

RUSS - IS THE "NOVY MIR" PURGE AN END OF AN ERA?

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MUNICH, 13 March 1970 (CAA Department) The following Radio Liberty Research Item (No. CRD 65/70) of February 26 is written by D. Pospelovsky.

Literaturnaya gazeta, the USSR Writers' Union official weekly, reported on February 11 the appointment of five new members to Novy mir's editorial board. A few days later Western agencies reported from Moscow that Tvardovsky, the liberal editor of Novy mir, had resigned his editorial post. In a way Tvardovsky is irreplaceable in current circumstances. He is a believing Party member; at the same time he is a firm believer in creative and artistic freedom; he also is courageous and personally honest. He is thus acceptable both to the majority of the Soviet intelligentsia, most of whom are much more sceptical about the possibility of progress towards freedom under the Soviet regime than Tvardovsky, and (up until now at least) to the leadership as a sincere and convinced member of the Communist party. In his latter function Tvardovsky was also highly useful for contacts with Western left-wing and moderate-communist writers, giving a "human face" to Soviet communism.

Now Moscow is full of rumors and it is still unclear whether Tvardovsky's resignation is final. His desire to resign is natural. He could not have achieved and kept the high prestige of his journal without the aid of such assistants as Vinogradov, Kondratovich, Sats, Lakshin, particularly Lakshin, one of the Soviet Union's leading literary critics. All of these have now been purged and replaced by two questionable liberals, Kosolapov and Smirnov, both literary apparatchiks rather than writers; and three other minor writers of center-to-dogmatic leanings: Ovcharenko, Rekemchuk, Bol'shov, of whom the latter is the most obviously dogmatic figure and is slated to be chief deputy editor of the journal. According to some information (see February 17 report by Jacob, the Moscow correspondent of Le Monde) the leadership is having second thoughts on Tvardovsky's resignation and that it is not unlikely that he may be asked to stay and that a compromise solution on the journal's staffing may yet be reached. Indeed, it would be highly dangerous in circumstances of the present growth of samizdat to kill Novy mir as the outlet for moderate liberals. By doing so the authorities will inevitably swell the ranks of samizdat: the Lakhsins,

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Tvardovskys, Vozensenskys, Abramovs and all the other moderate liberal writers and poets who had up to now managed to publish their works in Novy mir would be forced into circulation of their works in samizdat. In this case the recent expulsion of Solzhenitsyn from the Writers' Union, the purge of Novy mir and other journals, and similar measures, may turn out like the case of a football player in a political satire which was playing at one of the Moscow avant-garde theaters, the Taganka for three days, until removed on February 19 (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Feb. 20). A football player kicks the ball: "The left doesn't know what the right is doing...and no one knows who is on the right or who is on the left..." At the end of the sketch "the soccer player scores a goal against himself, but compliments himself on his scoring style (International Herald Tribune, Feb. 18, 1970). The effect of purging Novy mir may precisely turn out like a perfect goal into one's own gate. And it is probably this that the Soviet leadership has become at last aware of and is having second thoughts on what to do next. Thus Solzhenitsyn's prediction, "You'll soon be trying hard to rub out your signatures from the statement on my expulsion," may yet turn out to be closer to realization than one would have expected.

One of the latest samizdat documents circulating in the USSR, a letter to Brezhnev ascribed to Academician Sakharov, the author of the 1968 essay on Creative Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence, also confirms that the leadership is having second thoughts. According to it Brezhnev's secret speech at the December 1969 Party Central Committee Plenum demanded further liberalization of the economy and more truth and personal responsibility. The letter congratulates Brezhnev "on this bold and correct step" but says that "history will not forgive you if salvation measures do not follow the signal, and they are very simple. A cure follows from the diagnosis. The total mutual lying can be cured only by public discussion. What amount of initiative, intellect and enthusiasm will emerge, if finally mouths are no longer gagged. Dozens of articles lie in editorial offices of magazines; dozens of books have been typed which honestly analyze our life. All this is suppressed. Solzhenitsyn, the pride of Russian literature, was driven out of the writers union. The Supreme Soviet which costs so much money, has become a blind voting machine. Public discussion and only public discussion can put sick Russia on the path of recovery."

In another place he says: "We have lost not only the battle for the moon but the economic race as a whole... we hold out only because of our fabulous natural resources and the traditional patience of the peasants." (Time Magazine, February 23).

Apparently it is this loss of the economic race in the year in which according to Khrushchev's predictions the Soviet Union was supposed to have surpassed the USA in per capita production, that Brezhnev boldly recognized at the Plenum. Judging by this



alleged Sakharov letter Brezhnev did not call back to a return to the Stalinist model, although voices of this type must have been heard, for A. Birman, one of the Soviet Union's leading liberal economists, warns in his two latest articles (Novy mir, 12/69 and Litgazeta of Feb. 11) against those economists (khoziaistvenniki) who suggest abandoning of the internal economic accountancy principle.

In economics, in ideology, and in social policies the reactionary trend of the current Soviet leadership has brought it into a blind alley, not dissimilar to the one in which the Czechoslovak leadership of Novotny found itself in 1966-67. But will the Brezhnev leadership have the boldness to take the Sik-Dubcek step? Hardly so. Or will it try to rely again on the patience of the people?

Against this step a warning came in the latest Novy mir (No. 12, 1969) from a completely different corner: a review of The Book of the Governor of the Shan Province which was published in the Russian translation from the Chinese over a year ago in Moscow. Shan Yan, the author, lived in the 4th Century B.C. and in his theories of state leadership surpassed and preceded Machiavelli.

Concerning the reliance on the patience of the people which the alleged Sakharov letter mentions as reason of the continued existence of the Soviet Union, Shan Yan wrote: "When the people is weak, the State is strong, when the State is strong the people is weak. Therefore a State progressing along the right path, aims at weakening its people... If the people is weak, it drags itself along the pointed road..." There should be no hesitation in insulting the people, because "when people are debased and insulted, they treasure the ranks and honors; when they are weak, they treasure the titles of office; when they are weak they treasure prizes."

But when people become affluent, they lose self-discipline and "parasites" appear. Novy mir here notes that "parasite" is a free translation into modern Russian of the old Chinese word for louse. A modern one indeed, if one remembers that it exists in the current Soviet legislation and that several poets and other Russian dissidents have lately been sent into banishment on the grounds that they were parasites.

Novy mir explains that Shan Yan has a long passage on these parasites who "threaten to subvert the might of the State." These lice or "parasites" according to Shan Yan are "the study of music, history, poetry, rules of good behaviour and old traditions, as well as virtue, love of mankind, unselfishness, good oratory, wit." For: "The art of oratory and wit lead towards disorder; rules of morality and music aid towards lack of moral discipline; kindness and love of mankind is the mother of misdemeanors; the appointment of virtuous people to offices is a source of vice."

"Unity of people and mutual support come from ruling them as if they were virtuous; disunity and mutual shadowing result from ruling them as if they were vicious. There, where people are treated as virtuous, vices are concealed; where they are treated as vicious, crimes are cruelly punished... If people are governed as if they were virtuous social disorder becomes inevitable and the State will perish; if people are governed as vicious, then an exemplary order sets in, and the State reaches might."

Punishments should be cruel and should precede the crime, according to Shan Yan (pp. 268-69).

Compare Shan Yan's discussion on virtue and vice with Solzhenitsyn's description of the attitude to virtue, kindness, compassion and love of mankind in the First Circle.

In the First Circle he says about the young Rus'ka that the fellow was brought up by the Soviet school which had taught him that kindness, love of mankind, chivalry were contemptuous ideas and that reporting on comrades and denunciations were one's civic duties.

In his Easter Procession Solzhenitsyn gives a vivid picture on the attitude of the Komsomol-inspired young people to religion and traditions, who assemble around a church during the Easter night service to insult the believers and desecrate the Midnight "Christ Has Risen!" procession with their acts of hooliganism, sympathetically and passively observed by the militia. In conclusion Solzhenitsyn asks the question in complete contradiction to Shan Yan's as well as the Soviet Government's attitude: "What then will come out of these our main millions...? What good do we expect from our future?"

"Truly, one day, they shall turn around and crush us all!"

"And those who have set them on here will also be trampled and crushed by them!" (see Posev, 2/69, p. 47).

Shan Yan's fate was also similar to the one predicted for Russia by Solzhenitsyn: "Shan Yan fell victim to the very laws enacted by him. When the emperor who had favored Shan Yan had died, the throne was occupied by his heir who hated Shan Yan... Shan Yan had taken to flight and tried on his way to stay overnight at a road inn, but the innkeeper refused to let him in, saying that according to Shan Yan's laws an innkeeper letting unknown strangers in ought to be severely punished. Shan Yan escaped to a neighboring kingdom, but its citizens remembering Shan Yan's treacherous kidnapping of their prince, refused to give him asylum. A few days later he was killed and his whole family liquidated" (p. 268).

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And Novy mir concludes its review of Shan Yan's book with a highly topical reproach to modern Soviet historiography: "One comes occasionally in our literature across assertions that the theory of legists was progressive, for it helped to unify China. Quite true, the liberation of the political leader from all moral norms, substantiated by this theory, had helped the despots of the Tsing Kingdom to annihilate their rivals.... Important, however, is not only the fact of unification but also the question how it was carried out. It is worth remembering that the unification of China was accompanied (in accordance with the ideas of Shan Yan) by a complete liquidation of humanitarian education, bonfires made of books, and by hundreds of executions of the contemporary intelligentsia. These measures, nevertheless, did not lead to the goal set by Tsing Shi Huang: to insure the domination to his dynasty for ten thousand generations. Only a few years after his death the dynasty was annihilated by a popular rebellion" (p. 270).

The dynasty had fallen, says Novy mir, and the ideas of Shan were so deeply compromised that no one dared to repeat them or to adhere to them. But the negative moral aftermath of the doctrine remained: "the state apparatus built on the legist principles had been inherited by other dynasties, and together with this state machine from generation to generation was passed on that attitude to man and those ideas, on which it had been founded" (p. 270).

Conclusion: The method of political allusion is well known to all dictatorial and particularly modern totalitarian states. The censor could hardly stop the publication of Shan Yan's book or of the Novy mir review of it, for thereby he would overtly admit that he saw similarities between the theories and practices of Shan Yan and those of the CPSU. He would then find himself in the position of that anecdotal police investigator who arrested a man in Moscow for cursing at a certain 'Joseph', thinking the fellow meant Stalin. But under investigation the detained fellow says he meant Joseph Tito. The investigator releases the man who then asks the investigator: "Comrade investigator, and whom did you mean?..." This fear of censors and party supervisors of being accused of equating tyrannies to the Soviet system is one of the reasons for the occasional appearance in the Soviet Union of books and articles of the above nature. On the other hand, they serve a very useful purpose, for no intelligent reader in the Soviet Union (including very often the censor himself) has any doubt "whom the author means." At the same time, if we take the words of the alleged Sakharov letter seriously (and whether it emanates from Sakharov or similar Soviet scientific circles, we should not doubt their seriousness), the country at the moment is not far from the point reached by China towards the end of Shan Yan's career: it is powerful outwardly, it engages in arresting and punishing "parasites" even before

they had committed a crime, it is based on the weakness and patience of its people. But the alleged Sakharov letter hints and Novy mir explicitly states that such patience of a weakened people is not eternal.....

And it is to be hoped that the Soviet leadership would at last realize that short of full-fledged Stalinist terror of the 30s, which is hardly possible under the present circumstances of "collective leadership" and disunity at the top, expulsions of Solzhenitsyn, purging of Novy mir, and thus pushing of its authors and of the writings of the above type into the illegal sphere of samizdat will only aggravate the issues and bring the country closer to the brink. The attack on the dogmatic Stalinist Kochetov's "And What Do You Want?" (Oktyabr, 9, 10, 11/69) in the last issue of Literaturnaya gazeta (Feb. 11, 1970) shows that there is still some appreciation of the inherent dangers to a society in oversimplistic attitudes to the socio-ideological issues. This attitude characterizes Kochetov's writings and it is precisely for this that he is being criticized. The question is, will the Soviet leaders understand that persecutions of the intelligentsia and of its journals are also such harmful simplicism?

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