

NOT TO BE MICROFICHED

Munich, November 13, 1964 (Free World Analysis) -- Following are extracts from an article by Giuseppe Boffa, Moscow correspondent of L'Unità, which appeared in the November 7 issue of the Italian CP weekly organ, Rinascita. The article was entitled "The Function of the CPSU in Soviet Society," and carried a sub-title: "Contribution to a debate on the questions raised by the recent events."

In the international Communist movement the debate on concepts of the necessary ruling functions of the party has been going on for years. This was so to a certain extent before the XX Congress of the CPSU but much more strongly so afterward. In Italy there was a rejection of the "transmission belt" theory. The full autonomy of parties was recognized, and therefore also that of the Communist party and of unions and other large organizational groups for the masses in which Communists operate, often in an executive capacity. The discussion has been extended into the international camp. One of its most interesting phases occurred recently in Budapest in the Council of the World Federation of Trade Unions. However, the same debate has not arisen, at least until now, in the Soviet Union or in some other socialist countries. With regard to the USSR, which is the concern of this article, the debate has, indeed, not been completely absent: it has made itself noticed, however, in events, implied by contradictory decisions, not in explicit manifestations.

If there is one theme which has been constantly repeated in the USSR during the last ten years through all of the changes which have taken place, it is that the ruling function of the party in Soviet society should be reinforced. This phrase has been constantly in use, from the XX Congress up to the present, and made another appearance immediately after the removal of Khrushchev. This thesis was designed to be the counterweight balancing the effects of many post-Stalin innovations. While the more rigid police controls were abolished, a whole series of decisions for economic decentralization taken, greater autonomy for the individual republics proclaimed, and part of the press opened to differing forms of discussion, a guarantee against the possible appearance of divisions and clashes as a

result of these political actions was indicated by the reinforcement of party leadership....

Every request for autonomy in the USSR in the name of this same thesis, although never publicly formulated, was discouraged, even during the last decade, because this was judged sufficient to promote discussion about the leading position of the party....

At present it would be superficial to judge this type of rule to be either absolutely good or bad. It has arisen in the USSR due to the particular circumstances in which the construction of the economy has taken place, and by the very specific character which it has assumed, dominated as it is by strong political imperatives... Rather it is a question of seeing whether [this thesis] is still valid today when those circumstances have been altered and Soviet society has achieved high levels of development and maturity in the economic field -- and in others as well....

On the other hand, every attempt to formulate a different governing system has been discouraged insofar as it implied a claim to autonomy. This is why its critics have been able to achieve so little effect in practice. In theory, the concept was occasionally condemned, never in such a way as to eradicate the deep-rooted position which it has had for decades in Soviet political practice. Again this year an attack was made upon it during the course of a polemic with the Chinese, who openly theorize that the guidance duties of the party are explained as a function of "command." In a series of articles appearing last April in Izvestia, the Chinese were reproved for entrusting to the party organs "not the role of organizers and educators of the masses, but a role of 'command force,' which would fix and regulate all the activities of the local organs of power," and also for identifying the "party leader" as a "commander of production." Not a word was said, however, in these same articles of the persistence of that same theory in Soviet political life. It is possible that it was also the intention of the authors to strike, through the Chinese, at a way of

thought which certainly could not be said to have disappeared in the USSR; but if this was the case, the attack was of little use, since it avoided any reference to Soviet practices.

[Boffa goes on to discuss the organizational changes introduced in the USSR in November 1962, and notably the division of the party organization into two national sectors, one for industry and one for agriculture. Referring to the published transcript of the discussion at the Central Committee Plenum, he goes on:]

The [1962] reform was supported and justified by all [speakers] for reasons which could be defined as purely functional. It was said on that occasion, too, that the leading role of the party in the economy was being reinforced and -- it was added -- "perfected"... No one, then put in doubt in any way that the party should have a direct responsibility in the country's economy: they asked, rather, that it absolve its duties with the greatest possible competence. On the basis of this premise the reform was approved.

What has appeared strange since that time is the absolute silence which has fallen upon any possible political implications which might have arisen from such an innovation. Certainly in the wake of an act of such scope objections and perplexity would be legitimate. The first [objection] concerns the possibility that the party might be so directly involved in economic activity as to be actually subdivided into productive sectors. But this objection -- as stated before -- has not been taken into consideration, up to the present, in the USSR....

[Boffa's article proceeds to discuss these administrative changes. Noting that their political implications were never faced by the Soviet leadership, he criticizes the degree to which individual kolkhozes and sovkhoses were still subject to central control, and adds: "A year after the reform of the party structure, a traveller through the Soviet countryside could form the impression that the changes had not substantially modified the method of control."]

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At this point it is difficult to say in what way the removal of Khrushchev will be reflected in this group of problems. From indiscretions in the press we know that the reform of the party structure is one of the criticism levelled at the Khrushchev leadership. We do not know, however, what the arguments concerning these criticism were. They were formulated in the name of "reinforcing" the leadership of the party in economic life. From indirect information which is available it would seem that the expediency of the division of direction in the agricultural and industrial branches in the name of efficiency is being questioned. This division could bring on "confusion" and "conflicts." More interesting is another critical hint of seeing in this a purely organizational method -- therefore administrative -- of confronting problems which have an entirely different character. This is the situation up to the present. In a public and deepening debate, which has now become indispensable after a succession of experiments of such importance, it is not possible to avoid discussing fundamental political theses which were not confronted when the reform was decided upon, and which -- for the moment, at least -- are not being brought up even today, where the intention is being manifested of turning backward and abolishing the reform. Is it only the decision of 1962 which is in question, and not the conception of a party which gives it direct responsibility for the functioning of the economy? If the structure which the party has assumed these last few years is a mistake, can its former structure be held adequate for its duties? And further, are these questions pertinent only for the activity of the party in the economic sector or also for other aspects of its function in society? Does the autonomy of organizations like the soviets or unions really clash with the ruling position of the party or is it not, instead, the condition for making such a necessary ruling position effective? Finally, is not open discussion, inside the party and outside, the only premise which would allow a correct response to so many questions?...

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