

Recent Studies on Communist Affairs

SWITZERLAND

Writers' Congress in East Berlin, by Theodor Wieser, in *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, Zurich, March 1956.

Wherever communism rules, literature and those who produce it have faced a seemingly insoluble dilemma: how to square the dictates of political orthodoxy, as defined by the party in the principles of "socialist realism," with good writing and artistic creativity. East Germany is no exception, as Mr. Wieser shows in his report on the Writers' Congress held in East Berlin last January.

Wilhelm Girnus, a leading advocate of party orthodoxy, stated bluntly in a pre-Congress pronouncement that "ideological clarity," *i.e.*, strictest adherence to the party line in literature, was inextricably related to "artistic mastership." Without such clarity, according to Girnus and his circle, there could be no artistry in literature.

This line of reasoning aroused some controversy at the Congress. Taking a more "liberal" approach, the well known German Communist writer, Anna Seghers, pointed out that artistic creativity need not merely "illustrate" party ideas, but could actually lead the party to discover new phenomena in reality.

Aside from ideological dissensions, the Congress clearly revealed the poor state of literature in East Germany. None of the famous old-timers like Anna Seghers, Arnold Zweig or Bertold Brecht had produced anything of major impact, and the work of lesser writers was characterized by the Secretary of the Writers' Association as "lacking imagination," "platitudinous," and "lacking a personal point of view."

The most important event of the Congress took place on the last day when Walter Ulbricht, Communist Party Secretary and leading official of the East German regime, addressed the assembly. "Socialist development," he declared, was to be the foremost theme of East German literature:

To recognize this new thing, this progress, to give artistic expression to the struggle between reaction and the new life . . . that is the most important task of our literature.

In short, after the plea for greater artistic independence by the opponents of the Girnus group, the party again intervened and laid down the law. The task of East German writers was to be of service to

the party's needs of the moment. Anything else, Ulbricht's address showed, would be considered a deviation from socialist "truth and reality."

INDIA

Stalin—Perverter of Leninism?, by a Student of Soviet Affairs, *Thought*, New Delhi, March 24, March 31, and April 14, 1956.

As his title indicates, the author of this series of articles tackles a question which is of interest not only from the theoretical and academic standpoint but also from the standpoint of appraising practical future possibilities. If, indeed, Stalin grossly perverted Lenin's teachings as the present Soviet leadership claims, the "rehabilitators" of pristine Leninism—Khrushchev *et al.*—might logically be expected to carry out some fundamental changes affecting the character and purposes of the Communist Party. If, on the other hand, Stalinism involved no basic departure from Leninism, then the "new look" in Communist ideology can hardly produce any sweeping change and probably must be considered a mere tactical maneuver of transitory character.

The author makes a case for the latter point of view. He recalls that Lenin himself junked volumes of Marx' theoretical writings when he insisted upon a "revolutionary elite," established a monolithic party organization, and smashed even fellow socialist parties after the successful Bolshevik revolution. Once embarked upon, it was merely a matter of time and of tactical expediency before this road led the USSR to the Stalinist stage of absolutism in which the whim of one man ruled the Communist Party and, through it, the state. Stalin, declares the author, did not change the Leninist scheme; he merely perfected it to the point where even the last remaining equalitarian goals of the October Revolution were sacrificed to the drive of the ruling caste to assure its self-perpetuation. Despite the repudiation of Stalinism, the author sees no reason to believe that this drive has ceased or will cease to be the prime moving force behind the Soviet system.

The author attributes Stalin's success in wielding such awesome power to his ability to manipulate the subordinate *loci* of power—the army, the secret police, the party and the bureaucracy—playing one against another in a perpetual rivalry for influence and authority around his own person. The fact that this process

seems to have been interrupted by Stalin's death, he believes, does not signify any basic change in the system, but only a temporary weakening of it. "Collective leadership" was the only answer in a situation where no single person wielded sufficient influence to rally the various power *loci* entirely around himself. However, concludes the author, the absolutist principle inherent in the concept of permanent revolution remains, and as long as it persists, a tendency to drift back to one-man rule is inevitable.

JAPAN

A Muslim Visits Communist China, a series of articles by Asa Bafagih, in *The Green Flag* (Tokyo), February and April 1956 issues.

Probably one of the best kept secrets of Communist China is the fate of its large Muslim population. Despite their number, estimated by some at as many as 50 million, the outside world knows little of how they are faring under the Communist regime, and what scant information is doled out from the Peiping propaganda mill is neither very revealing nor reliable.

Mr. Bafagih, an Indonesian newspaper editor who visited Communist China as a member of the Indonesian delegation to the fifth anniversary celebrations of the People's Republic in October 1954, made a special effort to penetrate this mystery during his visit. His account, appearing serially in an English-language Muslim journal in Tokyo, is interesting not because he succeeded in doing so, but because of the obstructions and frustrations he encountered in his inquiry—which reinforces the widely-held suspicion that here is another unsavory skeleton in the Chinese Communist closet.

Mr. Bafagih reports that he and his Indonesian colleagues were prevented at every step from making fruitful contacts with Chinese Muslims. Though the delegation stayed in the Chinese Communist capital for two weeks, a requested interview with Professor Muhammed Makien, a famous Chinese Muslim scholar at Peiping University, was never granted—first on the ground that the professor was too busy and later that he had suddenly become too ill to see anybody! The delegation had no better luck with its request for permission to visit Sinkiang Province, where the Muslims are in a majority. This time the grounds of refusal were that Sinkiang was too far away and that arrangements could not be made on such short notice.

What few interviews the Indonesian delegates did have, with official sanctions, were hardly conducive to frank talking by those interviewed. Mr. Bafagih reports that some Muslim leaders whom they met seemed pleased at first to converse directly in Arabic,

but then quickly caught themselves and switched to Chinese, which meant talking through the accompanying official interpreter.

The author also was allowed to visit some functioning mosques in Peiping and Canton, but nowhere was he able to gather much authoritative information concerning the life of the Muslim communities. What distressed him most was an estimate he was given, which placed the present number of Muslims in all of Communist China at only about ten million, a mere fraction of the number known to have lived in China before the advent of Communist rule. No one could or would explain why the estimate was so low, a fact underlined by the general increase in the Chinese population.

The only logical explanation, Mr. Bafagih fears, is that millions of Chinese Muslims either fell victim to the Mao regime's campaign of anti-religious persecution or sought safety from it by denying their faith. His sad concluding comment is:

It is probable that many millions of Muslims who have disappeared have merged into the great mass of the people, all wearing uniforms of blue or black. L. L.

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

Soviet Political Strategy in Asia, by A. B. C., in *The World Today*, Vol. 12, No. 5, May 1956.

The Soviet Bloc and Under-Developed Countries: An Assessment of Trade and Aid, by A. Z., in *The World Today*, Vol. 12, No. 6, June 1956.

Post-Stalin foreign policy and the means used to implement it are the subjects of two thoughtful articles in recent issues of *The World Today*. The first article, "Soviet Political Strategy in Asia," points out that recent Soviet foreign policy, while restricting itself in Europe to holding or neutralizing operations, has concentrated on infiltrating the economically backward areas of Africa, the Near East, Southeast Asia, and South America. The author feels, however, that this new geographic emphasis in Soviet foreign policy indicates no change in the broader postwar drive to place Germany and Japan firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence, but on the contrary is designed to further it. The present leaders of the Soviet Union have merely adopted the old geopolitical axiom that "the road to Berlin runs through Cairo." By the same token, implies the author, the road to Tokyo runs through Southeast Asia.

Within the past year several major statements by Soviet leaders have emphasized the current strategy. The struggle between capitalism and socialism cannot be settled by war, said Premier Bulganin. "We are convinced the opposite is the case. . . . Let every-

one prove in peaceful economic competition that he is right." Speaking on the anniversary of the October Revolution, Deputy Premier Kaganovich proposed the creation of what he called a new "socialist internationalism," to be cemented by a far-reaching program of aid to the underdeveloped countries. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February of this year Mr. Khrushchev made the strategy official. He indicated also that Soviet efforts would be concentrated in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

That the Communist bloc of nations commands sufficient power to sustain a program of aid cannot be denied. The real question is whether or not the Communist bloc sincerely intends to live up to its promise of "economic cooperation." The author of the second article under review shows quite convincingly that this is doubtful.

According to the Soviet definition, "true" economic aid is achieved only when there is "comprehensive expansion of normal economic links based on mutual benefit and equality." The Soviet Union, therefore, bestows only a few gifts and grants and openly prefers trade to outright sales or purchases. In point of fact, however, trade between the Soviet bloc and the underdeveloped areas has been neither extensive nor motivated by the principles of "mutual benefit and equality." In 1955, the *total* volume of Soviet bloc trade—of exports *plus* imports—was only about \$530 million. But the most remarkable feature of this trade is that the underdeveloped areas are the credit givers! Indeed, in 1954-55, Argentina had to curtail trade with the Soviet Union because it had accumulated a \$40 million credit balance, and at the end of 1954 the USSR chose to settle the balance due Uruguay in sterling, not in commodities as arranged.

In the rare cases when the Soviet Union does sell its products for cash, the sales generally occur at a time of such extreme hardship for the buyer that the use of the term "economic aid" is at least partially apt—as, for example, in the case of the Soviet sales of grain to India and Pakistan in 1951-52. But propaganda rather than aid is the primary Soviet purpose.

For this reason the most favored method of Soviet aid is the provision of a complete project or of technical instruction; and by concentrating its aid on grandiose schemes the Communist bloc has been able to gain propaganda successes quite out of proportion to its efforts. The Bhilai steel mill is a joint Soviet-Indian project and is not scheduled to begin operation until 1959; but all of India and most other underdeveloped areas hungering for industrialization have already been made aware of the Soviet Union's "generous contribution." Similar highly publicized of-

fers have been made to Burma and Egypt, among other countries.

It is this type of technical and scientific "assistance," writes the author of this article, that the Communist bloc will most probably stress in the future. The Soviet Union's primary aim is neither to trade with nor to grant aid to economically backward areas. It wants to extend its sphere of influence. And providing teams of scientists and technicians promises the Soviet Union "the highest dividends in terms of influence with the smallest capital outlay."

Some Perspectives on the Nature and Role of the Western European Communist Parties, by Bernard S. Morris, in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 1956), pp. 157-69.

The author of this provocative article attacks the erroneous notion still held in some quarters that the West European CP's are primarily conspiratorial movements aimed at the overthrow of "bourgeois" governments. As matters stand today "the national Communist parties . . . serve rather as adjuncts to Soviet foreign policy than as instruments of revolution. . . ." The last thing the Soviet Union wants at this time, says Mr. Morris, is the establishment of new Communist states in non-contiguous areas. While Western Communist parties have been given the green light to exploit local situations, to lead their masses along the "local road to socialism,"

. . . their purpose is not to bring Western Europe to the point of rebellion; it is instead to stimulate anti-American feeling, to make cooperation on the intergovernmental level more difficult and to induce neutralism and apathy among those who do not favor a pro-Soviet orientation. To the extent that the Communist parties can accomplish this much, they will have performed their duty toward the USSR.

This latest version of the Popular Front tactic creates a dilemma for the Western CP's. They must seek increased mass support, but at the cost of destroying their distinctive character: "the greater their following, the more emasculated their program." Yet, while the Communist parties debate the new policies, and lose numbers of active members (membership in the French CP has declined from 908,000 in 1947 to 500,000 in 1954), their success at the polls continues—a challenge to the West which must be answered, Mr. Morris concludes. The ". . . vast number of non-Communists . . . who see the Communist Party as the only party on the left openly advocating basic social and economic change without recourse to force" must be given a clear sight of the democratic road to social harmony and economic security.

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Editors' Note: Readers are welcome to send communications dealing with matters discussed in *Problems of Communism*. Letters should be addressed to the Editors, *Problems of Communism*, U.S. Information Agency, 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Washington 25, D. C.

THE "PARLIAMENTARY" TACTIC IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In his report to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU last February, Nikita Khrushchev stated that under present world conditions "... the working class ... [is afforded] the possibility of inflicting a defeat on the reactionary anti-popular forces and of gaining a firm majority in Parliament, converting it from an organ of bourgeois democracy into an instrument of genuinely popular will." As an example of this new "parliamentary" tactic, Anastas Mikoyan, on the same occasion, pointed to Czechoslovakia as a country where "the socialist revolution was carried out by peaceful means." Due to the "favorable postwar situation," said Mikoyan, Communists were able to "come to power by allying themselves not only with the parties of the working people which were close to them but also with the bourgeois parties which supported the common national front." The Czechoslovak experience teaches us, he concluded, that in some countries the "people" (read: Communists) can "win ... in their own way, yet also without civil war."

As a Czechoslovak national who was in Prague in 1945-48, I feel obliged to caution the world that Comrade Mikoyan's "new story" is an old story indeed. The postwar Czechoslovak Parliament was "converted" into an instrument of "genuinely popular will" only by force of Communist arms and at the expense of all democratic procedures and traditions—all in the name of making it an "instrument of genuinely popular will."

How was this done? In 1945 Czechoslovakia was "liberated" from the Nazis, and the Czechoslovak Communists, working in the shadow of the occupying Red Army, gained overwhelming influence in many of the local committees of national resistance. The combined pressure of the occupation forces and the Communist-dominated local organs forced the National Front Cabinet and the President reluctantly to agree to far-reaching nationalization measures.

On the eve of the Constituent Assembly elections in May 1946, the Red Army ostentatiously moved sizable numbers of troops from Austria into Czechoslovakia. But despite this move and the growing power of local party activists, the Communist Party polled only 38 percent of the vote in the elections.

This was a very poor showing under the circumstances, and thereafter the influence and power of the Communists declined steadily. By the end of 1947 the strength of the Czech Communists had deteriorated to such an extent that the non-Communist parties were confident of making considerable gains in the elections scheduled for the early spring of 1948.

The Communists were well aware of the situation, however, and availed themselves of their strength in the Ministries of Interior and National Defense to pack the police and the army with their members. When the protests of the non-Communist majority of

the Cabinet were ignored by the Communist Ministers, including the Premier, the twelve non-Communist Ministers resigned. They hoped thereby to topple the Cabinet and force new elections, which would undoubtedly have resulted in a Communist defeat. Their resignations were refused, however.

At this point the Communists abandoned all pretense of democratic procedure. They decided to use armed force. The violent *coup* of February 1948 was staged by Valerian Zorin (now Soviet Ambassador in Bonn), who had been sent from Moscow to Prague with this specific task. Strong Communist-commanded police forces were concentrated in and around the capital, the Communist-dominated factory militia were armed, mob demonstrations were arranged in the streets of Prague, the secretariats of the non-Communist parties and government ministries headed by non-Communists were invaded, and "action committees" terrorized all existing political, administrative, and economic institutions.

The ailing President, Dr. Eduard Benes, was under severe pressure from all sides. The National Assembly was prevented from meeting. Finally, on February 25, 1948, Benes was "allowed" to accept the resignation of the twelve ministers but was forced to appoint a new Communist-dominated Cabinet, in which the only non-Communists were avowed fellow-travelers. By the time the National Assembly finally met on March 10, 1948 (the day of Jan Masaryk's mysterious death), many of its members had been arrested or threatened with arrest, and others had fled the country. Between March 11 and May 6, while the Assembly was in session, a number of deputies were deprived of their parliamentary immunity, arrested and prosecuted.

The "stable parliamentary majority" formed in this manner adopted a new election law and approved the new Constitution of May 9, 1948, which was specifically modelled on the Soviet Constitution. (Benes categorically refused to sign the Constitution and resigned on June 7, 1948.) New National Assembly elections were held on May 30, 1948, after the organization of a "regenerated" National Front including the Communists and the pro-Communist wing of the Social Democratic Party. The electorate was presented with a single list of National Front candidates, who naturally won 80 percent of the seats in the New Assembly. Such was the transformation of that body into an "instrument of genuinely popular will."

In May 1954 a new election law was passed allowing only candidates of the Communist-dominated National Front to run in local election districts. Furthermore, there was to be only one candidate in each district. When the November 1954 elections were held, the voters were herded into the election booths and given open lists of candidates. No envelopes were provided, and the voters were expected to insert their marked lists into the ballot boxes under the watchful eyes of members of the Communist-controlled election commissions. This is the manner in which the "organ of genuine democracy" presently in office in Czechoslovakia was elected!