

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

## COMMUNIST AREA

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

.1206

USSR:  
Information media  
Dissension

23 November 1971

### THE SOVIET PRESS AND INTERNAL OPPOSITION

Summary: Amnesty International was recently attacked in Izvestia for its publication of authentic reports dealing with the internment in mental hospitals of persons of undesirable political persuasion in the Soviet Union. The following report provides a survey of Soviet press reports on this topic.

Considering the directives and rules which apply to the entire Soviet press, it is not to be expected that the mass media would report in any detail on internal opposition in the USSR. The present Soviet policy on this matter differs very little from that which applied during the Stalin era: all reports on opposition, on the civil rights movement and on other currents within the Soviet intelligentsia and the intelligentsia in the union republics are considered to be nothing more than hostile propaganda aimed at discrediting the Soviet system. But a policy which functioned thirty years ago is becoming more and more difficult to retain today. The Stalinists were able to employ their repressive policies without resistance, unnoticed by the outside world and, in part, by their own society only in a state hermetically sealed off from the rest of the globe. In the meanwhile, however, times have changed considerably. The Soviet Union is no longer the "mysterious sphynx" of the world community.

In spite of the continued existence of out-dated institutions and leadership methods, total isolation from the West is no longer possible, for one prerequisite for any sort of modernization and progress is the continued improvement in channels of communication among the world's peoples. Whether the representatives of the oldest generation of Soviet functionaries want it or not, the USSR is already on the path from an isolated to an informed society.

This fact helps explain why the opposition in the Soviet Union has chosen, as its first and foremost undertaking, the task of informing its own society. Its interest in keeping the public abroad up-to-date on events in the Soviet Union is similarly motivated. Thus, even the Soviet press is no longer in a position to ignore the opposition completely.

### Polemics with Amnesty International

Twice in the recent past, sharp attacks on Amnesty International have appeared in the Soviet press. The official government paper Izvestia printed the first of these in March of this year, (1) expressing its disgust at the organization's protest in the Scandinavian capitals against "juridical persecution in the Soviet Union." Izvestia referred to the alleged persecution as a hostile invention and also claimed that the signatures of well-known Scandinavian politicians on protest petitions were forged. The paper does not, however, mention the fact that during the same period, authentic reports had become available throughout the world on the "juridical," as well as extra-legal, repression carried out against opposition forces. And in the case of the Scandinavian protests, they were directed at a series of trials which had been carried out behind closed doors, thereby representing a breach of the Soviet legal code.

Izvestia's second attack against Amnesty International occurred in connection with reports about the commitment of numerous healthy persons to special psychiatric clinics:

In one report by the English section of this organization it is claimed that in the Soviet Union representatives of the intelligentsia are being committed to psychiatric clinics "without any legal examination whatsoever." The fairy tales about "psychiatric isolation for the mentally healthy" are invariably accompanied by hypocritical choruses about martyrs who have been damned to spend the rest of their days behind sealed walls. In fact, this is a matter of persons who had committed publicly dangerous acts while in a state of legal insanity [or who] had become mentally ill during a trial or following the sentencing, so that they were in no condition

to be conscious of their acts or to control these acts. They can be released if a new psychiatric examination (which must take place every six months) shows that the application of protective measures of a medical nature is no longer necessary. (2)

In an attempt to prove the legality of this process, Izvestia cited two cases. The paper reported that a certain Olga J. had been committed to a psychiatric clinic on the basis of a legal decision. Then she was released from the hospital because "her state of health had improved."

The reference here is most likely to Olga Joffe, born in 1950, a student who was declared legally insane on the basis of a psychiatric examination in which the ill-reputed Dr. D. R. Lunts participated (he was responsible under Stalin for preparing "psychiatric diagnoses" commissioned by the state security organs). She was committed to a special psychiatric clinic for treatment.

Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy published a record of this trial from which the following dialogue between the defense attorney and the medical diagnostician is taken:

Question: How do you explain the fact that the beginning of the illness which "has been developing" in O. Joffe for 14 years did not keep her from completing the mathematics school and entering the university?

Answer: The presence of this form of schizophrenia does not necessarily include a personality change perceptible in the [individual's] surroundings. (3)

Khronika's comment: "They probably claim that the illness began in 1966, when O. Joffe and some friends distributed hand-bills at school."

Izvestia's second "case" is treated anonymously:

By the way, in the case of one of these persons -- about which considerable noise was made in the West -- a termination of the forced treatment was prescribed several years ago on the basis of an official psychiatric diagnosis. (4)

This reference is to one of the Soviet opposition's most well-known personalities, General Pjotr Grigorenko, who in fact had been committed to a clinic following his arrest in February 1965. As Grigorenko still formally belonged to



the army at the time, he had to be examined by an army psychiatrist. On the basis of this examination, he was released on 23 April 1965. He was arrested for a second time in 1969 and committed once again to a special psychiatric clinic in 1970. The only reason for this was Grigorenko's continued criticism of the haphazard injustice of the security organs.

#### Attacks on Amalrik

Soviet newspapers generally do not mention the names of opposition figures or people who have been arrested. One exception is the case of the young historian Andrei Amalrik (born in 1938), who was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in November 1970. Pravda published an attack on him in December 1970 (5) and Agitator, the publication of the CPSU Central Committee, repeated this attack at the beginning of this year. (6) In Agitator he is described as follows: Not talented, therefore dismissed from the university; a no-good person, who lived off the information he could sell to Western newsmen; \$350 was found in his possession when he was arrested. N. Zhogin, assistant attorney general of the USSR, made the following remarks about Amalrik:

A certain Amalrik, born in 1938, kept up constant contact with correspondents of the bourgeois press and sold some works to them containing anti-Soviet, slanderous inventions. In one of his smear sheets which was distributed abroad, there is a whole series of falsifications with which our state and social order is to be condemned. In the course of his "creative search," this renegade even dared to slander in a hostile manner the Soviet people by representing them as a herd of amoral people for whom terms like "good" and "evil" were foreign. (7)

These statements by the assistant attorney general of the USSR refer primarily to Amalrik's essay which appeared in the West under the title "Can the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?"

#### Ukrainian Opposition Forces

The Soviet Ukrainian press, following the example set by the central press, likewise does not report on important opposition personalities in the Ukraine, nor on the numerous political trials in the Ukrainian SSR. Samizdat publications reveal that between 1960 and 1970 there were more than fifty political trials in various cities

in the Ukraine, at which more than 100 defendants were sentenced, mostly behind closed doors. During this period, two death sentences were pronounced, which were then reduced to 15-year prison terms in the course of appeals. A further death sentence was commuted. None of this was mentioned in the Soviet press.

In only two cases was the press forced to break its silence. Both had to do with important opposition representatives about whom public opinion in the West is also informed.

The first was Svyatoslav Karavansky, born in 1920 in Odessa, who had already been sentenced to a 25-year term in 1945 and who is presently incarcerated at Vladimir prison. Radyanska Ukraina, the organ of the Ukrainian CP Central Committee, published an article about him at the beginning of the year (8) which attempted to present him as a German collaborator during the Second World War. Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy has refuted these accusations several times and recalled that during the Second World War Karavansky was in fact a member of a nationalistic group whose motto was: the Ukraine without Stalin and Hitler.

The second opposition figure about whom the Ukrainian press has reported is the historian Valentyn Moroz, who was sentenced at the beginning of 1971 to nine years in prison and five years in exile. The attacks on Moroz were published in Radyanska osvita, (9) the organ of the Ministry of Peoples Education of the Ukrainian SSR as well as of the union for the educational and scientific sectors. This article aimed at defaming Moroz, calling him an agent and enemy.

### Conclusions

There are many indications that the problems of internal opposition are being reviewed by the party bureaucracy at even the highest level. This applies particularly to the union republics, mainly because there nationality opposition groups have a broader base. A list of persons arrested and subjected to additional repression reveals that the percentage of worker dissenters is very high in the union republics. Concerning the Crimean Tatars, for example, the percentage of simple people is much greater than that of the intelligentsia. But, as was noted at the beginning of this report, the problem of the opposition is one of those areas which is excluded from the mass media.

In this survey of the few cases which have been exceptions to this policy, it has been seen that they comprise a small circle of opposition figures about whom the public is well informed and about whom even the organs of Western communist parties report. The Soviets were, in these cases, forced to break their silence. In all these cases, usual methods were used: the people and groups in question were seen as a product not of Soviet society but of "enemy propaganda".

- 
- (1) Izvestia, 18 March 1971.
  - (2) Izvestia, 24 October 1971.
  - (3) Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy, Nr. 15, 31 August 1970.
  - (4) Izvestia, 24 October 1971.
  - (5) Pravda, 17 December 1970.
  - (6) N. Zhogin: "Povyshat' bditelnost' sovetskikh lyudei," Agitator, Nr. 2/January 1971, p. 20 et seq.
  - (7) Ibid., p. 22.
  - (8) Radyanska Ukraina, 30 January 1971.
  - (9) Radyanska osvita, 14 August 1971.