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COMMUNIST AREA

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MORE GOULASH AND MORE UPLIFT

Seldom in recent months has an article in Pravda (by V. Stepanov, the editor of Kommunist, 17 May 1965) been so widely misinterpreted. The Muenchner Merkur today (19 May 1965) sums up its findings (and those of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, (18 May 1965) with a dramatic headline: "Weniger Gulasch im Magen." However, a close reading of the full text of Stepanov's essay, which is significantly entitled "The Highest Ideals and the Daily Cares of the Party,"¹ provides no support for the strange assumption that Stepanov has somehow reversed the 1965 budget of his Prime Minister and the March Central Committee Plenum speech of his First Secretary with one lightning blow.

It is true that Stepanov's article provides a great deal of indirect criticism of Khrushchev, but that is a routine part of post-October politics in the USSR. What is not in any way true, however, is the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's statement yesterday that:

On Monday Pravda, by publishing a strong attack on the goulash communism of Khrushchev, almost adopted the Peking line.

1) Emphasis supplied.

On the contrary, Stepanov's main criticism of Khrushchev (without ever naming him) is one of subjectivism and voluntarism. He also emphasizes, as one would expect of a high priest of communism, that man needs ideals as well as bread:

In recent years one not infrequently encountered one-sided and sometimes even primitive ideas and theories picturing communism as a society called upon solely to satisfy material needs of an elementary nature. The satisfaction of the needs of mankind is one of the fundamental principles of communism. But that is not all. Communism is being built to provide full prosperity and free development for all peoples."

[Stepanov's emphasis]

In order to achieve this it is essential to solve both theoretically and in practice such social-economic, political and ideological problems as the growth of production, the development of forms of ownership and labor, the complete conquest of class differences, the rapprochement of nations, the perfection of socialist social relations, the all-round development of the capabilities of men and formation of their Weltanschauung.

The Program of the CPSU states that communism asserts the highest human ideals for which men have fought down the ages: Peace, Labor, Freedom, Equality, Fraternity and the Happiness of all peoples. Therefore it would be profoundly wrong to reduce the meaning of communism mainly to the mere satisfaction of the "belly's" wants," to a narrow pragmatism which is blind to the broad horizons of the future and of the highest ideals." Marxist-Leninist literature at various times has unmasked such theories of communism which have nothing in common either with Marxism or with scientific communism.

Certainly if the reader stops reading at this point, he may well argue that since Khrushchev's well known belief in the virtues of a full belly are being criticized by Stepanov, therefore the Kommunist editor must be preaching a return to steel and lean communists. But analysis requires the reading of the next paragraph as well, which says:

The CP, following the teaching of Lenin and his precepts, considers the primary law of its work to be to show constant concern for an increase in the material prosperity of the people -- for raising their personal incomes, improving their housing, providing better social insurance and satisfying their material and spiritual requirements. The Party considered and considers it to be its duty to pay more attention to the daily needs of the workers and their families. But at the same time, these cares of the party for the needs of the working people, the vital daily actions to raise the standard of living and to create new conditions to this end make concrete its supreme ideals and disclose, step by step, the whole road to their fulfillment.

[Emphasis supplied]

An objective student of this paragraph in its context will soon perceive that Stepanov is not proposing a choice of steel over goulash, but merely advocating that the extra goulash already decided on (and now being cooked by Kosygin and Brezhnev) should be accompanied by a realization that the spirit too has its needs. All he is saying is what Dudintsev said so effectively in 1956, that man does not live "by bread alone."

Stepanov next turns from the Higher Idealism to the extremely earthy decisions of the March Plenum (unfortunately the Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Muechner Merkur correspondents appear not to have read as far as this.) He says of it:

Its decisions not only ensure the necessary conditions for the development of agriculture, but they also take a new step towards the restoration of the Leninist style in Party and State work.

[Emphasis supplied]

The latter part of the sentence is unimportant, since new leaders in the USSR always claim to be returning to Lenin. What matters is the first part. The main "decisions" to which Stepanov refers include notably:

- (a) more realistic grain procurement and delivery targets,
- (b) higher procurement prices for wheat and rye (costing the state about 1 billion rubles),
- (c) increased procurement prices for buckwheat, millet, rice, sunflower, cattle, pigs, sheep (costing the state about 2.9 billion rubles),
- (d) reduced income taxes for the kolkhozy,
- (e) cancellation of kolkhoz debts to the state,
- (f) state capital investments in agriculture of 41 billion rubles in 1966-70.

The 1966-70 plan therefore, with Stepanov's full support, is going to aim at the centralized state investment of rather more than 8,000,000,000 rubles a year in agriculture.

(Actual investments will probably be bigger, because the state farms and kolkhozy themselves will invest a considerable but much less easily determined amount).

The magnitude of this sum can best be realized if it is recalled that in 1964 the Soviet investment in the defense industries, both direct and indirect (i.e., from the state budget and from enterprise budgets) was 8,000,000,000 rubles at the maximum (see T. Sosnovy, Foreign Affairs, April 1964) and this sum is likely to have decreased slightly in 1965.

The Sosnovy breakdown estimated that 4 1/2 billion rubles of this total comes from the state budget and 3 1/2 billion from the budgets of the factories themselves. But the Sosnovy estimates seem improbably high, because the 4 1/2 billion figure was obtained by applying the percentage figure for defense industry expenditure in 1938-40 to the total industrial expenditure by the state in 1964.

1938-40 was a period of rapid mobilization, whereas 1964 was not. The percentage figure of defense industry investment to the total should therefore be reduced (see R.R. Neild, Survival, October-November 1964). Sosnovy's 3 1/2 billion figure for defense factory investment was reached by applying the same 1938-40 percentage (29 per cent) to the total expenditure financed by factories out of their own budgets -- another procedure loaded on the high side.

The conclusion is that in 1966-70 Brezhnev, with Kosygin's and Stepanov's support, is probably planning to invest more each year on average in agriculture than in the defense industries. This situation would be unprecedented in Soviet history, and the whole shape of the 1966-70 plan may yet be changed for the worse due to further escalation in Vietnam. But at present Stepanov's support for Brezhnev's March Plenum decisions means that there will be more goulash, not less, and his Pravda article is a plea to spice the goulash with ideals, not for a sudden reversal of the whole trend of the last eight months. If the CPSU had really decided to swing "almost to the Chinese line," it is scarcely likely that Shastri would now be in the USSR or that Tito

would be reported to be planning a visit to Moscow in June. The Stepanov article is a criticism of Khrushchev's style, vulgarity, arbitrary decisions and tendency to go to extremes in every new campaign, not a reversal of his over-all decision, which was taken with the full approval of B and K and since has been improved on by them, to work towards fatter and more contented communists.

r.r.g.