

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

## COMMUNIST AREA

*This material was prepared for the use of the editors and policy staff of Radio Free Europe.*

• FRANCE: Party Affairs

• 22 September 1969

### DISSIDENT JOURNAL CONTINUES CHALLENGE TO FRENCH CP

Summary: In the aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, leading intellectuals of at least three West European Communist parties have embarked on the publication of "dissident journals": Il Manifesto in Italy, Wiener Tagebuch in Austria, and Politique Aujourd'hui in France. The latter journal, whose editors were summarily expelled from the PCF for "contradicting the Party line," has continued discussing the questions of Prague and Peking in its latest issue. The open, scholarly discussion in which the journal has engaged indeed indicates a contradiction to PCF "discussions" in recent months, and the intellectual challenge has yet to be met by the French Party.

While "normalization" proceeds along its grim course of suppressive consolidation in Czechoslovakia, the Communist parties of Western Europe have far from overcome the climatic changes which the Prague Spring provoked within their ranks. In some parties, the discussion of the Czechoslovak Events and their far-reaching consequences has shaken, but not divided, the Party faithful. In others, however, the military confrontation of August 21 in Eastern Europe has led to continued intellectual confrontation, which in turn has witnessed the publication of at least three important "dissident" journals: Il Manifesto in Italy, Wiener Tagebuch in Austria, and Politique Aujourd'hui in France.

The latter journal, founded in January 1969 and edited by long-time Communist Paul Noirot, was received with immediate hostility by the Communist Party leadership, which overturned the Party statutes in its attempts to expel

the editor and disband his cell (which defied Party calls to denounce its comrade). On May 7, Noirot and his editorial colleague Guy Perrimond were banished on the grounds of having contradicted the policy line of the PCF; but their determination to continue this "contradiction" in the form of open, scholarly discussion of the ideological and practical problems confronting world communism today has not been as easily dampened. In the August-September issue of Politique Aujourd'hui, they and their entourage (which includes many non-communist leftists) have provided another contradiction to the PCF. While the latter has taken notable steps backwards in the field of open discussion of international affairs (1), the journal of "socialist research and practice in the world" has engaged among other things in analysis of the situation in Czechoslovakia and of China and the Cultural Revolution. If the PCF aspires to a "leading role" in the conduct of scientific discussion and analysis of world events, it has far to go to catch up with its step-child, Politique Aujourd'hui.

#### Czechoslovakia Not Forgotten

In the aftermath of its hasty condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the PCF has been retreating steadily into its traditional (pro-Moscow) pose on international affairs. When called upon to comment on Czechoslovakia, the PCF and its leaders (notably Jacques Duclos during the election campaigns) have resorted to hedging statements calling the problem an "internal Czechoslovak" one, stressing that "the PCF's position is, after all, known" (to which one might ask, "Is it really?"), and invoking resolutions of "non-interference" to justify their failure to re-state the position which the French Party once took on the Warsaw Five invasion.

Politique Aujourd'hui, on the other hand, is not following this "ignore it and it will go away" policy. In its round-up of international events for the months of July and August it recalls "Prague: Sad Anniversary." The column describes the period of the anniversary as follows:

Faced with a disintegrated official press, clandestine appeals called to the population to attend large

- 
- (1) Here one might refer to the tepid coverage which L'Humanite has recently given to world communist affairs, and the censorship which the Politburo of the PCF has applied to Roger Garaudy following his interview with the Yugoslav journal, Komunist. On the latter point see RFE Research report, "Garaudy Gives Interview to Belgrade Komunist," 11 September 1969, by Slobodan Stankovic.

demonstrations of passive resistance for the 21st of August. [Those in] power, lavish with their dramatic appeals, added to this threats [and] warnings, and the fatal day approached in a climate of great tension. Without doubt, it would be known later who -- and in whose interest -- organized some of the provocations which permitted the repressive forces to shoot, killing two youths in Prague, two in Brno. Among the thousands of arrests carried out it will be simple, when the time comes, to get "witnesses" who will be suitable. The methods are now quite recognizable.

Rhetorically summing up the course of events since Husak's coming to power, the article asks:

Has Husak, as some think, saved something by calling out the tanks? Has anything remained to save which can be called socialism? Today not many Czechoslovaks would be able to claim this.

This clearly marked editorial comment is not, however, the only contribution to the discussion of Czechoslovakia which Politique Aujourd'hui makes. In a section devoted entirely to this question, 20 of the "Black Book" national assembly documents on "A Week in August" are reprinted, for the first time in France. (2) In addition, the Rude Pravo article of 4 July 1969 attacking Dr. Frantisek Kriegel is reprinted, together with "Some Notes to Serve as a Commentary" which document Kriegel's contributions to the Spanish and Chinese revolutions and Kriegel's impassioned call for a new, active Party leadership in his address to the CPCPS Plenum in April 1968.

#### China and The Cultural Revolution

As in its coverage of Czechoslovakia, Politique Aujourd'hui reveals an approach to the complex matter of China and the Cultural Revolution which differs greatly from that of the institutionalized center of Marxist thought in France. While the PCF has placed itself firmly and polemically in the Soviet camp when dealing with the latest rounds in the Sino-Soviet conflict, thus reducing the possibility of open discussion on the Chinese position, Politique Aujourd'hui

---

(2) As a footnote in the introduction to the documents points out, extracts from the documents have appeared in Robert Mandrou's book Les Sept Jours de Prague, referred to as "an indispensable historical documentation."



has opened in its latest issue an investigation of the "economic, social and cultural reality out of which [the Cultural Revolution] has arisen." Unfettered by a dogmatic allegiance to either of the major interpretations of the situation in China today, it introduces its section on China thus:

We would like to open this question, to furnish if not assured answers [to the major questions] -- and who here is capable of giving them? -- at least hypotheses, reflections and material for reflection. (...) Some landmarks...many questions which remain unanswered. In the months which follow, the discussion will develop widely.

The first contribution to this material for reflection is the translation and interpretation of several of Mao Tse-tung's poems. In his excursion into the content of Chairman Mao's artistic endeavors, Guy Brossolet points out that several of the dominant themes in them have a direct relationship to the changing political and cultural reality in Maoist China: the ascension of China into the modern world, visions of the future, the will to master nature and a belief in the potentials it offers, the escape from traditional fatalism. Brossolet's essay is strictly literary, yet it is not without broader political meaning: as the editors of Politique Aujourd'hui stated, they wish to provide material for reflection, and Mao Tse-tung's poetry should provide ample food for thought to those investigating the "cultural" aspects of the Cultural Revolution.

In a similarly objective vein, the journal has re-printed portions of Lin Piao's report to the Ninth Congress of the CCP, followed by a pictorial interpretation of Mao's ode to "600 million men." In addition, there appears an article by Jerome Pietrasik on "Peking's Megatons," an historical review of Peking's rise to nuclear power. The detachment with which the author approaches the development of nuclear capacity in Communist China is apparent in his closing paragraphs:

One question remains: what use will China make of its nuclear "deterrent" when it is completely operative? Will Mao Tse-tung one day risk involving his country in a conflict at the price of his countrymen? It appears, in fact, that, as the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1950's, China is discovering progressively "nuclear wisdom": the possession of atomic weapons can put a nation on the road to political and military moderation; experience teaches that "paper teeth" can inflict dangerous wounds.

[emphasis supplied]

Though dealing with a controversial subject par excellence, Pietrasik has not fallen prey to the all-too-tempting opportunity to polemicize with Peking. And while this and the other articles on China in this section of Politique Aujourd'hui are virtually without explicit political comment, it may be safely assumed that they will stimulate discussion on China in leftist circles more effectively than the terse statements of condemnation for the Chinese leadership issued by the French Communist Party.

### Conclusions

As this review of a portion of the latest issue of Politique Aujourd'hui has indicated, discussion continues in French leftist circles on the two most provocative points on the communist map today: Prague and Peking. However, it is not the PCF which has initiated and encouraged an open, publicized debate on these questions, but a journal whose editors have been harshly censored and summarily dismissed by the Communist party for "contradicting the party line." One factor in the PCF's emergence from the political isolation in which it found itself shortly after World War II was the support which it received from prominent intellectuals, who for their part are traditionally the object of high regard in French society and whose "engagement" can be of major moment in the fate of a political movement or party. Yet the dogmatic approach to discussion of the major issues in world communism which the Party leadership has recently exhibited will sooner harm than help the PCF in the battle of the wits. Even though Politique Aujourd'hui may not represent a major political threat to the PCF, it does mount a significant intellectual challenge to the Party. It remains to be seen if it will be met.