

Soviet Propaganda Apparatus

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IN ITS fundamentals, communism is unlike any other political movement. It is essentially worldwide, expansive, and proselyting. Proclaiming itself the only truth, it cannot tolerate for long any competing doctrine, particularly of the left. This is why Socialist and social democratic groups in countries where the Communists have come into power always became their first victims: their continued existence as an alternative system would be an unwelcome reminder of more palatable alternatives. We must always remember that communism—especially when

it gains power—needs its whipping boys. Its dynamics demand objects of attack, especially when its domestic affairs are not going as well as they should. Threats of attack from outside

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must be conjured up constantly to take people's minds off the shortcomings in their own backyard. At the same time, accusations must always be leveled against others to divert attention from the day-to-day moves which are part of the dynamic of Communist expansionism. So propaganda plays a vastly important role in the Communist scheme of things, and modern communism is able to equip its propaganda armory with weapons unknown even 30 years ago.

Essentially Dynamic

According to the Soviet dictionary-encyclopedia:

Propaganda is the interpretation of ideas, teachings, political opinions, and knowledge; component parts of the work of the Communist and workers' parties in the ideological training of the Party masses and the toilers.

Propaganda, in short, is a means of presenting events and ideas in the way which best suits the Communist Party's purpose at the moment. It is essentially dynamic in the sense that it is deliberately planned to influence the minds, emotions, and ultimately the actions of specific groups.

Propaganda is not simply the dissemination of information to all and sundry: it is the presentation of facts and ideas to achieve certain ends. In the case of the Communist movement these ends are the establishment of the Communist system throughout the world, and it is this world-embracing dynamic which gives the Communist movement its continuing impetus.

The Communists distinguish between propaganda and agitation—the first being a more sophisticated version of the second. Agitation is the presentation of single ideas to the masses to arouse their emotions, while propaganda puts the points over in

more complete forms. For this purpose, Lenin saw the agitator using the spoken word and the propagandist using the printed word.

With the advent of radio, television, and other means of mass communication, the distinction has become somewhat blurred, and, for our purpose, propaganda will be taken to cover agitation as well. As a Soviet article on agitational work stated in 1960, propaganda is "the main means of linking the Party with the masses, the well-tried method of persuading the workers, explaining to them the policies of the Party." A party resolution on propaganda published in Moscow early in 1960 reemphasized what has been said from Lenin's time onward, that party propaganda is "decisive."

Not Isolated

Communist propaganda cannot be assessed in isolation. It must be judged dynamically against the situation of the moment, the happenings of the past, and the likely trends in the future. To appreciate the full meaning of any Communist line of the moment, it must be seen in its full context and not just as an isolated phenomenon.

Thus, we can take as an ever-recurring example Communist statements on peaceful coexistence. These have been made for many years, as much in Stalin's time as today, as much by Peking as by Moscow. They were spoken as strongly during the Korean War as during the war in Vietnam, as much during the Berlin blockade of 1948 as during the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

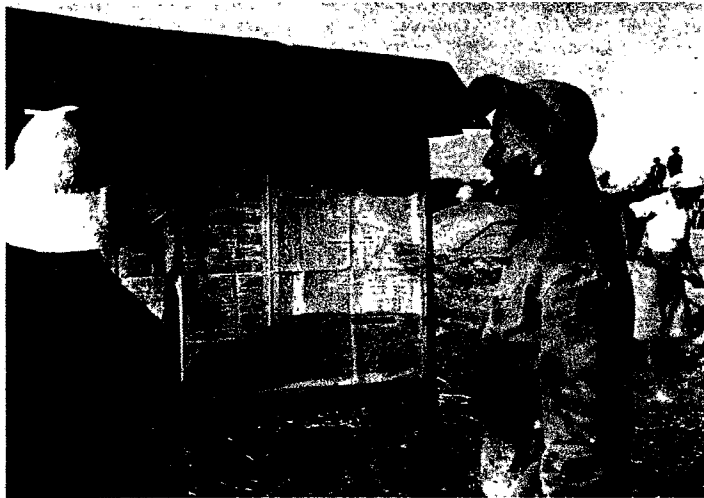
The emphasis is on peaceful coexistence between states, which has consistently been put into the specific perspective of Communist world domination. This basic thesis was restated in May 1964 by Mikhail Suslov who

represented the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee at the 17th Congress of the French Communist Party. In it he made the classic interpretation of the interrelationship between the development of strike action as part of the class struggle in West-

of the mass of the workers against capitalism.

In this context peaceful coexistence is a tactical means to something bigger, not just the desirable end in itself which most people imagine it to be.

The heartland of the Communist



NATO Letter

Former Premier Khrushchev called Soviet newspapers "the long-range ideological weapon of our party," but their effectiveness is limited to the homefront

ern Europe and any anti-Western actions in other parts of the world:

In the conditions of the struggle for peace and peaceful coexistence, the national liberation movement is gaining ever more victories and the class struggle in the capitalist countries is mounting steadily. This has been borne out by the trend of the strike movement. . . . The struggle for peace strengthens the positions of the Communist Parties as a nationwide political force and promotes the development of the class movement

system remains the USSR, even though it is rivaled in the minds of the more militant by Red China. Moscow and Peking between them are the fountainheads of Communist propaganda throughout the world. With both, the aim is the same; the ideological quarrel is over the means. It is, therefore, essential for us to remember the interlocking role of the party and the state in all those countries where the Communists are in power. This dichotomy is vital and cannot be overemphasized.

In the Communist countries the party is the controlling factor, with the state subordinate. There is a matching of the party apparatus with that of the state all the way down to the local level. The major decisions are made by the party through its Central Committee or the Congress, with the state organizations taking up the party directives.

The dynamism both at home and in international affairs is generated by the party, just as the party decides on the propaganda line and ensures that it is carried out through all the different media. This work is done by Agitprop, the department of agitation and propaganda, which was set up soon after the October Revolution. It plans, directs, and oversees all the media of Communist propaganda at home and abroad.

Types of Organization

In this work, every type of organization is expected to carry out its specific task. There are three main types of organization. Over all is the Communist Party itself, which issues the directives. Then comes the state. Finally, there are the "social organizations"—the trade unions, women's and youth leagues, peace and friendship societies, and scientific and educational bodies. Whether operating at home or abroad, they all have their task to fulfill in putting over the propaganda line of the moment.

The Communist movement puts out its propaganda through a complex network of direct and indirect transmission belts. The direct means are through the national Communist Parties in those countries where they have a legal existence. In such countries they operate overtly as ordinary political parties, supplementing this "normal" work with the operation of cov-

ert front organizations such as progressive bookshops, travel agencies specializing in trips to Communist countries, cultural societies to promote relations with specific Communist countries, and trading companies dealing in goods imported from Communist countries. In many cases, these fronts have direct relationships with equivalent "social organizations" in the Communist world.

The Communist state organizations work through their normal dealings with equivalent bodies in other countries. They make use of their diplomatic and trading contacts. They take the rostrum at international gatherings. Their officials seek out likely converts in their own fieldwork.

The "social organizations" have their main contacts abroad by way of the international fronts, the names of which define their spheres of activity: World Federation of Trade Unions, World Federation of Democratic Youth, International Union of Students, World Council of Peace, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, World Federation of Scientific Workers, Women's International Democratic Federation, International Organization of Journalists, and the International Federation of Resistance Fighters. This vast complex was set up in Stalin's time, in the years following the end of the war.

Temporary Compromise

Although the international Communist fronts as we know them today are of postwar origin, the idea goes back to the 1920's. Lenin was always an exponent of opportunism in political work, stressing the need for temporary compromise where it could help attain a party objective. Another Leninist classic, first enunciated in 1920 and repeated by his successors ever

since, lays down a tactic for Communists which holds good after more than 40 years of continuous application:

It is possible to conquer the more powerful enemy only by exerting the utmost effort and by necessarily, thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully taking advantage of every, even the smallest, fissure among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie in the various countries; by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this fail to understand even a grain of Marxism and of scientific modern socialism in general.

It is in this work that the Communist fronts play their role. Ostensibly non-Communist bodies, their job is to present and gain support for Communist policies where these would be rejected if put in direct party terms.

Wider Potentialities

The first large front was the International Workers' Aid (IWA) of the 1920's. It was originally set up as a genuine relief organization to collect funds in Europe and the United States to send emergency food to the Soviet Union, then in the midst of famine. But its wider potentialities were realized by its founder, the German Communist Willi Muenzenberg, who soon changed its major emphasis to political solidarity, with charity as a secondary function. In this way the IWA could get sympathizers at all levels for Soviet policies and carry out considerable party propaganda without the party label being attached.

By the mid-1920's the IWA had expanded under Muenzenberg to carry out political work in inflation-ridden

Germany, then in an industrially troubled Japan, and then in Britain with her general strike of 1926. Muenzenberg built up a publishing empire, a book club, a film distribution firm, and



After Stalin's death, Soviet leaders began to improve the "image" of the USSR by participating in more international activities, including athletic events. This reduced the usefulness of the front organizations.

a complete newspaper chain in Japan, all controlled by this Communist machine. In the 1930's, having fled to France to escape the Nazis, Muenzen-

berg built up more fronts with anti-Fascist labels.

Besides Muenzenberg's "innocents' clubs"—as he called them—there were a number of other fronts such as the Young Communist International (YCI) and the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern). These paralleled in many ways the Communist International (Comintern) itself. The Profintern was never very successful and died unmourned in 1937. The YCI was dissolved in 1943, at the same time as the Comintern—both dissolutions being presented as gestures to Allied unity in the war.

The Profintern's work as a front has been assumed by the World Federation of Trade Unions, while the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students between them have taken over many of the functions of the YCI.

In the Name of Peace

The multitude of organizations within the Communist countries themselves, together with the Communist bodies and fronts throughout the rest of the world, all have the job of presenting the Communist message of the moment. They have the task of defending Communist interests and of attacking any policies, actions, or persons viewed by the Communist leadership as likely to stand in the way of Communist expansion.

Everything is done in the name of peace—a peace under Communist rule. By the party logic, the opposition to Communist expansion is imperialism, which by its very nature is warmongering. Only communism can effectively oppose imperialist warmongering, and so peace can only be assured when communism has full power in the world.

Communist propaganda is spread by

the biggest communications network in the world. One-quarter of the book and pamphlet production in the world appears in the USSR: in 1963 Soviet publishing houses issued 77,625 titles totaling 1.3 billion copies.

All publishing houses are controlled by the State Committee for the Press of the USSR Council of Ministers, set up in August 1963 to control on a state scale the content and ideological direction of all types of publication. The job of this Committee is to see that literature is published which will help "the creation of the material and technical basis of communism," while, at the same time, unmask the essence of non-Communist ideology.

News Agencies

Together with press and publishing go the state-run news agencies, of which the Soviet agency *Tass* is the most notable. It operates under close party supervision, whether at home or abroad, as do the official news agencies of the other Communist countries. They send news from the Communist countries to the outside world and supply the Communist press at home with its foreign coverage. In both directions the party line of the moment is observed.

Two years ago, the Soviet agency *APN* was set up. This is not a state body, but a "social organization." It complements the work of *Tass* with feature and magazine services throughout the world. It has nearly 4,000 press clients in non-Communist countries and publishes over 30 newspapers and magazines, as well as books and brochures.

The use of radio by Communist propagandists has been, perhaps, the most spectacular phenomenon over the past decade. In 1948 the Soviet, East European, and Chinese Communist

stations were broadcasting 600 hours a week for listeners abroad. This total has now topped the 4,000-hour mark, with a constantly increasing emphasis on services to Africa and—in recent months—to Latin America.

With the addition in May 1964 of services in Khmer for Cambodia and in Thai for Thailand, the number of languages used by Moscow's external services has risen to 48. This does not include those transmissions in local languages from Soviet central Asian stations which are beamed with stronger signals to reach listeners on the other side of the USSR's Asian borders.

If we look back over the past decade of Communist propaganda activity, we can see it as one of increasing sophistication. The death of Stalin obviously brought many changes with it, but it was not until after the middle fifties that the Communist leaderships began to think in what might best be called public relations terms. Stalin rarely ever stirred from the Kremlin, which he kept as a closely locked fortress. His successors threw the Kremlin gates wide open and embarked on a series of world tours—Western Europe, North America, Asia, and most recently Africa.

On the diplomatic level, Communist representatives thawed and smiled. The Communist countries took part in international conferences, and their entries were submitted for international competitions. International sporting events with Western countries were staged in Moscow and other

Communist sport centers with full television coverage throughout Europe.

As the Communists have taken advantage of these more normal channels of international cooperation, so the importance of the fronts has been reduced. Their utility has been further diminished by the Moscow-Peking dispute which now comes into the open at every important front meeting. In fact, it is in the fronts that the extent of the split can be best appreciated.

Communist propaganda continues to be dominated by three factors—ideology, utopia, and myth. Ideology is the hard basis, with its insistence that peace will only come when communism is triumphant. Utopia is the day of communism triumphant, a vague wonderland in an even more vague future. The hardships and restrictions of today must be imposed because imperialism is still a threat, states the ideologist. The myth remains as before in the continued reminders that, with imperialism in the world, a catastrophic war is always imminent. Communist mythology is in constant need of a bogey with which to frighten the believers and potential believers. If no devil exists, then one must be created.

Communist propaganda is something very much on its own, with nothing else like it in the world. Our appreciation of it can only be made on a very personal level. It is a major weapon in the Communist armory, and its effectiveness depends on our own critical assessment of it.