

NOTES FOR BOOK ON RELATIONSHIP OF RUSSIAN COMMUNISM
TO AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

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October 1960: Russia's Changing Role in Africa as Seen
in Khrushchev's UN Performance

To understand the new stage in the Cold War, it is necessary to observe Russia's changing policies in Africa. Khrushchev's spectacular performance at the U.N. as "protector" of the struggles for freedom in Africa must be seen in the light of Russia's military, economic and scientific prowess. The American Government has yet to learn from Dulles' junking of the Aswan Dam aid and Russia's taking over financial responsibility that Russia is no 10th rate power and America is not the only "real" world power. Nor can any illumination be gotten from the old radicals or the new ones like Castro, who have swallowed whole Russia's claim to being "the first power." Africa has not, and it is Africa that has been declared the new battleground.

Up until 1953-54 Russia showed very little interest in Africa. Because World War II had created the possibility for some African countries to gain national independence on their own, Russia's African specialists from among the West Indian Communists, like George Padmore, had broken with the Communist International. Padmore aligned himself with Nkrumah. Russian Communists dismissed Nkrumah as a "nationalist stooge for British imperialism." The same held true of their view of the African freedom fighters in French West Africa. Although they had created the R.D.A., the direction of West African revolutionaries was away from their influence the minute the Cold War emerged.

Russia began to sing a different tune as the various African nationalist movements either won their freedom or were in the process of winning it. First, however, it walked quite gingerly. When it began to participate in the technical aid programs to the Afro-Asian world, it was, more or less, within the context of the U.N. That is to say, as the Big Brother aiding the little fellow not because he thought "the little one" of great aid in meeting the challenge of the Western Goliath, but because its neutralism in the struggle between East and West would leave Big Brother free for the decisive battle in Europe.

There was some change in 1956 when, at the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Mikoyan berated the lag between African studies in Russia and African realities. But when DeGaulle, in coming to power, criticized NATO, Khrushchev rushed to his side to assure him he understood his "position in Algeria." The Communist Parties were ordered to stop their flirtations with the nationalist rebels.

The story is a very different one now. It has come to a climax in the Congo. It is this which brought Khrushchev to New York. Lest anyone think table thumping brings "defeats," he better reread Khrushchev's calculatedly "freedom loving" speech at the U.N.:

"Ours is the age of the struggle for freedom . . . Stormy developments have flared up on the African continent. The young Republic of the Congo on the third day after the proclamation of her independence fell victim to aggression . . . Raw materials for nuclear weapons - uranium, cobalt, titanium, cheap labor - that is what the monopolists are afraid of losing in the Congo . . . Colonialism should be done away with . . . Who can say that French mothers whose children are dying in the fields of Algeria are less unfortunate than the Algerian mothers who bury their sons in their own lands."

Of course Russia is as interested in the uranium mines in Katanga as Belgium and America and the U.N. But, for the moment, Khrushchev has achieved exactly what he set out to do; on the day 13 newly-independent African states joined, he dominated the U.N. and at the same time separated himself from ITS policies. Under the banner of peace and "total disarmament," he declared war on the U.S and the U.N. and "colonialism."

Those who think that this has not opened many doors in Africa that have not previously been opened to Russia, or that Russia's butchery of the Hungarian Revolution will make the African accept American "democracy" so openly aligned to the existing colonialism on the African continent, are blind entirely to the tidal struggle for freedom in Africa. There is no doubt whatever now that everything - from the abstract declarations for freedom to the detailed figures on the rate of economic growth in Russia under State Plans as against that under private capitalism; yes, and even table thumping as a sign of opposition to "colonialism" - will flood the African continent. It will not be long before a School of Africanists is established in Russia, and the Russian technicians in Africa are armed not only with economic aid but the usurped banner of Marxist liberation. The extension of the Cold War to Africa will travel presently under cover of Neutralism.

January 1961: The New Russian Communist Manifesto

On December 7, 1960, the eighty-one Communist Parties that had met in Moscow in secret for three weeks, issued a 20,000 word Manifesto. The New York Times published the full English translation provided it by the Russian news agency, Tass.

The press has been busy playing detective ever since. The consensus seems to be that Khrushchev and Mao met "half-way", that is to say, the Khrushchev slogans - "peaceful co-existence" and "war is not fatally inevitable" - that permeate the Manifesto have a belligerent Mao-ist sound. Belligerent they always were since Khrushchev never spoke of peaceful co-existence without at the same time rattling rockets, but "Mao-ist" they are not.

The Unreal World of Isaac Deutscher

The only analysis which goes still further afield in speculations about the "half-way" meeting between Khrushchev and Mao is that made by a "Russian expert" who passes for an anti-Stalinist, semi-Trotskyist, "independent" thinker, but who has so organic a Communist mentality that he might as well carry a party card instead of a scholastic one. This famous author's name is Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher calls the arrogant heads-of-state meeting in Moscow "very nearly a revival of the old Communist International." Deutscher assures us that this new conclave was greater than the 1928 Comintern which first proclaimed Stalin leader, since "in the Russo-Chinese dispute - the quarrel, that is, between the two Big Brothers - it was clear that neither was big enough to lay down the law." (See the Reporter, January 5, 1961.) Deutscher gets himself so embroiled in his "it seems" and "in effect" that he writes as if indeed he was present at the closed conference and participated brilliantly in its debates!

Although eighty-one parties signed the Manifesto, and China gets more credit than the others because it "contributed in great measure to changing the balance of world forces," there is no doubt whatsoever, at any stage of the document, as to who "laid down the law." From the first to last, the document holds up the undisputed leadership of Russia.

Indeed, not only is the Soviet Union "the first country in history to be blazing a trail to communism for all mankind"; not only is it "the most striking example and the most powerful bulwark for the peoples of the world;" not only is it the greatest in the "world socialist system"; it is the first in the whole world and not only of the existing world, but of future civilization. Thus "Soviet science has ushered in what is virtually a new era in the development of world civilization."

"Independent National Democracies"

What is new is the Third World, the Afro-Asian-Latin American World, the world of non-Communist revolutions, stretching from the Congo to Cuba, which the Manifesto calls "Independent National Democracies." This third force Russia is so eager to embrace that the Manifesto lists them as second and even on a par with "The Socialist World."

Now this has not always been so. The "socialist countries," that is to say, the East European satellites and China, used to be called "people's democracies" or "people's republics" while "the national movements" were clearly labeled "bourgeois." Indeed it was easier for Khrushchev to understand to do business with Nasser's Egypt which had suppressed the Communist Party but continued to fight "the West" than to understand the strange phenomenon of the ex-colonial, African countries whom he had given niggardly technical aid, and whom he criticized in strident voice as "bourgeois."

Here Mao did give Khrushchev a lesson and the present Manifesto shows this. "By giving a further powerful impetus to the National-Liberation Movement, it (China) exerted tremendous influence on the peoples, especially those of Asia, Africa and Latin America."

Khrushchev was suspicious of this non-Communist world and especially so of Africa, if for no other reason than that Communism had no one there. Nor was there anyone there with whom to create "a popular front." There was neither a substantial proletariat nor a native African bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals who led the movement were educated, not in Moscow, but in "the West." If they had a dream - and they did - it was, not of Russian Communism, but of Pan-Africanism. For the time being, as could be seen from the first country - Ghana - that gained its independence, the leadership was closer to Great Britain than to Russia.

Khrushchev saw the handwriting on the wall. A new world was emerging without owing anything to Russia and without showing any inclination to follow its path. Russia had to intervene if it was not to lose this new world. The new Russian Communist Manifesto transforms Khrushchev's performance at the UN into the theory for the whole world under its command, China included. (China had objected to giving as much aid to this non-Communist world as to the Communist one, especially China.)

It is this world which Russia aims to dominate, as is evident from its actions in Cuba, in the Congo, and in Laos. Everywhere the Russian jets are in evidence; nowhere Chinese. Russia has the power; China only has the population. An ideology to suit both are searching for.

The Manifesto also refers to the 1957 Manifesto which exorcised "revisionism." That is to say, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the theoretic banner under which it fought for freedom from Communist imperialism. The

period in which Hungarian workers and intellectuals had raised the question of the Humanism of Marxism, which they spelled out as freedom from Communism, had coincided with the period when the Africans had raised the question of a different, a human path to industrialization, and had accounted for the cautious moves in Africa. Times have changed since then. The first Sputnik did a great deal to dull the sickening memory of Russia's bloody counter-revolution.

The Sputnik, The UN, and The Third World

The Sputnik generated self-confidence and over-confidence in Khrushchev. Here he was first, not only in the "socialist world," but in the whole world, including America. Russian prestige need no longer be limited to the ideological front. Economic aid must now be emphasized boldly, with the aim of drawing the recipient into this new world civilization. The knowledge that America will not allow Russia this unchallenged place in science only made Khrushchev go all the more out for this new third world.

The violent gyrations between shouting about "peaceful co-existence" and missile-rattling had all the farcial elements of an actor who had not learned his lines well. But none had ever learned them better than Nikita Sergeivich Khrushchev, who had written, spoken and directed them. No crowning of king or queen was more carefully planned than the "spontaneous" and contradictory outbursts of Khrushchev at the UN.

Surely no "popular front" in Stalin's day had this audience, this power, this independence, these international ramifications as the Afro-Asian world is addressed at the UN. When Khrushchev first embarked on his dramatic de-Stalinization in 1956, it was in no small measure to give himself a new mantle in the Afro-Asian world. Latin America was nowhere in the cards then,

but it would come in mighty handy when Cuba too fell into the Russo-Chinese orbit. De-Stalinization permitted the Stalinist, Khrushchev, to travel under the unsullied banner of Marxism-Leninism and thus appear as an exponent of a liberation theory in countries which had gained their freedom from Western imperialism by their own sweat and blood.

Where Stalin was wary of neutrals unless he could fully control them, Khrushchev gave them the bear hug and told them they could go their independent way. The Manifesto spells out the price for the aid "without strings." A new historical period has set in in the life of mankind: the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that have won their freedom have begun to take an active part in world politics." If any one doubts that "world politics" is Communist politics, let them read the Manifesto.

The lesson in "world politics" Khrushchev is giving the Afro-Asian-Latin American world is this: The war that is "not fatally inevitable" does not mean that the Russia of sputniks and ICEMs subordinates its policy in any way to that of "the West." On the contrary, Russia champions "peaceful co-existence" because the war that is "not fatally inevitable" means that "the West" is walking on glass lest any small war start the nuclear holocaust. Therefore, the "independent national democracies" may go far indeed in challenging the United States and Russia will do all it can to help. In a word, "peaceful co-existence" is the careful nurturing of every crisis from the Congo to Cuba.

What is Old And is "Forever"

The Manifesto of the 81 by no means limits itself to what is "new." Neither the new third world, nor the "other" world whose global domination it is challenging can make the Communists forget their own troubles with labor in both industry and agriculture. After all, the Five Year Plan that issued from the De-Stalinization Congress in 1956 had to be scrapped because the

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Russian people would not continue to sweat itself in accordance with the "norms" that called for a 50% rise in industrial labor productivity and a 100% rise in agricultural labor productivity.

The new Seven Year Plan is meeting opposition. The crisis in agriculture is openly acknowledged. But there is also a silent opposition of worker and youth in the cities. The silent opposition in the most recent period seems to take the form of not going to work at all. It would appear from the Manifesto that the affliction is not only characteristic of Russia, but is a world problem.

The Manifesto states that "the survival of capitalism in the minds of people persists over a long period, even after the establishment of a socialist system." This is the Communist underhanded way of saying that labor still resists capitalist exploitation even when it calls itself "communist." The Manifesto goes on to say that if the working people, instead of opposing the state, had a "Communist attitude to labor," it would be for "vigorous improvement of the scientific and technical standard; of Automation." Exploitation, speed-up by any other name feels just as tiring and that is precisely why labor opposition to "norms" set by State Plan continues.

One thing is clear: "the new world civilization" is built on the same old exploitative foundation: the sweated labor of the workers. We see that despite the victories in outer space, and even in the ideological battles in the new lands that do not know these rulers as their own workers know them, the problem at home is to make the workers produce more and more.

The working people of this allegedly "world socialist system" know the old and forever exploitation. They want this changed before they go out to conquer "new worlds." ICBMs may not need to be manned, but Automation machines

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in the factory require inhuman speed of men. Thus the silent opposition of worker and peasant is taking the form of not going to work at all.

The most sobering experience I can offer any self-deluded would-be Communist enamored of the Manifesto is to go on a steady diet of reading the Pravda, Izvestia and Trud, which carry on a daily campaign against "idlers who lack labor discipline," "parasites who do not know that he who does not work shall not eat," and then see that what awaits alleged "idlers" is not just propogande, but prison terms. It is clear that 43 years of Communist rule has not wiped out the continuous labor resistance.

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