

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

COMMUNIST AREA

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

0608

- USSR: Culture
3 June 1970

THE CHRONICLE CONTINUES INTO THE SEVENTIES

Summary: The first issue of the Chronicle of Current Events for 1970 has appeared on schedule. Although there are few changes in this issue, there are indications that democratic forces in the Soviet Union are more self-confident and are as well if not better organized than before.

The Chronicle of Current Events, in its third year of existence as an underground bi-monthly in the USSR, continues to appear with only slight changes in content. That it appears at all is a testament to the courage and diligence of its contributors, editors and distributors. It is also tangible proof of the failure of Soviet authorities to allow the implementation of free speech and other freedoms guaranteed by the Soviet constitution.

Issue No. 12 of 28 February 1970, strictly adheres to the Chronicle's tradition of appearing on the last day of every other month. Its size, however, has decreased from 16,500 words (No. 11) to approximately 10,000. The size has varied from its inception, but the latter number approaches the average figure for quick and broad distribution. The introduction has also changed, and this is more significant. The first issue (30 April 1968) began with: "THE YEAR OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN IN THE SOVIET UNION," obviously implying that these

rights were not being observed. In the first issue of the following year, the word " C O N T I N U E S " was added with its letters spaced to emphasize the editors' conviction that the struggle for these rights would not diminish. And now, in the first issue of this year, there is a more explicit and developed statement: "THE MOVEMENT IN DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN IN THE SOVIET UNION C O N T I N U E S ." This grammatical development reflects the increasing confidence and determination of those responsible for the Chronicle's publication. It is also a sign of greater cohesion, solidarity and organization among dissident forces.

Certain basic themes emerge in this issue as they have in the past. It is evident from the included documents that the Soviet authorities, whom one would expect to observe laws they themselves legislate, are in fact the greatest law-breakers. A poignant example is the latest installment concerning the fate of Major-General P.G. Grigorenko, the father of the Soviet civil rights movement and now imprisoned in a psychiatric penitentiary in Kazan. The fact that materials dealing with him are first in the table of contents and comprise the longest section in the issue is a tribute paid him by the editors and reflects the esteem in which he is held by the Democratic Opposition.

The first part of this section is a condensed version of Grigorenko's diary written after his arrest last May and his 10-month pre-trial incarceration in Tashkent and Moscow. Since this document has already found its way into the West and is available in the unabridged version, there is no need to go into it except to add that it is a very fair and balanced abridgement. The second part of the initial article, in describing the trial against Grigorenko in February of this year, reveals the injustices associated with Soviet political trials: having been found incompetent to stand trial by a sham psychiatric examination, Grigorenko was not allowed to be present in court, nor was he allowed to consult with his attorney. Witnesses gave testimony that contradicted statements they made before the trial; (1) an appeal for a third psychiatric

- (1) Professor Detingof, the chairman of the Tashkent psychiatric board that found Grigorenko competent, changed his mind at the trial and agreed with the findings of another board that Grigorenko was not responsible for his actions, even though he had not seen the patient since the examination.

examination was rejected. Grigorenko was found guilty of anti-Soviet behaviour committed while he was not responsible for his actions. He was then sentenced to the Kazan special psychiatric center "until recovery." Since the state of a person's mind in the USSR depends on the degree to which he accepts the regime, an outspoken reformist such as Grigorenko has little hope of "recovery."

The trial against I. Gabai and M. Dzhemilev, both of whom were accused under article 190-1 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, is the next entry and reiterates the same theme. "The court avoided checking the facts and only established authorship, conditions under which they [the protest documents] were compiled and the facts of their distribution." The court made no attempt to prove, objectively, that their contents were "slandorous to the Soviet state and social structure" or, subjectively, that the accused "wittingly" spread lies, as stipulated in article 190-1. Both were naturally found guilty since the decision was determined before the trial. A Soviet official referred to in Grigorenko's diary explains this supra-legal behavior: "understand, he says, the laws are not written for us; we shall do with you as we like."

Another case in point is a further entry giving supplementary information on Solzhenitsyn's expulsion from the Writers' Union. It reveals that the members of the Riazan branch of the Union did not initiate the expulsion but were pressured to do so by the agitprop section of the party's Riazan obkom.

In this and other examples of illegal procedure by the authorities, the Chronicle continues to take a very pragmatic approach that avoids editorial comment, adding only minimal explanatory material necessary to clarify information given in the documents. In their attempt to be impartial and include the views of all persons oppressed by the regime for their political convictions, the editors also incorporate views which are contrary to the liberal democratic and patriotic spirit of the civil right's movement. Belatedly, a very short but fair synopsis of Andrei Amalrik's "Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?" is given in the "News of the Samizdat" section. However, two letters with negative reactions to this essay are cited, probably to indicate the rejection of his pessimistic views by the Democratic Opposition as a whole.

The Chronicle has traditionally been concerned with the plight of all mankind, as reflected in its banner -- the 19th article of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an historical context, this means that the rights of the hundred-odd nationalities that comprise the Soviet Union are supported equally as opposed to a strictly Great Russian or even Slavic orientation. In this regard, the Chronicle cites Jewish protests at being persecuted and not being allowed to emigrate to Israel. Past issues have also focused on other non-Slavic nationalities such as the Crimean Tatars, Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, etc. There had previously been no evidence that the protest movement had active participants in Eastern Europe, but under the section "News in Brief," a one sentence item notes that two officers have been arrested in Poland for their participation in the affair of the Baltic Fleet officers. (2) There is no information as to their nationality so it is possible that these were Soviet rather than Polish citizens. In any case, the seed of protest has been carried to foreign communist soil. Judging from events of the past, the soil there is even more fertile than it is in the Soviet Union.

The tremendous distances covered by the Chronicle (from citing protests in Tashkent to Dnepropetrovsk, Saratov, Moscow and now Poland) does not facilitate data gathering. Information in the 12th issue, however, indicates that the editors probably have highly-sophisticated communications equipment. The Chronicle reports that police searched Andrei Amalrik's apartment [in Moscow] on 27 February. (3) The same issue also reports the results of the Grigorenko trial in Tashkent on the same day. The Chronicle itself was issued on the 28th. Since the editors take pains to be accurate in their information, it is likely that written rather than oral transmission was used to forward information [for example telex or even computer]. This further substantiates the thesis that the people behind the Chronicle are highly professional men. (4) The Uzbek Academy of Sciences, for example, is certain to have computer links to its counterpart in Moscow.

- (2) See CAA Research report, 19 May 1970, "Soviet Military Bissent Registered in Samizdat Publications."
- (3) A. Amalrik has just been arrested and is now reportedly being held in Sverdlovsk. (Charlotte Saikowski in CSM, 2 June 1970).
- (4) D. Pospelovsky "Two Years" of the Chronicle of Current Events, Supplement to Radio Liberty Research Bulletin, 1 April 1970, feels that "it is not unlikely that the real persons behind the publication are top Soviet scientists, nuclear scientists, physicists." (p. 27)

The recent news concerning Z.A. Medvediev is the first known case in which a leading member of the Soviet scientific community has been arrested. If this portends more arrests of such professionals in the future, the Chronicle might indeed be affected. Meanwhile, however, it continues to appear. The 13th issue has just been received in the West.

G.v.D.