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SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES

Soviet foreign policy toward the newly independent countries, particularly Egypt, has been marked during the past three months by a self-contradictory lack of single purpose curiously reminiscent of the early post-revolution years when the Foreign Commissariat and Comintern often worked at cross purposes. During this recent period a new "hard" line toward the "national bourgeoisie", i.e. nationalist leaderships, has emerged, but at the same time efforts promote friendship with these groups have continued.

After Stalin's death, following the failure of abortive Asian communist revolts in 1948 and the attainment of independence by an ever-increasing number of former colonies, Soviet policy

the self-proclaimed adherence of off-beat Cuba to the communist camp (surely an ideological liability for all its political advantages) and the improvement in relations with Yugoslavia, Khrushchev's version of Marxism-Leninism seemed in danger of linking, across the Cuban and Yugoslav bridges, with the unorthodox socialisms of Asia and Africa. In order to preserve one of the major cohesive elements within the USSR and the camp, i.e. the ideology, it became necessary to apply a cordon sanitaire somewhere between Titoism-Castroism and Nasserism-Kassemism. The new "hard" line statements serve this purpose.

This new preoccupation with ideology in foreign policy vis-à-vis the newly independent countries was initiated by Khrushchev in a speech in Sophia on 19 May. At the same time, the counter-theme, which continues the pro-nationalist line of the post-Stalin period, can be seen in the reported recent delivery of Soviet MIG-21 jets to Egypt and the publication in Pravda on 6 August of a lengthy Cairo interview in which Nasser expounds his

of following either the capitalist or the non-capitalist path of development. And, those leaders who really have the interests of the people at heart...either they will understand this, or after them other people will come who better understand the demands of life."

In addition to the problem of ideological corrosion and the suppression of the Egyptian Communist Party, the Soviet Union has been faced with additional reasons for dissatisfaction with the Nasser regime in 1962. At the end of December 1961 Nasser granted an interview to Kingsley Martin which was published in the 5 January New Statesman. Nasser told Martin that an Egyptian Communist Party would be a stooge of Moscow and he intended to have none. After studying conditions in Russia, China, and Yugoslavia, Nasser said, he had decided that Egypt must reject the communist practice of giving priority to heavy industry and making people wait for an improvement in consumer goods.

Stronger views on communism were expressed in June 1962 by Nasser's close friend and foreign policy advisor Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal in the second of a series of articles on Egypt's new constitution. Having rejected capitalism in the first article, Haykal predicted that communism "will reach a dead end...because (it) has put an end to the exploitation of the majority by the minority but has failed to furnish safeguards for the freedom of this majority liberated from exploitation." He went on to say:

"The dictatorship of the Party naturally centers in its leadership. The dictatorship of the leadership consequently opens scope for high-level plots and intrigues, and ends in the dictatorship of an individual or a group of persons who adapt themselves to the views of an individual. Hence absolute power--wise or extremely mad. And with absolute power, wise or mad, freedom cannot live."

These provocative statements have come at a time of increased speculation that Nasser intends, for internal economic reasons, to shift the emphasis of his trade policy back to the West. Dissatisfaction with Egypt's trade with the communist camp, preference for Western goods and convertible currencies, and realization that expansion of his trade with African countries will be increasingly influenced by Common Market¹ relationships, are among the chief reasons given for this possible shift.

The latest indication that the new "hard" line toward nationalist leaders may become a lasting feature of Soviet foreign policy is seen in a Pravda article of 4 August--"Where are the Right Socialists of Asia Going?". Although the article deals specifically only with right-wing socialists in India and Indonesia, its criticism is clearly directed at a wider target. The article

¹For a discussion of the Soviet attitude toward the association of newly independent countries with the Common Market see Background Information "European Integration--A Soviet Trauma", 23 June 1962.

duns the pseudo-socialists who are searching for a middle course between what they call totalitarian communism and capitalism. "Often people operate under the word 'socialism' who have nothing in common with real, scientific socialism". This is done, however, "mainly to fool the masses", and their anticommunism brings these groups "into the camp of imperialism's defenders". These right socialists "speak a lot about socialism, the defense of democracy and freedom of the individual" and "announce that Marxism has become hopelessly antiquated", but "no socialism as preached by them can bring them out of their present ideological and political blind alley".

The foundation for a real shift in Soviet foreign policy toward the nationalist leaders has been laid in these communist documents. The ideological, political and economic reasons for such a shift can be demonstrated to exist. The fact that such a shift has not taken place and that both "hard" and "soft" lines appear to be operating simultaneously can only be explained by the complex and antagonistic problems which are facing Khrushchev and his foreign policy advisors.

The older, post-Stalin policy continues to obtain. According to the New York Times of 29 June and 2 July, "according to reliable reports" in Cairo, Egypt has received the first of 40 MIG-21 jet fighters. This is the most modern Soviet jet, which the USSR is offering to India, but is apparently refusing to make available to China.

The editors of Pravda and Izvestiya, Satyukov and Adjubei respectively, spent from 22 to 31 July in Egypt on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Egyptian revolution. On their return to the Soviet Union the two editors gave maximum play to two interviews which Nasser had granted on 23 and 29 July, Pravda devoting half of page 1 and half of page 3 on 6 August, and Izvestiya following suit on the next day. The publication is surprising for the attention which it gives to Nasser's detailed views on political and agricultural organization--the cooperative system, technical help to farmers, credits, etc., but its publicity for Nasser's unorthodox views on the class conflict and the nature of the socialist revolution in Egypt--in view of the above-discussed new "hard" line--is nothing short of astounding. There follows an abbreviated text of the most interesting passage:

"Question: Mr. President, you spoke about the obliteration of the boundary between classes. Do you think that the big bourgeoisie (and) large landowners will voluntarily, without opposition, renounce their rights to property and privileges? You probably know that our October revolution was one of the most peaceful--during the storming of the Winter Palace only a few people were killed. But after the victory of the revolution, after the establishment of Soviet power the capitalists and landowners, relying on the generals and the officer corps, began a war against the workers. Do you think that this won't happen in your country?

G. A. Nasser: I would like first of all to speak about the differences which exist between the October revolution in

your country and the revolution in Egypt. In your country the people brought about the revolution. In our country it was brought about by the army. Your generals who launched a war against the revolution were members of the aristocracy. The case is different in our country. The officers in our country who came out for the revolution, against the authority of the king, were, as a rule, members of the middle classes. A difference of our revolution was that we had no popular political organization or such a political party as you had. The large political parties in our country were reactionary.

The officers who brought about our revolution had no intention of governing the country. We intended to hand over power to one of the large influential political parties... I have in mind the Wafd... But the Wafd was a party of the feudalists and naturally it refused to accept our conditions (to carry out agrarian reform).

We were (thus) obliged to take power into our own hands in order to introduce the agrarian reform law. Of course we knew that this reform could meet with resistance from the reaction. But in our country the possibility that a group of officers would carry out a counterrevolutionary coup was excluded. Why? Because we "free officers" knew all the officers in our army. I personally knew 70% of the officer corps--I became acquainted with them during my service in the units, during the Palestine war, during my teaching in staff colleges where I gave lectures.

The social composition of the officer corps of the Egyptian army was such that among them were relatively few members of the propertied classes. Of course, among the officers there were people who pretended to speak in the name of the bourgeoisie and who strove to live in a bourgeois manner. Another special feature of our army was that the imperialist powers were not successful in subverting the officers. Of course, in 1957 the British gave one officer £160,000 to organize a coup, but he himself reported the whole story and the projected coup failed.

Question: Mr. President, you have introduced in the United Arab Republic a series of important reforms. The reactionaries are probably opposing everything connected with your reforms?

G. A. Nasser: Of course the reactionaries exist and oppose our reforms. But the big feudal aristocracy, the big Egyptian bourgeoisie, as ruling classes, have to all intents and purposes been rendered harmless, their economic power broken. Before the revolution the feudalists were the greatest power. Three hundred families owned 1,300,000 feddans of land. Today the maximum size of land holding is 100 feddans.

We have nationalized almost 90% of industry, the significant part of internal trade, almost all foreign trade. Export has been 75% nationalized and import completely...

Only trade in trifles remains in the hands of private merchants...Also we sequestered the property of the thousand most wealthy families. We have introduced a progressive income tax. Anyone who earns 10,000 Egyptian pounds a year must pay a tax of 90%. We have also introduced an inheritance tax.

Who then remains from these forces who is in a position to take action against the revolution?..."

The publication of this interview in Pravda and Izvestiya is very significant. Nasser pretends to speak in the name of socialism, and his words contribute healthily to the relativization of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Why did the Soviet press choose this particular moment to provide their readers with such provocative reading material? The answer is not clear, particularly in the light of the developing "hard" line toward nationalist leaders. One may tentatively conclude that the need for friends, particularly during a tense period in international relations, has brought about an important gesture of amicability toward one of the major nationalist leaders. Meanwhile, the establishment of a single line and clear-cut purpose in relations with the nationalist leaderships remains an unsolved problem of Soviet foreign policy.

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