

9 October 1957

Background Information (USSR)

"PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY" AND POLISH MARXISM

The renewed Kremlin drive against Polish revisionism in art and literature (see Background Information, 1 October 1957) has now been extended far into the philosophical field. Problems of Philosophy (No. 4, 1957, sent to press 9 September 1957) has launched a major offensive (see Appendix, page 1) against the Polish magazine Philosophical Thought, which was replaced some two months ago by the new Philosophical Studies. The Soviet article is directed mainly against the ideas of E. Szacki, E. Wiatr, Z. Bauman, R. Zimand and A. Schaff, who have reopened the question of the relationship between politics on the one hand, and culture and philosophy on the other. To Problems of Philosophy, now that the iconoclasm of 1956 is over and the rehabilitation of Stalin is in progress, this outlook is equivalent to "traditional petty-bourgeois opportunism". The magazine does not realize that the Khrushchev of the XX Party Congress, in this case, must also be a "petty-bourgeois opportunist."

Szacki's desire for ideological coexistence between East and West is another bane to Problems of Philosophy, as well as his devotion to the tenuous idea of "humanist Marxism." Because he argued that people should be attracted to Marxism instead of coerced into it, the Soviet magazine accuses him of "denying Party leadership in culture and partiinost in the social sciences." In this connection it is interesting to note that a very different conception of partiinost is now current among the dissident intellectuals of the Georgian SSR who seem to have much in common with Szacki. According to Mzhvanadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Central Committee of the Party, they are demanding a popular art free of partiinost; they refer to the latter as "Party patronage," for all the world as though they were ardent students of Djilas (Tiflis Radio, 6 October 1957; see Appendix II below). These Georgian dissidents are in fact asking that art should be freed from politics, which would be intolerable to Mzhvanadze. Similarly Problems of Philosophy suspects that Szacki hankered after the release of philosophy from politics, and his attitude is therefore described as "militantly apolitical."

The Soviet magazine also denounces E. Wiatr and Z. Bauman for their article entitled "Marxism and Contemporary Sociology" (Philosophical Thought, No. 1, 1957). Their argument is said to have been that science should not be subordinate to ideology; in Soviet eyes this is tantamount to casting doubt on the need for "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Although Philosophical Thought no longer exists in its original form, there is reason to think that the inevitable Polish reply to this new neo-Zhdanovite attack on freedom of expression will be as firm as Polityka's response to the Literary Gazette (No. 116) denunciation of Opinie (see PAP, 7 October 1957).

r.r.g.

"Is that Marxism?"

By V. Kasyanova  
Voprosy Filosofii,  
 No. 4 (released to printer on  
 9 September 1957)

Articles by Polish scientists and philosophers devoted to the role of Marxist outlook in socialist society, to the tasks and prospects of the development of Marxist philosophy and sociology, to the problems of lecturers on Marxism and so forth have started appearing ever more frequently in the recent numbers of the Polish philosophical journal Mysl Filozoficzna as well as on the pages of many other Polish journals and papers. Not denying the topical character of all these questions I would like to express my opinion on at least some of the problems broached in these articles, each of which deserves a detailed study.

A basic topic of the majority of articles is the problem of relationship between the policy of a socialist country and the social sciences, particularly philosophy and sociology, politics and culture, politics and art. The theme is touched on in the articles of E. Szacki ("Marxism and the Cultural Policy," Mysl Filozoficzna, No. 6, 1956); E. Wiatr and Z. Bauman ("Marxism and the Contemporary Sociology," Mysl Filozoficzna, No. 1 1957); R. Zimand ("About Zhdanov's Theory on Reflection in Art," in the same issue of the journal); A. Schaff (in the special pamphlet "Topical Problems of the Cultural Policy in the Field of Philosophy and Sociology") as well as in many other articles.

One cannot disagree with Adam Schaff about the need "To speak clearly and loudly about these things," and, naturally, with statements about the need of free and sincere discussions on new complex or yet unsettled problems, which are justifiably made on the pages of the Polish press. But is the problem of the relationship between politics and culture, including social sciences, art and philosophy new and unsolved? Do not at least some of these authors impose a discussion on these problems evidently only to cast doubts about high-principled Marxist theories and to revise them?

E. Szacki's article "Marxism and the Cultural Policy," written in connection with Adam Schaff's pamphlet "Topical Problems of the Cultural Policy in the Field of Philosophy and Sociology" leaves no doubt about this. Szacki criticizes the Marxist statements in Schaff's pamphlet. "Marxism of our era does not exist yet," he asserts in discussing with Schaff. "One must distinguish Marxism as it should be from Marxism which exists...the future will show what Marxism will be like." In what then consists our present task? At present, replies the author, we must unite in "the struggle for the protection of each culture from any reaction, including the Stalinist reaction." R. Zimand agrees with E. Szacki and says "that Marxism has been destroyed by Stalinism," "Marxism must be built anew," "one must start with the destruction of Stalinism."

What is new here, a reader may justifiably ask, in what way does this differ from the traditional petty bourgeois opportunism? Referring to the opportunists of the Second International, V. I. Lenin said that they make "many promises to be Marxists in the next period, but not now under given conditions and the given period! Marxism on credit, Marxism on promise, Marxism for tomorrow, a petty bourgeois, opportunist theory—and not only a theory—of temporary blunting of contradictions," of erasing contradictions between the bourgeois and the socialist ideologies. (V. I. Lenin: Works, Volume 22, page 94.)



Lenin's characterization is fully applicable to E. Szacki and R. Zimand. Of course, this is "not only a theory," since it is a determined policy with respect to culture... In Szacki's opinion "for Marxists there is no such striking difference now as there was a few years ago between Marxism and the bourgeois ideology." He considers that "due to many reasons they must not be opposed to each other." Why such opposing is outdated, the author does not reply, and of course cannot give a reply, since the world continues to be torn by class contradictions and no non-class ideology nor culture can exist in it.

In order to refute these fundamental truths of Marxism E. Szacki uses arguments which are well known to us. He speaks of Stalinization, and de-Stalinization, about the alleged loss of confidence in Marxism, and about some unclear "strategic goals" of Marxism, about the "importance" of the Marxist camp and of the problem of a "humanist Marxism." The aim in fact is the denial of Party leadership in culture, the denial of partiinost in social sciences, the recommendation to stop "training" cultural workers in Marxism, and instead to "attract" them to Marxism by indirect methods, by means of a correct inside and outside Party policy, that is a whole program of an open breach with Marxism, a breach which in this case has adopted the form of denying or ignoring politics, a form of militant apolitism. And this in a transitional period from capitalism to socialism in society, when the ideology which is alien to the proletariat is still extremely strong and in the face of the recently increasing class struggle!

How can people, pretending to be Marxists and Communists, plead against compulsory lectures on basic Marxism in universities and institutes and deny the need of Marxist textbooks at a moment when the reactionaries are again lifting their heads and striving to guide the education of youth, and when lectures on religion are reintroduced at schools?!

The question of partiinost, of the class mindedness and objectivity in social sciences and particularly in sociology is also broached by E. Wiatr and Z. Bauman in their article "Marxism and the Contemporary Sociology." Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat—they say—is that particular aspect of ideology in which the unity of objectivity, classmindedness and partymindedness is achieved for the first time. But this unity has allegedly been infringed of late. "The falsification of Marxist philosophy," committed in connection with V. Stalin's cult of personality, allegedly led to a denial of the system created by Marx, "to a breach between the so-called proletarian classmindedness in social sciences and the genuine proletarian demands for its scientific character." The subordination of science to ideology, understood as a perverted reflection of the social life, by classes has allegedly again taken place.

The authors of the article speak about a perversion of science in socialist society which is allegedly done in the interests of some social groups that attempt to subjugate the working class and carry out a policy which is against the working class' interests, and who for such reasons are bound to adopt a position hostile to social science. The authors do not explain what social groups are involved, what is the class nature of these groups, and what class interests they serve.

Marxism is a concrete analysis of a concrete situation, in the given case of the economic situation, and the statement made by E. Wiatr and Z. Bauman, due to the lack of concreteness and proof, rather recalls the inventions of Marxist enemies about a special economic and political system, which they call Stalinism, and which differs both from capitalism and from socialism.

If the authors would engage in an elaboration and justification of their point of view they would be forced to cast doubt on the fact of the building of socialism and of the dictatorship of the proletariat existing in the Soviet Union which, however, they dare not do directly.

From their assertion about unscientific sociology in the Stalin era they draw an astounding conclusion that bourgeois western sociology is ever more approaching the general-theoretical sociological theories of Marx and Engels. The authors seek similar traits between the contemporary bourgeois sociology and the "sociological conceptions of Marx and Engels," as well as traits of principled differences of the latter from the "well-known state of Marxist sociology during the past several decades."

They claim that the "separation of the two trends in sociology by an impassable gap (the Marxist and non-Marxist trends are meant—E. K.) is considerably outdated at present," "that to view the non-Marxist sociology as one which is alien to materialism does not correspond to the truth," that "no orders or prescriptions should restrain the freedom of scientific study," that "scientific activity cannot be subjected to regulations, directives and authoritative 'ideological decisions' restricting science."

These quotations speak for themselves. This is a very old revisionist idea of class cooperation, the idea of reconciliation of two irreconcilable classes, a petty bourgeois, anarchist idea of freedom from Party leadership, and finally, the idea of reconciling two opposing camps in philosophy and sociology—materialism and idealism. No convincing "scientific" arguments are stated to support these conceptions, nor can this be done.

It is true that the authors of the article point to the recognition of determinism by individual bourgeois sociologists, to the reflection in their doctrines of some real process taking place in the modern capitalist society. But is it an explanation of the real objective laws of social life upon which the activity of the Communist Party to transform the world relies? Of course not. Exaggerating and generalizing the role of individual, arbitrarily chosen and isolated features of social life, the contemporary bourgeois sociologists engage in most cases in the construction of unscientific projects and in the composition of subjectivist recipes for the liquidation of social evils and calamities.

Despite the verbal recognition of objective laws which is sometimes encountered in contemporary bourgeois sociology, in fact bourgeois sociologists deny them and portray social development as the result of free will. But this by no means indicates that Marxism has at any time "denied a priori," as E. Wiatr and Z. Bauman claim, the achievements of non-Marxist sociology. We have always recognized the great significance of individual concrete sociological research studies by bourgeois revolutionary democrats, by representatives of the evolutionary school in sociology and by other great sociologists. The Soviet Union publishes and distributes the works of progressive foreign scholars and sociologists. It is enough to name the works of Edward Taylor and many others, not to mention the publication of the classical works on sociology by Montesquieu, Rousseau, Franklin and others.

For the sake of fairness it should be noted that by no means all Polish philosophers have allowed themselves to be submerged by this turgid revisionist wave.

As long as antagonistic classes with their fundamentally hostile views continue to exist, as long as there are two camps in the world—the socialist and the imperialist—the problem of the revision of Marxism, the class ideology of the proletariat, retains all of its dangers and acuity. We well remember Lenin's words to the effect that "the most dangerous people in this respect are



those who do not wish to understand that the fight against imperialism, if it is not inseparably connected with the struggle against opportunism, is an empty and false phrase" (Works, Volume 22, p. 288).

What really new and topical problems have been raised and discussed in the above mentioned articles by Polish philosophers? Is this a discussion on topical Marxist problems which is necessary in order to develop the world-wide communist movement? The authors criticized here are distorting Marxism, falsifying it under the banner of the struggle against Stalinism. Will such a "struggle" be of any advantage to the proletariat? Is this Marxism? Surely not.

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Extract from speech by Mzhvanadze, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP, Georgian SSR to a conference of Georgian writers and artists:

Tiflis Radio,  
6 October 1957

No one can accuse us communists of fearing criticism or of the tendency to hush up and slur over defects in our work. The policy of the Communist Party is the brightest evidence of this. Unfortunately an incorrect position was taken up by some literary and arts workers who did not have a deep knowledge of life, and who came under the influence of panicky and liquidatory moods.

The whole question, Comrade Khrushchev has said, is reduced to the following: from what position and in what name is criticism carried out? We uncover and criticize shortcomings and mistakes in order to eliminate them, as a hindrance on our way, to strengthen the Soviet order and the position of the Communist Party, and to insure further successes and a more rapid forward movement.

And what happens to certain writers when they criticize? Not knowing life, lacking the necessary political experience, the ability to see the main and determining point in life, they clutch at the shortcomings of one or another workers, dump everything unthinkingly and indiscriminately into one heap, frighten themselves and try to frighten others.

Of great significance are Comrade Khrushchev's directions on the indissoluble ties between "partymindedness" and "narodnost" in literature: on the fact that one cannot set off the conception of "partymindedness" against that of "narodnost."

But it was not only abroad but at home also that there appeared sharp wits who contended for so-called popular art (narodnoye isskustvo), free from "partymindedness," or as they more often call it, from "Party patronage."

But the policy of the Communist Party, expressing the basic interests of the people, constitutes the vital basis of the Soviet social and state system.

Therefore it would be quite erroneous to think that in our Soviet conditions it is possible to serve the people without taking an active part in the implementation of the policy of the Communist Party.

Comrade Khrushchev said, it is impossible to want to go with the people without sharing the views of the Party and its political line. He who wants to be with the people will always be with the Party. He who stands firmly on the positions of the Party will always be with the people.