

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

COMMUNIST AREA

*Amelowska*

USSR/41

USSR: Youth

12 March 1969

## A NEW VIEW OF THE STUDENT REBELLION

Summary: The first Soviet reactions in 1967 and 1968 to the youth and student unrest in the West were quite negative. Among the pejorative terms used to describe the demonstrators were "Maoists," "anarchists," "Trotskyists," and "werewolves." This barrage has, however, met with resistance in communist circles; the PCI, for example, has held itself aloof from such criticism and stressed again at its recent Congress in Bologna that it views the rebelling students as its allies. Soviet theoreticians are presently attempting a review of the entire complex situation.

Already last year, Soviet propagandists and Party ideologists realized that their condemnations of the rebellious students in the West were causing negative reactions and having unfortunate effects. Mao's adherents and various leftist and anti-Soviet groups had taken advantage of Moscow's rather obvious tactics. The error which the Party bureaucracy had committed was, however, in line with their tradition of reacting to certain things in stereotyped ways; instead of recognizing the social phenomena, they began immediately to attack youth with denunciations from the standard ideological arsenal. A totally Pavlovian nature of this reaction was illustrated by the fact that they felt themselves troubled more by the battle cries of Ho Chi-minh and Mao than did the Western bourgeois circles at which they were, in fact, directed.

With a certain amount of delay, the Soviets finally embarked on tragi-comic activities to discover which motives were at the root of the youthful unrest in the West. For a long time, they depended on the interpretation of the French Communists, who were in 1968 in conflict with the students. As the PCF changed its position, however, this source of information became useless to the Soviets, and they were forced to pursue the problem on their own.

For the ideologists (in the strictest sense of the word) this clarification proved to be a too difficult task and one for which they were in no way prepared. Notably, one of the first and more useful contributions to this investigation was made by the researcher into sexual problems and doctor of philosophical sciences Igor Kon. (1) He approached the subject carefully and from a psychological point of view, without regard for the aspects of social criticism. In analyses which have appeared since then, the political side of the question has received more stress.

The journal Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya published in its February edition a revealing document on the new Soviet tactics on the matter of Western students. (2) It puts special emphasis on the poor material situation of the students, especially those which come from the workers and peasants classes and from lower income groups, and stresses that a great number of them must work their way through school (in France, this amounts to 40% of the students). Politically speaking, the students present no unified picture. The role of Herbert Marcuse, earlier declaimed by the Soviets as a traitor, is analyzed in a much less emotional manner.

The two authors of the article fall into the mire of incorrect interpretation at the point at which they attempt to envisage the rebellious students as an accomplice of international revolutionary strategy. This attempt is revealed, for example, when the anti-authoritarian aims of the students are turned into a protest against capitalist monopolies. According to the Soviets, an important reason for the students' anti-authoritarian position is the totalitarian claim of the monopolies to the regulation of society. Such a one-sided interpretation, which only includes monopolies based on economic power as the focus of student protests, consciously ignores the fact that the protest of the students is not only directed at the capitalist practices in economy, but at undemocratic, authoritarian structures of command in all social strata and in all social systems -- not only in the capitalist one. The two authors also adopt the interpretations of the "progressive American sociologist" Howard L. Parsons. For him, the first thing that is important in a characterization of the students' philosophy is their lack of experience and their tendency to "confuse" power with authority, direction with manipulation and philosophy with dogma.

---

(1) Igor Kon, Dr. of philosophical sciences, "Durzhuznoe Obshchestvo i molodezh" in Novoe vremya, No. 25, 21 June 1968, p. 5 ff.

(2) G. Diligensky and M. Novinskaya, "Studenchestvo zapada; antimonopolisticheskaya bor'ba" in Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnoye Otnoshenie, No. 2/1969, p. 81 ff.



With all these interpretations, the attempt is made to build the foundation of a purposeful optimism. One is given the impression that the radicalism of the students is only a temporary matter and that the students, through their contact with reality, will become a positive force in the service of socialism.

### The Role of the Students in the Communist Strategy

The most recent Soviet interpretations are expressions of the attempt to place the rebellious students in the service of Soviet goals. But a certain sobriety of evaluation becomes apparent in the course of this attempt. For example, it is only noted in passing that the Communist students "in many countries play an important role in the student movement," and then in the same breath this is modified: "however the ultra-Leftist orientation forms the total intellectual climate of the movement." The extremism of the students is a negative value for the Soviet side for two reasons: first, it is an advantageous point of departure for Maoist ideas; second, it removes from the communist parties the possibility of personally directing this movement and of bringing it under their own influence. However, the thought is expressed that the present "weaknesses" can be overcome.

The most important step in this direction is closer contact between the students and the workers, and between the students and the unions. The workers think and judge things differently than the students; yet, as they possess greater experience in life, there is a chance that the students could approach them. That leads directly to the major point of the analysis. The radical extremism of the students is a dangerous problem, but it must not be overlooked that the students also belong to the most active troops in the battles against "monopoly." The Communist must recognize this force and build it into its strategic concepts:

A close connection between the students and the working class is not only important because it multiplies the powers of the anti-monopolistic coalition: at the same time it helps the student movement free itself from its present shortcomings and to unfold the battles of the mass movement of the workers for a fundamental change in society, for democracy and socialism, wider and more actively.