

Munich, November 10, 1964 (Free World Analysis/Kevin Devlin)

The following interview with Enrico Berlinguer, Paolo Bufalini, and Emilio Sereni, the three members of the Italian Communist Party delegation which visited Moscow last week for talks with Soviet leaders, was published in the November 8 issue of L'Unità:

QUESTION 1: The entire press has followed with interest your trip to Moscow. Since your return some papers have been writing that you obtained neither a complete clarification of the changes in the Soviet party leadership and government, nor satisfaction of the demands put forward by you. At the same time...it is said that with your journey the Italian CP has "aligned" itself with the CPSU, accepting all the explanations and positions of the Soviet comrades. Would you therefore begin by telling us what your activity was in Moscow in the light of the aims which you and the party leadership had fixed for your trip?

BERLINGUER:

We have said time and again in the clearest way that the main purpose of our trip was not to seek information of a private nature on the recent changes in the CPSU leadership. We made it clear that in this regard what we proposed was rather to emphasize the need to make available to public opinion more ample information on the replacement of Comrade Khrushchev.

In the first place, apart from these changes in the CPSU leadership, what interested us was to discuss with the Soviet comrades both the political problems to which these changes have drawn attention (the struggle for peace, the prospects for a development of socialist democracy, etc.), and the more general questions now facing the international Communist movement. The course of discussions corresponded to this stand. The meetings in fact opened, in agreement with the Soviet comrades, not with a report from them on the reasons for the change in the CPSU leadership, but with a full exposition on our part, setting forth the PCI's positions on the whole complex of questions mentioned above. It was within the framework of this exposition that we informed the Soviet comrades of the reservations, perplexity and questioning which the changes in the CPSU leadership have provoked.

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On the first day the discussion turned mainly on these questions and in the course of their exposition, the Soviet comrades outlined the reasons for their recent decisions and made a preliminary reply to the questions raised by us. On some points this reply expressed very frankly disagreement with some of our positions. In the second sitting the discussion of these subjects continued, but concentrated on political problems (especially questions concerning the development of socialist democracy). The main themes covered in the second long meeting and in the final brief session were those concerning the situation in the international Communist movement, relations between Communist parties, the international conference and the preparatory commission and the "memorandum" of Comrade Togliatti.

The whole course of the conversations, friendly and at the same time very frank, allowed us to clarify better a whole series of questions, clear up some misunderstandings, record agreement on many fundamental problems and, at the same time, to recognize that on other problems the viewpoints of our two parties are still different...

#### QUESTION 2:

Could you tell us what information you gathered from your conversations on the reasons for the replacement of Comrade Khrushchev?

#### BUFALINI:

...The main criticisms levelled against Comrade Khrushchev ...are the following. First of all violations in practice of the principle of collective leadership, Comrade Khrushchev took a series of decisions, even ones of great importance, on his own and announced them in public speeches, facing the leading bodies of the party and government with a fait accompli. The practical consequences of such a method, in itself unacceptable as a matter of principle, were felt above all in the orientation and organization of agricultural production...

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QUESTION 3:

So far you have spoken primarily of considerations based on internal Soviet policy. Did questions of international policy not have any weight in the decision to replace Khrushchev?

BUFALINI:

The Soviet comrades have told us that questions of foreign policy were not discussed at the Central Committee meeting, except for an explicit and clear reconfirmation that the CPSU and the Soviet government would firmly continue the policy of peace, in accordance with the strategical line of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems, outlined by the XXII Congress and confirmed in later CPSU congresses.

QUESTION 4:

On the whole, do you think there will be changes in the direction of internal Soviet policy? Questions have been raised on one point in particular. Given the role that Khrushchev played in the whole post-Stalinist shift of policy, some have seen in the change the beginning of a return to the methods and attitudes characteristic of Stalin's rule. What is your opinion on this?

SERENI:

...The Soviet comrades emphasize in this regard that the procedure followed in this replacement was that called for by the socialist Constitution and the CPSU Statute, and therefore conformed to the process of reestablishing socialist legality opened up by the XX Congress. The significance of this emphasis does not escape us, even if respect for that procedure does not seem to us sufficient to ensure, in itself, the overcoming of those delays in the further development of socialist democracy already discussed in Comrade Togliatti's "memorandum"... All this induces us to recognize the validity of this stand and therefore to interpret the recent changes in the Soviet leadership not as a break with, but as a continuation of, the internal political line opened up by the XX Congress.

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But, it seems to us the experience of the recent changes confirms that the only effective guarantee against the re-emergence of certain dangers and the repetition of certain errors is to be sought, once more, in the more lively development of an internal party dialectic and in an ever more widely democratic articulation of the whole socialist society...

QUESTION 5:

There has been a lively reaction throughout the world to the replacement of Khrushchev, and its unexpected nature. In your view, how has the public most closely effected -- that of the Soviet Union -- reacted?

SERENI:

...It has seemed to us that in the USSR there is felt the need for more extensive information and debates that are not merely formal, which would ensure a real clash of viewpoints and diversified contributions. We believe it would be a profound mistake to underestimate the strength which these needs have assumed in the Soviet Union...

QUESTION 6:

This being the framework of your Moscow talks, what are your reservations concerning the way in which Khrushchev was replaced? Berlinguer has already said that such reservations persist.

BERLINGUER:

The reservations which we feel we must maintain even after our visit to Moscow are essentially concerned with the lack of public information on the reasons for the change in the Soviet party leadership and government. It is our impression, and we have said so very frankly to the Soviet comrades, that if...in deciding to replace Comrade Khrushchev they had on the one hand explicitly recorded his undoubted merits and, on the other hand, publicly announced in detail the principle criticisms made against him, public opinion would have better understood this change...

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QUESTION 7:

In the statement which Berlinguer made on his return, he also spoke of differences between us and the Soviet comrades over the democratic development of socialist society. Could you clarify your views on this point?

BERLINGUER:

It seems evident to me that the reservations about the method, which I have already mentioned, also touch upon problems of substance, and indicate the existence of slowness and delays in the process of the development of democratic life opened up by the XX Congress. We do not deny -- indeed we hail with great satisfaction -- the progress made in this direction in recent years... Our entire evaluation is based upon appreciation of the high degree of development which the Soviet Union has reached in recent years in the fields of industry, science, technology, culture, and so on. But this very fact, in our opinion, demands an imposes an adequate and more rapid development of the whole socialist democracy. It is not our place to indicate the methods and forms which this development can and must take...

It is clear to us that within Soviet society it is not only desirable but necessary that there should be a more ample expansion of democracy.

In this respect our impression is that there are various problems which have not yet been posed and faced in their full scope. For example we might mention the problem of a greater articulation, from the center to the periphery, of the state and social bodies (soviets, trade unions, etc.). We might also mention the problem of culture and art, which Togliatti discussed in his memorandum. Speaking more generally, it seems to us that the principal means is to promote an ever wider participation of Communists and all citizens in solving problems and investigating the causes of difficulties which arise in economic development, and in working out the necessary decisions...

It is precisely because we are convinced that the fundamental historical task of the working class of our country and of the entire capitalist West is to wage to its end the struggle for democracy and build a socialist democracy that we feel deeply

aware of the link which exists between this struggle and the democratic progress made in socialist countries...

QUESTION 8:

You also went to Moscow to carry on with the Soviet Communists that dialogue which, as Togliatti himself intended, was to be based on his "memorandum".. Could you tell us what are the attitudes of the Soviet comrades to this document?

BUFALINI:

We have begun with the Soviet comrades a discussion of the questions raised in Comrade Togliatti's Yalta memorandum. It is clear that, in dealing with such complex questions, we could not in these talks not only not exhaust the subject, but not even carry forward a sufficiently profound discussion. As Comrade Berlinguer has made clear, there are differences of opinion between the Soviet comrades and ourselves on the question of developing socialist democracy.

With regard to the complex problems raised by the memorandum, the Soviet comrades and ourselves are in full agreement in recognizing the necessity and opportuneness of a more profound debate, both between our two parties and within the international Communist movement in general...

QUESTION 9:

Do you have the impression that, as recent events would seem to indicate, there are signs of a change in the polemics going on within the international Communist movement, and in particular in relations between the USSR and Communist China?

BERLINGUER:

It seems to me very difficult at this stage to foresee the course which the debate within the international Communist movement and Sino-Soviet relations may take in the near future. It is difficult to assess the significance and possible results of the presence in Moscow for the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution of a Chinese delegation led by Comrade Chiu En-lai. We welcome the event in itself and consider it a positive development. We have always claimed that an improvement in political

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and state relations between the USSR and the CPR would be of great value not only for the socialist camp and the international workers' movement, but for the whole world and the cause of peace. We have always been and still are opposed to any deepening of the rift and to any break, and at the same time we are opposed to compromises in the ideological field....

In our judgment the whole situation is now fluid. It therefore seems to us more advisable than ever to avoid hasty conclusions and not to take actions which would precipitate matters...

QUESTION 10:

A final question. In would public opinion the name of Khrushchev is closely linked with the policy of peaceful coexistence. Do you believe that Soviet foreign policy can now be modified after the change in leadership?

SERENI:

It is beyond doubt that Comrade Khrushchev made a great personal contribution to the elaboration and implementation of the policy of peaceful coexistence... But it is no less true that...a policy of initiatives for peaceful coexistence has become the policy of the whole party, the whole people and the Soviet state... Moreover, we have found full confirmation of this fact not only in the public statements of the Soviet leaders and in the conversations we had with them, but also in their new foreign policy initiatives...

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