revolution of 1918, though unsuccessful, confirmed this belief. For in Germany, too, workers' and soldiers' councils were formed (partly under the influence of Russian events), and in the following years a series of armed clashes took place between the Communist minority among the workers and counterrevolutionary military formations serving the "bourgeois republic." The Bolshevik leaders chose to view this development as proof of the typical character of their own experience.

Today it is clear that Lenin was totally mistaken both about the social and historical character of his own revolution and about the importance of its political forms. The revolution arose not from the oppression of the workers in a capitalist society, but from the failure of such a society to develop; the historical role of the revolution was not to end exploitation but to modernize an underdeveloped country by dictatorial methods. The Soviets were not typical organs of working class rule, but unique—and very temporary—forms of mass organization in a country where, owing to Tsarist oppression, the tradition of stable democratic organizations was lacking. This is why they never achieved comparable importance in

Germany and never were formed in other advanced countries. The uprising in the Russian capital, finally, was victorious only because of the absence of a tradition of "bourgeois democracy"; in no country with established parliamentary institutions did the workers show the expected tendency to rise "against the state."

The really decisive political feature of the October Revolution was neither the role of the Soviets nor that of the workers' uprising in Petrograd, but the seizure of power by the centralized Bolshevik Party; it was this that made Lenin's victory the first of the totalitarian revolutions of the twentieth century. By contrast, the Soviets and the workers' uprising merely arose from the fact that this revolution was grafted onto the earlier, uncompleted democratic revolution against Tsarism, the last of the great democratic revolutions of European history. Lenin, who for all his insistence on the role of the party was unaware of the true implications of the instrument of power he had forged, saw himself as the heir of the democratic revolutionary tradition of the West; hence his belief that the role of the Soviets, or of Soviet-like organs, and the workers' uprising would be repeated in the industrially advanced "bourgeois democracies."

First Concepts of the "Peaceful" Path

IN that belief, the Communist parties of the West marched for 15 years from defeat to defeat. In countries with large organized labor movements, slogans like "Bildet Arbeiterräte!" or "Les Soviets partout!" proved absurd even in times of revolutionary crisis; and even where millions of workers voted Communist, as in Germany during the great depression of 1929–32 or in France in the 1930's, they did not show the slightest inclination to rise against the "bourgeois-democratic state". Towards the end of the postwar crisis, Karl Radek became the first Bolshevik leader to perceive the error; on the basis of the experience in Germany, he persuaded the Comintern in 1922 to adopt a demand for "workers' governments" as a "transitional slogan"—in other words to call on the workers to press for parliamentary governments of the "united front," which were then to be urged on to extra-constitutional measures, until the resistance of the old ruling classes and their bureaucracies would convince the workers of the need to establish proletarian dictatorships. In a sense, Radek may thus claim to be the originator of the present concept of the "parliamentary road to socialism"; but after the defeat of the German Communists in 1923, his

ideas were condemned as "opportunistic" and the old doctrine restored in its full rigidity.

Yet under Stalin the restoration of the old doctrine did not imply a return to the old illusions about a working class revolution in the West; on the contrary, it was a form of writing off the prospects of such a revolution, of turning the Comintern into a mere auxiliary of the Soviet state while proceeding with the "building of socialism in one country."

But as Stalin, empirically following the logic of power, became gradually conscious of the true implications of the type of party which Lenin had led to victory, he was bound to see also the possibilities for foreign Communist parties in a new light. At home, he proceeded to resolve the contradiction between the democratic-revolutionary heritage in Lenin's ideas and the realistic needs of a totalitarian state by liquidating the former and rationalizing the latter; abroad, he began to explore the possibilities of using dependent totalitarian parties as instruments not of popular revolution but of the infiltration of foreign governments, with the aim of influencing their international policy in the interest of the Soviet Union. The first large-scale experiment of this type was the policy imposed on the Chinese Communists from 1924-1927, which led to their affiliation with the Kuomintang, their filling of many key posts in its military-political machine during the northward offensive, and finally to an attempt by the CCP leadership to put the brake on the peasant revolution in a vain effort to avoid conflict with Chiang Kai-shek. The fact that this policy ultimately failed must not be allowed to obscure its historical importance in pioneering a completely new type of Communist activity.

The experiment in China was facilitated by Communist acceptance of the doctrine that in the national revolution of such a backward, "semi-colonial" country the immediate aim of the Communists could not be the "dictatorship of the proletariat" but only an alliance with all "progressive" classes; the strategy of infiltration was justified as the political form of that alliance. It took the victory and consolidation of Nazism in Germany, however, to make Stalin agree to a modified application of this strategy in democratic, industrial countries.

Pages From the Fascist Book

MUSSOLINI had been the first to see that the technique of the centralized party and the one-party state could be applied for gaining and preserving power without accepting the Bolshevik ideology or

program. He also recognized that such a party was by its very nature independent of any particular "class basis"—that it could afford to rely on different social strata in turn. Applying these observations, he demonstrated how such a party could exploit the institutions of a parliamentary democracy in order to seize power "legally." This lesson was not understood in Russia at the time, but it was carefully applied by Hitler. By the summer of 1934, when Hitler had proved by the Roehm purge of June 30 that he was not the stooge of the Reichswehr which Stalin had believed him to be, the latter began to take him seriously both as a danger to the USSR and as a model for new and significant political techniques. The time had come for Bolshevism to return the compliment of imitation.

In the meantime, the Communist parties in the West, while losing much of their early strength, had gone through many Kremlin-imposed changes of leadership. Admiration for the power and ruthlessness of Stalinist Russia rather than belief in a repetition of Lenin's revolution had become the decisive article of faith. Stalin now decided to use the CP's to try and bring about "anti-Fascist" governmental coalitions; for the first time in their history, they were to attempt seriously to influence parliamentary politics within the bourgeois state, using the unscrupulous maneuverability of a totalitarian party to this end. But as in China ten years earlier, the aim was not to seize power and carry out a social revolution but to influence foreign policy in alliance with all "progressive" classes. This time, the reason given for limiting the objective was not the backwardness of the countries concerned, but the need to avoid civil war with Hitler on the doorstep, and the professed danger to the Soviet Union if the Western countries without strong Communist parties—particularly Britain and the United States—should be scared into Hitler's camp by the spectre of Communist revolution.

Here was the essence of the "Popular Front" strategy: it was the first great experiment in using totalitarian Communist parties to gain influence within the state machine of Western democracies by parliamentary means. Since the objectives were limited to foreign policy, the CP's were ordered to modify their social and economic programs to keep them within the "capitalist framework." The strategy was thus an attempt to combine the lessons of the Chinese experiment and of Hitler's victory in a spirit completely foreign to the Leninist tradition. Again, it failed in

the end. But in France it resulted in large permanent gains by the Communist Party; and in Spain it led, during the civil war, to almost complete Communist control of the remnant of the Republican state machine when the latter became dependent on Soviet supplies and advisers. From this experience, Stalin learned how successful the new technique of "legal" seizure of the state machine might be, if combined with dependence on the Soviet Union.

Wartime and Postwar Fronts

THE new strategy was abandoned between the time of the Munich agreement and the German attack on the USSR—*i. e.*, the period of Soviet-German negotiations leading to the Stalin-Hitler pact. But after Hitler's invasion, the same policy was readopted under the slogan of "National Liberation Fronts" in occupied Europe and of "National Unity" elsewhere. The Soviet directive to all Communists during this phase was to build up their organizations, and to occupy key posts but to be extremely moderate in their programs so as not to frighten the Western powers. In the process of liberation, Communists everywhere were instructed to join coalition governments on the broadest possible basis, not even rejecting at first the leadership of turncoat generals in ex-Axis countries. But it quickly became obvious that Stalin intended to make completely different use of these coalitions, according to whether the countries concerned were in his own military sphere or in that of the Western powers.

In Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe, the Communists were for the first time encouraged to follow the "parliamentary road to socialism" to the bitter end—that is, to imitate Fascist methods of dealing with their coalition partners once they had control of the physical means of power and the machinery of official propaganda. The individual Communist parties were given considerable latitude in the timing and tactics they adopted to eliminate, split or swallow rival parties, to enforce single-list elections, and to carry out "economic revolutions from above." But everywhere the result of "people's democracy" was the same within a few years—the imposition of absolute Communist Party rule as an extension of direct Soviet control.

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the Communists were warned strictly against any measures which might bring them into conflict with the Western allies for as long as Allied troops remained in their respective countries. (There were also repeated warnings of this kind in the borderline case of Yugo-

slavia, but they were disobeyed by the Yugoslav Communist leaders.) After that, the Russian attitude seems to have been ambiguous for some time; the indications are that Stalin never wished any Communists to make a bid for total power, either by parliamentary or violent means, in countries where they could not be physically backed by Soviet forces and kept afterwards dependent on "the leading role of the Soviet Union," but that he was prevailed upon to tolerate a certain amount of experiment. It is a fact, at any rate, that a number of Western Communist leaders in 1946 made statements interpreting the coalition governments of this time as stages in a "people's democratic" development, which might peacefully lead to "socialism" by the "parliamentary road". And the Italian Communists, at least, showed considerable confidence that they might come to power as independently on this road as Tito had done on the road of civil war. It was only after the end of the Communist participation in West European governments, the formation of the Cominform, and finally the conflict with Tito, that these hopes faded and the Western Communists returned—after some ill-prepared attempts at revolutionary mass action—to sterile and rigid opposition.

Today, after the Twentieth CPSU Congress and the dissolution of the Cominform, the West European Communists are resurrecting these statements of 1946, and again it is the Italians who do so with the greatest self-confidence and apparent conviction. The "Leninist revival" has resulted in the first explicit theoretical recognition of the strategy of the "parliamentary road" which had been developed, gropingly and gradually over more than twenty years, by Stalin; but it has also freed that strategy from its Stalinist limitation to either foreign policy objectives or to states under Soviet military control. In contrast to Lenin, the present leaders know as clearly as did Stalin that they are dealing not with working class risings against the bourgeois state, but with totalitarian techniques for legally seizing the state machine; in contrast to Stalin, they believe in the "world revolution"—*i. e.*, in the possibility and desirability of Communist victories outside the immediate Soviet sphere.

Mao's Path to Power

THE possibility of such victories must have been impressed even on a reluctant Stalin by two Communist movements which followed an altogether different road from either Lenin's or his own. These were, of course, the Chinese and Yugoslav experiences.

Mao Tse-tung had from the beginning been opposed to one aspect of Stalin's Chinese policy of the 1920's—the attempt to brake the peasant revolution in the interest of preserving the Communist-Kuomintang alliance. After the defeat of this policy, some of the military specialists of the Chinese CP, including Chou En-lai, undertook a number of unsuccessful attempts to imitate the Leninist tactics of the armed workers' uprising, even though conditions were plainly unfavorable. Meanwhile Mao, then still far from the leadership of the party, took to partisan warfare in a mountainous region.

It seems evident that Mao at first acted not from a conscious strategic concept of the Chinese road to power but from an instinct of political self-preservation, guided by the immemorial tradition of Chinese peasant risings. Only gradually, as this partisan warfare was moderately successful while all else failed, did Mao's strategic concept develop. Some Western students of communism have seen his originality in the bold decision to rely on guerilla tactics in the countryside and to avoid decisive battles for the control of big towns, even though this meant building up an army and a party organization in which the peasants formed the great majority, contrary to Communist doctrine. Yet the difference between Mao's partisan warfare and the traditional peasant rising was no less vital: it consisted in his gradual creation of a *mobile* force, composed in part of intellectuals and working class cadres but mainly of *uprooted* peasants, who could be used outside their region of origin. The famous "long march" to the Northwest, like the equally heroic marches of Tito's partisans during the war, was the visible symbol of the complete emancipation of the new army from its original social basis; despite the peasant origin of most of its members, it was no more a class force of peasants than a class force of workers, but a truly totalitarian creation.

The success of Mao's policy depended in part on the creation of new local government organs—which acted also as organs of agrarian revolution—in whatever area was held at any time by the partisan forces. The "Soviets" arose in China as did later analogous organs in Yugoslavia not as spontaneous forms of mass organization but as auxiliary institutions of military rule imposed by the party. Another condition of success was the transfer of experienced Communist cadres from the cities to the "Soviet areas". The party leadership long refused to take this step, however, since it would have implied recognition that the uprising in the countryside had, contrary to traditional doctrine, become the party's main task; only

after Mao had struggled for years against the "working class" prejudices of successive Moscow-imposed leaderships were such transfers effected. After the recent Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow, Mao at last openly attributed such "sectarian" resistance to the errors of Stalin.

In Yugoslavia, Tito based his partisan activity from the start on a study of the Chinese experience, transferring the Central Committee and the largest possible number of urban cadres to the mountains and using the latter as soon as possible to form "proletarian brigades" in order to achieve mobility. Years later, Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo, the Yugoslav leader who had been in charge of liaison with Communist partisans in neighboring countries, saw one of the principal causes of the defeat of the Greek Communists in their repeated hesitation to take similar steps.

Limits of the Partisan Warfare Strategy

WHILE Mao's partisan maneuvers succeeded in preserving the Communist force for years as a potential contender for power and an actual factor of anarchy, his tactics would not have led to victory without the Japanese war and occupation; the latter acted as a decisive solvent of all state authority and at the same time gave the Communists an opportunity to add the appeal of nationalism to their program. The German occupation played an even more important role in Yugoslavia, for without it no partisan war would have started. Similarly, Japanese occupation and anti-colonial revolt offered the Vietnamese Communists their opportunity. By contrast, Communist attempts to apply "Chinese tactics" of guerilla uprisings in independent Asian countries since 1948 have been as uniformly unsuccessful as the attempts to apply "Russian tactics" in Europe after World War I.

During both the Sino-Japanese war and World War II the importance of "National Front" tactics was fully recognized by Stalin, and he urged on all Communist partisan forces a corresponding moderation of their program—in the Chinese case successfully, in the Yugoslav case with very limited and temporary success only. But the final struggle for power was initiated in both cases against his advice. It is doubtful whether the later guerilla actions elsewhere were ever intended by Moscow to be more than harassing operations.

It is only now that partisan warfare of the Chinese and Yugoslav type has been recognized in Moscow as a particular road to power which other Communist

parties may use as a model in similar circumstances.

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The Soviet leaders made no attempt at the Twentieth Congress to map out in detail the several "roads to power" they now profess to sanction for foreign Communists, or even to lay down a complete list of them—except in the purely formal sense that any future conquest of power could be described as either "legal" or "violent." This confinement to broad generalities was deliberate; in fact, leading Soviet spokesmen emphasized that it would be absurd to expect a revolution to take only one or a few prescribed forms in all countries and conditions. In short, the new line is aimed precisely at emancipating world communism from any hampering doctrines about the form of revolution; the Soviet leaders have

at last come forth with the stark recognition that it is the achievement of power alone which matters.

Such power is still described in Leninist terms as "the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of its Communist vanguard." But the sanction both of the Fascist-Stalinist technique of the "legal" *coup d'état* and of the Maoist-Titoist strategy of partisan warfare suggests full consciousness on the part of the Soviet leaders that the alleged proletarian class content of the dictatorship is a fiction, that its totalitarian form as a dictatorship of the Communist Party is the only relevant reality. Ironically enough, they seem to have gained this theoretical insight into the essence of their own system at an historical moment when the growth of new social forces with the achievement of industrialization makes the continued preservation of party dictatorship increasingly difficult even in the Soviet Union itself.

Bulganin and Khrushchev in Britain

By DENIS HEALEY

IT was under the heady influence of the "Geneva spirit" in July 1955 that Prime Minister Anthony Eden first invited the Soviet leaders, Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev, to visit Britain. However, in the nine months that elapsed before the actual visit, Soviet actions gave the Prime Minister more than one occasion for wondering if his invitation had not been somewhat over-impulsive.

In September the arms deal between satellite Czechoslovakia and Egypt confronted British policy in the Middle East with a new and exceptionally dangerous challenge. Two months later the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Geneva showed that Soviet policy on specific issues was as unyielding as ever. Then, as winter approached, the Asian tour of Bulganin and Khrushchev gave clear warning of the part

which such foreign visits were calculated to play in the Soviet game of psychological warfare, while the public criticisms of Britain's colonial past voiced by the Soviet leaders during their tour were particularly offensive to Prime Minister Eden's own Conservative Party.

Conservative spokesmen both in Parliament and in the press began suggesting that the invitation should be withdrawn, and the Prime Minister's replies on the subject showed that his own enthusiasm for the visit had dwindled. Official misgivings reached their climax during the unexpected three weeks' sojourn in Britain of Soviet Deputy Premier Georgi Malenkov.

Malenkov Paves the Way

MALENKOV'S coming grew out of a routine invitation which the nationalized British Electricity Authority had extended to its Soviet counterpart to send a delegation to tour British power plants. When the delegation arrived in March, the British were astounded to find it led by the redoubtable Deputy Premier, who also wears the cap of Minister

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