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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

PROPAGANDA
Newspaper

COMMUNIST PARTY
Personalities

CULTURE
Editing
Literature

Conditions At "Pravda" Publishing House
In BRATISLAVA

SOURCE LONDON: A 21-year-old university student, who escaped at the beginning of April 1952. He had worked at the mentioned "Pravda" Publishing House.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Until April 1952.

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Printing of newspaper.

Our informant describes the conditions in "Pravda" Publishing House in BRATISLAVA. This enterprise employs some 1,000 people, and is directly subjected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party which appoints all the senior officials.

The "Pravda" Publishing House is composed of five departments (odbor):

1. Editing of daily press, Jesenskeho street 12;
2. Publishing house, Benesova street 27;
3. Press, printing, Jesenskeho street 9;
4. Propaganda, Benesova street 27;
5. Publishing enterprises (Vydavatel'ske Podniky,) Dunajska street No. 47a.

The output of the third (printing) department has been steadily increasing, although no new machinery has been supplied in the last four years. The output of printing machines for the daily press and the weeklies ("Svet Socializmu," "Svet Sovetu," "Nase Vojsko" and "Bojovnik,") was 300,000 copies, and of those producing propaganda leaflets and posters of all kinds, 2,000 pieces per hour. About 15 to 20 books could be printed monthly, each in 10,000 copies. Owing to the bad quality of the printing ink, sometimes propaganda posters could not be printed in more than one or two colors.

All propaganda material had top priority in paper supplies.

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For the printing of expert literature, textbooks etc. paper was often not available.

The director of "Pravda" Publishing House is BENOVIC (fnu), of Jewish origin, living in BRATISLAVA, member of the Party Central Committee. He once owned a publishing house, which was nationalized. For this he got 2,000,000 Kcs and a job with the press. In 1945, he joined the Party and since then has been a most loyal Communist. He draws a monthly salary of 30,000 Kcs and has a "Tatraplan" car at his disposal.

The financial director and BENOVIC's deputy is SCHILLER (fnu), also a Jew, member of the Party Central Committee.

A very dangerous employee is STEINER (fnu), from the fifth department. During the war he was a member of the German SS; now he collaborates with the BRATISLAVA STB and is checking on the reliability of his colleagues. One of the employees was arrested and sentenced to 15 years, because of his denunciation.

STEINER's collaborator is PLACHY (fnu), also from the fifth department.

"Sales and propaganda of books."

Our informant was employed in the fifth department of "Pravda" subdepartment of "Sales and Propaganda of Books." This is what he reports on the organization of sales:

In the whole of Slovakia there were about 37 shops established by the enterprise, and a further extension of this network was planned. There were also some sub-bookshops (podprodejny,) which have existed only since May 1951, but by September were already in full swing. The total number of these sub-bookshops was about 5,000; they are attached to schools, tobacconists, factories etc. When they first started operating, each was supplied with Marxist literature to the value of 2,000 Kcs.

At schools, reliable students, usually members of the Youth League, are in charge of the sales.

If the sub-bookshop does not show a good selling turnover, two or three months later the Publishing House asks the respective school, factory or other enterprise to appoint another "salesman." In practice, much pressure was exercised on the employees and schoolchildren to buy this propaganda stuff; often the books were made a part of the school's compulsory reading program, so that the pupils could not avoid buying them.

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A number of "campaigns" were launched to increase the sales of propaganda literature. Such a campaign was e.g. under the slogan "The Post Serves the Reading Public," and it was carried out in Slovakia by the "Pravda," and in Bohemia and Moravia by the "Svoboda" Publishing House. During the campaign, each post office received from the publishing house lists of Marxist literature, which the postmen had to distribute among the people when delivering mail, with suitable propaganda and accepting orders for the books. All the orders were collected at the post office, which forwarded them to the publishing house. The Postmaster General's office received 15 per cent of the profit from those sales; but the postman who actually did the job, was not entitled to any reward. Some 971 post offices and 1,980 postmen were involved in this campaign.

Another large-scale campaign was the "Week of the Soviet Book," followed by the "Week of the Socialist Book," then by the "Week of the Marxist-Leninist Book," etc. Total expenditure on propaganda material, at "Pravda" Publishing House, amounted to 30,000 Kcs monthly. This was spent only for the purpose of spreading the Marxist literature in the countryside. Books were brought by trucks directly to the villages, or were sold by book-stalls with a reduction of 15 to 20 per cent, which actually was below the prime cost.

Political literature.

The "Pravda" Publishing House in BRATISLAVA was greatly interested in the founding of libraries in factories, offices, etc. This was done in the following way: via the Ministry of Information, the publishing house sent lists of books to the factory managements, which then had no choice but to buy a nice selection of them. Thus the factory was forced to start its own library of socialist literature. Our informant saw in his office many letters from factory managers, imploring the publishers not to send them any more books, since there was no money to pay for them; but the sales department completely disregarded such requests and send more and more books.

Political literature is distributed everywhere, and the Communist propaganda knows no limits in this sphere. Even in the hospitals, the libraries are being exclusively supplied with Marxist-Leninist literature, so that the patients have no choice left.

Some books by Western authors, which were published in CSR, because of the "progressive" opinions of their authors, are

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selling very well, and the publishing house never can meet all the orders for this kind of literature. This shows the hunger of the public for the books coming from the free world.

The SPKK (Association of Friends of Classical Literature,) which used to publish four books per year and had about 50,000 registered members, in 1950 was amalgamated with the "Pravda" Publishing House and started publishing mainly Soviet literature. Since then, the number of members dropped to some 2,000 people.

During the "Press Week" in August 1951, all editors were given a confidential order that the names of STALIN and the Soviet Union should not be used to excess as this would make them too common; they should be used only when their greatness can be stressed.

EVAL. COMMENT: Mentioned addresses of "Pravda" departments are according to the 1951 telephone book correct. The numbers of streets are the following: "Jesenakeho 12, Benesova 27, Jesenskeho 9, Benesova 27, Dunajska 47a." All the other mentioned newspapers are generally known. BENOVIC is a wellknown Communist editor. For other information about him see item No. 5205/52 and 5530/52. His monthly salary seems rather too high. Other details about production in line with general trend.