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COMMUNIST AREA

Non-ruling CPs/5

● Italy: Foreign affairs
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L'UNITÀ HAILS "THE YUGOSLAV WAY"

Summary: On the eve of the Yugoslav party congress, which is being boycotted by the CPSU and other East European parties, the Italian Communist organ, L'Unità, has published an article praising the autonomous Yugoslav path to socialism. The article speaks approvingly of the Yugoslav policy of non-alignment in foreign affairs, and hails in particular the development of workers' self-government and participatory democracy.

On the eve of the Yugoslav party congress -- and in the knowledge that the congress is being boycotted by the Soviets, other East European regimes and a number of pro-Soviet Communist parties -- the Italian Communist party has demonstrated its solidarity with Tito's independent, reformist regime by publishing an article in praise of "the autonomous Yugoslav way to socialism." The article by Franco Petrone, who is covering the congress in Belgrade,

appears in the March 9 issue of the daily, L'Unità (1).

Petrone sees it as one of the great historical achievements of the Yugoslav party that it has welded together into one nation peoples divided in the past by differences of language, culture, religion, historical background and reciprocal hostility -- "Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, Mohammedans." Under Tito's leadership, this unity was achieved first through the partisan liberation struggle and then through the development of an independent path to socialism.

The primary stress in Petrone's article is on this element of autonomy and independence:

The most interesting contribution which this socialist country has made to the general experience of the international workers' movement can be found not only in the national liberation struggle brought to a victorious conclusion but in the working-out of an autonomous way of development toward socialism.

In fact, Petrone traces the independent posture of the Yugoslav Communists farther back than most historians would feel inclined to follow him:

It should be remembered that, already before 1948, the tendency to stress its own autonomy and its links with particular Yugoslav features had always characterized the history of the [Yugoslav] Communist Party. It was not by chance, then, that when Tito took over the leadership of the party with the support of the Comintern, two important decisions were taken: the return [of Tito] to his own country, because only thus could an effective revolutionary action be carried out, and the progressive limitation, leading to the complete stopping of material provided by the solidarity of the international Communist movement.

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- (1) Franco Petrone, "L'originale e difficile ricerca del socialismo in Jugoslavia," L'Unità, 9 March 1960. The same issue contains another report from Belgrade in which Petrone says that the absence of all East European delegations except for the Rumanians has caused "perplexity" in Yugoslav circles, particularly with regard to the Czechoslovaks, since "relations between the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav parties had markedly improved after January 1968, and remained substantially good even after the events of August 21."

Discussing the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948, Petrone noted (without saying so explicitly) that the PCI was the first Communist party to criticize Stalin's move against Tito. Already in 1956, after the XX CPSU Congress, he recalled, Togliatti had described the Cominform measures as "mistaken," and had added in another interview that for the PCI the Yugoslav experience in building socialism had "a very great value."

Non-alignment Approved

In fact, the Italian Communists approved not only Yugoslav autonomy in international affairs but the even more challenging Titoist choice of non-alignment in international affairs:

It is beyond doubt that the rift which came in 1948 strengthened the movement in search of original solutions, and it is no accident that the first law on workers' self-government bears the date of 1950. At a time when the world was rigidly divided, military and ideologically, into two opposing blocs, the problem which the Yugoslav comrades were trying to solve was that of working out an original path of development which, without reference to existing models, would allow them to remain within the great Marxist family.

The results of these efforts were the choice of self-government in internal politics, and in foreign politics that of non-alignment: two formulas which characterize the Yugoslav socialist regime, and which have allowed them to take an autonomous place both within the Communist movement and within the world political set-up.

The L'Unità article went on to emphasize the importance of decentralization and participatory democracy in the Yugoslav regime -- pointedly refraining, however, from drawing any comparisons with practices in other East European states. Reforms progressively introduced since the mid-fifties had "given the workers' collectives the power to make all decisions regarding the life of the factory: the acquisition of raw materials, technological modernization, planning measures which, starting at this level, contribute to the formation of national plans, salaries, the nomination of the manager, profit-sharing, etc., etc."

Summing up, Petrone found in Yugoslav socialism "a permanent tension, an effort of daily research within the framework of the objective which this party has set for itself: the realization

of direct democracy through self-government."

Relations between the PCI and the Yugoslav regime have generally been close since 1956 -- and have grown closer during periods when the CPSU has attempted to reassert its authority within the international Communist movement. Thus, Togliatti's visit to Belgrade for talks with Tito in January 1964 was made at a time when Khrushchev was preparing to relaunch his campaign (temporarily blocked by the opposition of the PCI) for a showdown conference to deal with the Chinese. After the talks Togliatti declared that both parties had the same attitude to the Sino-Soviet conflict: while they rejected Chinese ideological positions and condemned their factionalist activities, they both had "many reservations regarding the project for a world conference," holding that "the divisions cannot be overcome through verbal proclamations or anathemas." (2) The rationale of this alliance was simple: any attempts to reassert the authority of the CPSU in the international movement -- under Khrushchev as under his successors -- threatened the interests of both the PCI and the Yugoslav regime, since both sought to maintain and extend their independence and freedom of maneuver.

More Allies

Even at the time of that early challenge to Khrushchev five years ago, the Italians and Yugoslavs were not alone. They had the support of the increasingly independent Rumanian regime, as well as of a few West European Communist parties. In 1969 they have many more allies -- particularly since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which more and more appears to have been a watershed in the history of international communism. An important spectrum of Communist parties -- including the majority of those in Western Europe -- now support, in varying degrees, the anti-hegemonic stand of the "Rome-Belgrade-Bucharest axis." The decision of, say, the Finnish Communist Party to attend the Belgrade Congress, despite the Soviet boycott and its own delicate geopolitical position, has a significance which far outweighs the submissive readiness of the pro-Soviet Indian party to obey implicit directives. Moreover as L'Unità has approvingly noted), the Yugoslavs have offset the effect of the boycott by inviting a large number of social democratic and non-Communist leftist parties in Western Europe and elsewhere. This is a further offense to the Soviets, but the Kremlin cannot ignore the political weight of these parties in making

(2) See Free World Analysis report, "Tito and Togliatti," by Kevin Devlin, 25 January 1964.

its increasingly complex policy calculations.

The PCI, for its part, has made its position abundantly clear. The publication of Petrone's article was a demonstrative gesture of solidarity with the Yugoslavs; but it was hardly needed.

Kevin Devlin

Even at the time of last year's challenge to Khrushchev, five years ago, the Italian and Yugoslav were not alone. They had the support of the increasingly independent Romanian regime, as well as of a few West European Communist parties. In 1958 they have many more allies -- particularly since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which more and more appears to have been a catastrophe in the history of international communism. An important spectrum of Communist parties -- including the majority of those in Western Europe -- now support in varying degrees, the anti-hegemonic stand of the "Home-Belgrade-Bucharest axis." The decision of, say, the Finnish Communist Party to attend the Belgrade Congress, despite the Soviet boycott and its own delicate geopolitical position, has a significance which far outweighs the sub-massive readiness of the pro-Soviet Indian party to obey implicit directives. Moreover, as I. Ullrich has approvingly noted, the Yugoslavs have often the effect of the boycott by inviting a large number of social democratic and non-Communist leftist parties in Western Europe and elsewhere. This is a further offense to the Soviets, but the Kremlin cannot ignore the political weight of these parties in making

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