

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

COMMUNIST AREA

USSR/29

● USSR:

Internal affairs

19 February 1969

A GROUND SWELL OF NEO-STALINIST INTERPRETATIONS

Summary: The beginning of 1969, the year which has been declared a "year of preparation for Lenin's 100th birthday anniversary," has brought with it an increase in Soviet newspaper and journal articles in which the anniversary is carefully integrated into the pragmatic political aims of the Soviet state. The campaign against "revisionists," especially the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs, is combined with suitably interpreted passages from Lenin's teachings. In the process one can perceive a return to Stalinist terminology; for example, social democrats are cast aside as imperialist agents. A survey of the articles in the press and in ideological publications reveals an increasingly aggressive and menacing tone in such writings. This is one of many signs that the dogmatic-conservative line which is presently being professed will be held and even hardened.

Under the title "Leninism - Marxism of Our Time," a Pravda article recently appeared which merits more than passing attention. In recent days in the Soviet dailies and journals, numerous articles and analyses have been published which have been assigned great propaganda value and which have been reprinted in the regional press and broadcast over the radio stations. The authors consistently defend Marxism-Leninism in terms of the mechanism of authority and the ideological and political principles which are valid today. The Pravda article mentioned above is an important instrument of propaganda and has already been reprinted in the newspapers of other socialist countries. For this reason, it deserves closer attention.

Lenin -- A Prophet of the Scientific-Technical Revolution

Marxist theoreticians in the East and the West have discussed for years the importance of the scientific and technical revolution in socialist theory and practice. This problem has also been brought up often in the Soviet Union, especially in philosophical journals and at scientific conventions of sociologists and philosophers. The zenith of these discussions was certainly the conference last year at Marienbad, at which sociologists, philosophers and economists participated.

At this conference a thesis was explained which is in no way compatible to Lenin's authority; it was said that Marx and Lenin lived at a time when there were no cybernetics, no econometrics, no theory of relativity, no electronics, no extended use of mathematic methods in the various branches of the economy; for this reason alone, modern Marxism must cope with the new, unforeseen and unforeseeable problems without value judgements and with the scientific instruments which are available and which are appropriate. The Pravda article now provides the following elucidation:

No one other than Lenin understood so well that the scientific-technical revolution would influence so strongly all facets of social life. He prophesied the time when science would force its way into all the pores of the social organism, when it would become a daily reality and a necessary element of our existence.(1)

It must have been rather difficult for the author, Afanas'ev, a philosopher, to explain what Lenin had really meant by such thoughts, for at the time that he lived he was hardly able to say much about such matters, and one cannot, with all due respect to his social utopia, regard him as a "seer." Therefore, the Pravda article can only refer to Lenin's general comments that society would develop in such a direction that the intelligentsia would gain more and more influence, importance and scope. This observation is, at the same time, of such an elementary nature that no prophetic gifts were necessary to make it.

On the other hand, it is much more important that Lenin's words be brought into the context of scientific and technical problems when it is a matter of saying something half-way concrete about the role and function of this growing intelligentsia. But instead of this, the philosopher Afanas'ev uses his remarks in order to serve up two theses from Lenin's works which have nothing to do with the scientific and technical revolution, but which, for very pragmatic reasons, fit well into the Party's concepts.

(1) V. Afanas'ev, "Leninizm - Marksizm nashey epochi" in Pravda, 20 January 1969.

First, Lenin's remarks must serve to provide proof that the scientific-technological revolution and capitalism are unreconcilable. The second reason for using Lenin's "prophecies" is even more important: in spite of the quantitatively and qualitatively increasing role of the intelligentsia, the historical role of the working class cannot be decreased in any way. This can be interpreted as a rebuke to the Czechoslovak Marxists, who have consistently stressed that in all processes of change the intelligentsia should be seen as the vanguard and the representative of the interests of the working class. They have also demanded that the activities of the intelligentsia be subjected to the control of the working class, and that in this way an organic process of interaction is guaranteed.

For the Soviet Party bureaucracy, which considers itself the only legitimate representative of all workers, vital interests are threatened by such claims, and it is forced to survive a threat to its existence by branding such positions as sacreligious. Yet precisely the confrontation with the consequences of scientific-technical development has revealed the immense hindrance which a clumsy and incompetent bureaucracy represents in the process of adequately and flexibly coping with the changes which have arisen. And in order to be able to discuss this at all, the almighty Lenin is called to duty.

While Afanas'ev ends his observations with a chapter "Lenin and the Scientific-Technical Revolution," he devotes the first part of his article fully to the international importance of Leninism. Here too he uses a revealing trick. For example, he asserts that Leninism has been implemented in the Soviet Union. Therefore, he concludes, the Soviet Union has become the only real model for socialism, which the other socialist countries must follow. It becomes then very clear to whom he is referring. He attributes the theses of "different models of socialism," of an "amelioration" and "humanization" of socialism to "anti-socialist elements." This is more than polemics with the Czechoslovak reformers -- it is an attempt to silence any "deviation" and any further discussion with the weapon which has been constructed especially for this purpose: the omnipotent Leninist way to socialism.

Stalinist Jargon on the Increase

The Pravda article mentioned above is especially interesting for the immense pretention with which it attempts to make Lenin up-to-date for contemporary consumption. A similar sour note is hit in other articles in which an undisguised return to the jargon of the Stalin era can be seen. During Khrushchev's era, such language was for the most part avoided. An important

example of this renewal can be found in an article of the central organ of the CC of the CP of Azerbaijan which undertakes a discussion of social democracy. The different explanations and philosophic observations, which are mostly new editions of old theses, are less interesting than the general tone of the article:

The current research on the rightist socialist upper class proves once again that they are agents of imperialism in the workers movement.(2)

The author of the article is especially hard on those Social Democrats who advocate "socialism without Marx." Above all the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, which could legally be active in the CSSR, is condemned. It is said of this party that it, on the recommendation of the socialist internationale, began with the organization of counterrevolution: the Chairman of the Austrian socialists, Kreisky, supposedly declared himself ready to finance this counterrevolution and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in the FRG supposedly provided some means for this project. "That's how social democracy looks!" cries the Party organ. Yet there is more to this problem than meets the eye. For if social democracy is revealed to be an agent of imperialism, then it should be reconsidered whether cooperation with it is possible at all, especially in the socialist countries.

Before Hitler's victory Stalin used similar tactics. At that time he called the social democrats "social fascists" and "agents of the Nazis in the workers movement." With this strategic move he contributed much to Hitler's election victory. After the 20th Party Congress his tactics were found to be incorrect and harmful, and they were condemned; one need only recall Togliatti's contribution. Yet these sprouts are springing up again and seem once again to be acceptable. Perhaps the leadership has forgotten whence they led the last time.

(2) D. Bol'shov, candidate of social sciences, "Sozialisty' protiv...socializma," in Bakinskiy rabochiy, 9 January 1969.