

Radio Free Europe/Munich
Non-Target Communist Area Analysis Department
Background Information USSR

11 April 1963

PRAVDA AND THE IDEOLOGICAL PLENUM

The Pravda editorial of 10th April 1963, which deals with the forthcoming Plenum of the CC, CPSU, beginning on May 28th, is a notably centralist document. It begins by pointing out that although in previous years the plenary sessions of the CC have been concerned with economic problems, whereas this one is to be ideological, "it also is inseparable from the fulfillment of the economic task of time." It continues:

"For example, the achievement of the maximum labor productivity, which is necessary in order to build communism, is not merely an economic task; its successful fulfillment requires a high standard of communist awareness and a high cultural level for all members of society."

The next paragraph harks back to the 20th Congress of the CPSU, which has always been anathema to Peking, and extracts from the 20th Congress resolutions the statement that:

"It is essential more closely to link our agit-prop with the tasks of establishing the material-production base of communism, an abundance of material and cultural wealth, a rise in the communist awareness of citizens, and to put an end to dogmatism and scholasticism which are alien to the creative spirit of Marxism-Leninism."

This emphasis on the necessity to provide the material prerequisites for communism, and the reminder that it is agitprop's duty to work to that end makes it clear that Khrushchev intends to continue with the "economism" for which he was esoterically denounced by Red Flag in its series of attacks on the CPSU leaders during the summer of 1962.

Hence the plenum will no doubt argue that Lenin believed in economic development, that Khrushchev is his worthy successor in this belief, and hence that the more revolutionary or adventurous roads to communism should be downplayed. None of this will improve tempers in Peking.

But the second half of the Pravda editorial suggests that in the field of culture and the arts the May Plenum will devote much of its time to chastizing revisionism among the Soviet intellectuals. L.F. Ilyichev, the Secretary of the CC for ideological questions, is to be the main

rapporteur, and he is an unreconstructed neo-Zhdanovite who for years has made a speciality of harrying the younger writers of Aksenov's generation.

Pravda's most interesting sentence in this connection reads

"peaceful coexistence in the field of ideology, which some people are trying to impose upon us, would be a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism."

One wonders who these people are who allegedly attempt to revise the CPSU's line in the direction of ideological coexistence. Certainly the writers such as Yevtushenko, Nekrasov, Voznessensky and Tvardovsky, the artists such as Neizvestny and Glazunov and many others spring to mind. But writers and artists have never been able to "impose" anything on the CPSU. Perhaps the pressure for ideological coexistence comes in fact from the masses of ordinary people and even the rank and file of the Party - the usually inarticulate workers who wonder why they cannot have fair wages instead of Luniks and who make their voices heard occasionally in angry letters to the press.

However another suspicion also occurs to the outside critic. A "centralist" line before a plenum today requires not only the attack on dogmatism implied in the "economist" section of the Pravda editorial, but also some criticism of revisionism. In the light of the Khrushchev-Tito rapprochement of 1962 and of the tactical requirements of the Sino-Soviet dispute, any maligning of Yugoslav revisionism would have been impossibly out of place. It may be that, at least to some extent, the Soviet writers and artists are going to have to shoulder the burden of hostility which Peking would much prefer to see Tito carry. This would be a centralist line adjusted to the "fourteen socialist countries" thesis. It might explain in part why the present wave of neo-Zhdanovism is apparently intended to last at least six months.

The last important feature of the announcement of the Plenum is its timing - May 28th, i.e., some thirteen days after the Moscow-proposed date for the commencement of Sino-Soviet bilateral talks. If the Chinese leaders accept Moscow's date, the course of the Plenum could well be determined largely by their attitude. If they were to show signs of a reasonable degree of willingness to yield on principles (they show none at present), Moscow could let the plenum take the course outlined in today's Pravda. But if they continue their intransigence, or refuse to appear for the talks without impossible pre-conditions, the Presidium could turn the Plenum into yet another full-scale attack on Chinese heresies in the indirect manner of the 22nd Congress.

If the plenum is to be domestically a weapon directed against the non-conformist intellectuals, its "economism" and its timing are both warning shots fired across Peking's bows.