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DIVERSITY DOES NOT FARM UNITY:

COMINTERN. COMMEMORATED

(See end for summary)

Why are Tito, Ceausescu and Cardinal Alfrink of Holland all speaking the same language? They all have the same problem, reflected in the main title of this paper, which is also the heading on the Sueddeutsche Zeitung's report (14 March 1969) of Cardinal Alfrink's speech to the Catholic Academy on 13 March. Cardinal Alfrink, however, first picked up the theme in 1961, with a speech on "Unity and Diversity in the Church," which was delivered in Strassburg.

Tito, of course, was giving rebuffs to the authoritarian-centralist concepts of the unity of his church and pleading for the free development of justifiable diversity much earlier, starting in 1948. And Moscow today, like Stalin then, is giving fresh impetus to the debate by celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Comintern in the old monotheist manner (the adjective was supplied by Veljko Vlahovic, member of the Presidium of the Yugoslav C.C., in his speech in Belgrade on 13th March).

Now that Stalin has passed away, Boris Ponomarev (1) has been selected by Moscow as one of the high priests of the monotheist view of the world movement. He described the 50th birthday of the Comintern as a "glorious anniversary" in a key-note article which appears in the February issue of Problems of Peace and Socialism. But even he is quite clear about some of the mistakes made, in

(1) Secretary of the C.C., C.P.S.U., for relations with the non-ruling parties.

the thirties:

Unfortunately, the negative consequences of the personality cult of Stalin and the retreats from Leninist norms connected with it were also expressed in the work of the Comintern - mainly concerning its cadres. It is well known that at the 20th and subsequent party congresses the CPSU resolutely condemned all the manifestations of the personality cult and took measures to eradicate their consequences.

Ponomarev goes on to describe the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 as historically necessary:

As the communist parties grew both qualitatively and quantitatively and as the international and domestic situation in various countries became more complex, this form of organization, which provided for the existence of an international guiding centre, gradually outlived its day. The VII Congress of the Comintern stressed the need for the Executive Committee "to proceed from the concrete conditions and specifics in each country and to avoid, as a rule, direct interference in the internal organizational affairs of the C.P.s." The objective conditions during World War II still more insistently demanded the resolute expansion of the framework of independence of the C.P.s.

These well-chosen words, at first sight, would seem to align Ponomarev with those who were exposed to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. But the escape clauses are numerous: firstly, how often can one break the rule, as Stalin did in 1948, Khrushchev did in 1956 and Brezhnev did in 1968? And secondly Ponomarev may be one of those who sees the invasion of Czechoslovakia as being necessitated by the security of the Warsaw Pact as a whole, rather than by the desire to meddle in Prague's internal affairs. Certainly he still views Soviet-style discipline as being the primary obligation for all the C.P.s:

At the present stage, when there is not and cannot be any single organizational or guiding centre in the international movement, it is especially important to defend and strengthen the principles of proletarian internationalism.

Otherwise the working-class and communist movement, the whole cause of the socialist revolution, may be seriously harmed. The strengthening of proletarian internationalism is the surest guarantee against the fragmentation of our movement into individual detachments, isolated in their national shells, and against their taking positions contrary to each other, which is fraught with extremely serious consequences, especially for the C.P.s in power.

In practice what this means is that while Ponomarev sees no need for the revival of a single centre, nevertheless the parties as a whole should do what Moscow tells them, especially if they are ruling parties accessible to the Red Army.

Tito, on the other hand, was clearly referring to the Comintern and Cominform among other organizations when he said in his report to the 9th Congress of the L.C.Y.: (2)

All the lessons of the past show that practice based on the concept of the leading role of one state or party or of an international center or forum in the role of arbiter deepens the differences and intensifies the conflicts in the ranks of the international movement, narrows and divides the front of the struggle against imperialism, and for peace, progress and socialism. At the same time this kind of practice creates great difficulties in the internal life of individual parties. This has particularly and sharply been manifest in the most recent period.

Even before Tito's speech was broadcast, the Rumanian C.P. had issued a long editorial on the Comintern in Scinteia (11 March 1969).

Any repetition, it warned, of the methods of meddling in the affairs of other parties which were practised at the time of the Comintern could only breed dissension and elements of tension, sharpen the differences in views, and seriously harm the cause of unity.... Multilateral meetings and international conferences may be

(2) Radio Zagreb, 12 March 1969.

useful but should not draw up binding decisions for C.P.s or pass verdicts on fraternal parties

[Emphasis supplied]

Thus there is little chance of "monotheism" being revived, despite the numerous dogmatists of the Soviet, Polish, E. German and Belgium parties who would like to attempt it. An authoritarian, centralized hierarchy can no longer properly fulfill its mission (3), and the centralist practices of the Comintern, which were dependent on the social and political factors of three decades ago, are no longer justifiable or even attainable in the changed atmosphere of E. Europe today.

Summary: This paper outlines the very different attitudes to the 50th Anniversary of the Comintern of the Soviet, Yugoslav and Rumanian C.P.s. Boris Ponomarev is proclaiming in Problems of Peace and Socialism that while no single centre now exists in the international movement, proletarian internationalism is still the overriding requirement. Both Marshal Tito and Scinteia on the other hand, are arguing that diversity need not harm unity.

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(3) Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 14 March 1969.