

Communism in Disarray

WILLIAM HENRY
CHAMBERLIN

A SPECTRE IS hanging over Europe: the spectre of communism." So declared Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm, when they published the Communist Manifesto in the turbulent year 1848. A spectre it remained, threatening in some countries at some times, but unrealized until the strain of an unsuccessful war, on top of unsolved social and economic problems, brought the three-hundred-year-old empire of the Romanovs crashing to its fall in March, 1917. There followed the collapse of the well-meaning but weak Provisional Government that filled the interim between the overthrow of the Tsar in March and the access to power of Lenin and his

Bolshevik Party (soon to be officially re-named Communist) in November.

The conception of permanent revolution, the belief in the interdependence of a communist seizure of power in a Russia prodominantly agricultural, and the spread of this revolution to at least some of the more highly developed industrial countries of Europe, is sometimes attributed to Leon Trotsky. But Lenin and all the leading Communists shared this belief in the close relationship between the communist revolution in Russia and the success of similar movements abroad. And in the hectic post-war atmosphere in Central and Eastern Europe there were enough temporary and local victories of communist-led groups, in

Hungary, in Finland, in Bavaria, to give some color of possibility to this hope. There were wild cheers from the assembled delegates at the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party, in March, 1919, when news arrived of Bela Kun's establishment of a Hungarian Soviet Republic. There was an attempt to send military aid across Romania; but this was frustrated as the civil war in the Ukraine took an unfavorable turn for the Soviet forces.

There was a new revival of hope for expansion of communism when the Red Army swept into Poland in 1920. Lenin favored the risky advance on Warsaw, instead of accepting very favorable territorial terms which Poland, in its time of defeat, was ready to accept, because he hoped that a Polish Soviet Government would emerge as the consequence of military collapse. But the Poles rallied on the outskirts of their capital; the overextended lines of the invading Red Army were pierced and this hope of "exporting" revolution on the bayonets of the Soviet armed forces was extinguished.

Finally Josef Stalin, who gradually eliminated his rivals in the Communist Party leadership after Lenin's death and was by 1929 clearly in the position of sole dictator, had to come to terms with the reality of "coexistence" between a Soviet Government that had crushed all opposition inside Russia and a Europe where communism at that time had won no permanent foothold. Not that Stalin, as was sometimes incorrectly represented abroad, had given up the goal of indefinite expansion of communism. But he began to pursue this goal by different means, first by building up the Soviet Union as a strong military-industrial power.

This was accomplished during the 30's, at the price of terrific suffering on the part of the Soviet peoples. In retrospect Stalin told Winston Churchill, in an unusual mo-

ment of frankness, during World War II that the struggle to impose collective farming on the peasants was "more terrible" than the stresses of the war with Germany. Millions of peasants in the normally richest agricultural areas of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine and the North Caucasus, perished of famine. Millions more were shipped to slave labor in timber camps and on new industrial projects.

Another grim accompaniment of Soviet industrialization was the series of paranoid purges of old Communist Party members and of the entire leadership of the Red Army, purges that are still very obscure, almost incomprehensible as to motivation. Up to the outbreak of World War II Stalin abstained from acts of overt aggression, involving a danger of war. He was much too busy with internal changes on a scale and degree of ruthlessness comparable with those of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great.

His design was clear. It was a communist dogma that the capitalist system would lead to imperialism and war. As German, Japanese, and Italian foreign policy became increasingly adventurous Stalin reckoned with the likelihood of war between the fascist and democratic countries. From this war he would remain aloof, biding his time. At the end, with the tanks, airplanes, and other weapons which his policy of hard, driving industrialization had made possible, he would step in and pick up the pieces. If the first World War had created conditions for the triumph of communism in Russia, might not new communist regimes emerge out of the misery and destruction of another big international conflict?

With Machiavellian cunning Stalin held out to Great Britain and France the hope that he might enter into an agreement against German attack. At the same time he had made overtures, to which he found

a response in Berlin, for a large-scale deal with his fellow-dictator, Adolf Hitler. The upshot was the conclusion of the German-Soviet pact of non-aggression in August, 1939, when the crisis between Berlin on one side and London and Paris on the other over Hitler's demands on Poland had passed the point of no return.

The pact soon turned into a pact of mutual aggression against Poland. The twentieth-century plebeian dictators, Hitler and Stalin, divided up that unfortunate country with even more ruthlessness than their crowned predecessors, Catherine II, Frederick the Great, and Maria Theresa had displayed in the partition of 1775, completed by the extinction of Poland as an independent nation in 1795. Infamous as the earlier partitions were, there was nothing at that time as bad as the Nazi extirpation of the Jews or the Soviet mass deportations to slave labor from Eastern Poland and the Soviet massacre of some 15,000 Polish-officer war prisoners in the Katyn Forest and elsewhere.

The dimensions of the Stalin-Hitler deal extended beyond Poland. The Soviet Union took over the three small Baltic Republics, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. It extorted from Romania the border provinces, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. So far Stalin's tactics had worked as effectively as Hitler's early ventures in remilitarizing the Rhineland, swallowing up Austria and annexing the border areas of Czechoslovakia. Finland represented an unpleasant surprise for the Soviet dictator. Finland, alone, fought hard and inflicted on the Red Army tens of thousands of casualties before weight of numbers forced the Finnish Government to accept cession of areas demanded by Moscow.

However, by the end of 1939 Stalin could feel that he had won back most of the territory which the Tsarist Empire had lost as a result of military defeat in the

first World War and, perhaps more important, that he had preserved his strength intact in the first phase of a struggle between alien states, all of which he hoped, soon or late, to subvert. His tactics of promoting, then remaining aloof from the struggle failed in the end, because Germany was stronger, and France weaker, than he had foreseen.

Instead of a bloody stalemate in Western Europe, as in the first World War, there was a swift collapse of France and a subsequent confrontation of the two totalitarian giants. Stalin tried desperately to appease Hitler in the last weeks before the German invasion, punctiliously keeping up deliveries of valuable raw materials, withdrawing recognition with indecent haste from the embassies of countries which Hitler had overrun. But these efforts were all in vain and from June, 1941, the Soviet dictator found himself locked in a life-and-death struggle with the Nazi empire. He emerged from this ordeal victorious, partly because of the stoical courage with which Russians, despite his tyranny, fought for their native land, partly because of large-scale aid from the Western powers.

And the final military breakdown of Germany in the West and Japan in the East in 1945, together with the craven acquiescence of America and Great Britain in Stalin's designs in Eastern and Central Europe, opened up new prospects for Soviet imperialist expansion, of which Stalin was quick to take advantage. He retained all the fruits of his iniquitous deal with Hitler at the expense of Poland and the Baltic States. And by the device of the satellite state, the subordinate communist dictatorship closely bound to Moscow, he extended Soviet power in Europe far beyond the dreams of the most ambitious Tsar.

By 1948, the hundredth anniversary of

the publication of the Communist Manifesto, the "spectre" of Marx and Engels had become a flesh-and-blood terrifying reality. Stalin's stooge Prime Minister Molotov could boast with some reason that all roads led to communism. At that time Stalin's orders were as effective in Warsaw, Prague, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, East Berlin as in Kiev, Kharkov, Samara, Saratov, Novosibirsk and Vladivostok. A vast area of Eastern and Central Europe was governed by Communist local regimes which were heavily infiltrated with Soviet agents, especially in the police and propaganda departments. Europe outside the Iron Curtain was still weak and stricken, with large and influential Communist parties capable of paralyzing economic activity in France and Italy. Allied policy in Germany was still predominantly negative. Greece was racked by Communist-inspired civil war, organized and supplied from neighboring Balkan states.

The United States had escaped the hardships and shortages of the postwar years in Europe. And it still monopolized the nuclear bomb. But its military establishment had been cut down drastically and the American people, drugged with wartime propaganda about the Soviet Union as a noble ally and a slightly misunderstood democracy, was still rubbing its eyes in bewilderment over a situation in which a new enemy had appeared on the horizon.

What was perhaps most formidable about the communist image at that time was the apparent invulnerability of its technique of government by a mixture of ruthless terrorism with high-powered propaganda. The hypnotism of Muscovite absolute power operated even in countries which were outside the range of Soviet military and police power. A nod from a French Communist, Jacques Duclos, was sufficient to replace Earl Browder with William Z. Foster as leader of the Ameri-

can Communist Party. Secessionist movements in Communist parties in the United States and Western Europe led to no important results. The situation was all the more discouraging because symptoms of the impending military and political collapse of the Chinese Nationalist Government were already visible. A single Communist empire of awe inspiring proportions, extending from Canton to Stettin, from the South China to the Baltic Sea seemed an imminent prospect.

Yet in this year 1948 two events occurred which showed that the prospect was not as bleak as it might have seemed. One was the break between Tito's regime in Yugoslavia and the Soviet empire. The first reaction in the noncommunist world was one of incredulity. It was widely assumed that either the break was a fiction or that Tito would be "liquidated" as many heretical Communists, Soviet and foreign, had been in the past.

Both assumptions proved incorrect. Moscow operated against Tito with all means short of war—economic boycott, attempts at internal subversion, provoked border incidents. But not for nothing was Tito an old hand at the secret of getting and keeping power, a Moscow-trained Communist. His personal dictatorship held firm. The Muscovite agents were ferreted out, shot or imprisoned. As for the attitude of the noncommunist majority of the peoples of Yugoslavia, this was perhaps foreshadowed in the remark of England's Charles II when his brother and heir-apparent James urged him to take more precautions against assassination.

"They will never kill *me*, James, to make *you* king."

Even those who had most reason to hate Tito would have seen little gain in his replacement by a Moscow *Gauleiter*. It was nationalism, the sense of national independence and interest that furnished the

motive power for Tito's secession from Stalin's empire, a secession which he made good and which was recognized when Stalin's successors paid a visit of reconciliation to Belgrade.

The second important event of 1948 was the successful resistance to the Soviet attempt to starve West Berlin into submission by means of a huge air lift of food and other essential supplies, mainly American, with some help from Great Britain. This plus American aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947 marked the first definite check to Stalin's incursion into Europe and also was the beginning of a more cooperative relationship between Americans and Germans, reaching its climax in the establishment of the German Federal Republic and the admission of Germany as a partner in NATO.

The Tito secession was the first sign that the unity of the communist bloc might disintegrate, that a nation could be communist-ruled without being subservient to Moscow. Yugoslavia, of course, was little more than a pawn on the chess-board of world politics. Yet its defection led to one immediate result, the collapse of the Greek communist insurrection, which had been receiving support from across the Yugoslav frontier. The defection introduced new limitations and question marks into Soviet strategic planning. It touched off small ripples of doubt and discontent in other Soviet satellite states.

Stalin's death in March, 1953, was followed by signs of a thaw both in the terrorist methods of rule in the Soviet Union and in the complete domination from Moscow of the Soviet satellite states. Many political prisoners were released; many who had been arbitrarily executed were given posthumous rehabilitation; the appallingly brutal conditions in the network of compulsory labor camps were alleviated. A curb was put on the former practices of

wholesale nocturnal arrests of suspects and mass "liquidations" of whole ethnic and economic groups.

The first symptom of unrest in the Soviet empire was the spontaneous general strike that paralyzed the administration of the Soviet Zone in Germany in June, 1953. Russian tanks crushed the freedom movement. In 1954 a similar outbreak in Poznan led to some lightening of terrorist police methods in Poland. In 1956 there was a double crisis of Soviet imperialism. In Poland Wlawa Gomułka, a maverick Polish Communist who had been imprisoned on the suspicion of Titoist heresies took over the leadership of the Polish Communist Party. A serious armed clash was averted by a very narrow margin and Poland acquired not full independence but an elimination of the cruder forms of direct Russian control and supervision, especially obnoxious because of the Russian role as the traditional oppressor.

Matters went still further in Hungary, where there was, in October-November, 1956, a heroic but hopelessly uneven revolt of the Hungarian people, with workers and students taking a leading part, against the Soviet military occupation. The movement was crushed for lack of support from outside. But tens of thousands of Hungarians who fled to America and various European countries were new witnesses against the tyranny of communism. And the cynical, ruthless suppression of what was obviously a popular rebellion aroused doubts and misgivings, even among hard-core communists. The example of Hungary was a powerful factor in winning the assent of the German people to the necessity of rearmament.

The disarray in which communism finds itself at the present time has its roots in two main causes. There has been a dramatic breach between the two giants of the communist world, the Soviet Union and

Red China. This has created more possibility for maneuvering in the direction of larger political and economic autonomy in the Soviet empire in Europe.

Because of the secrecy with which Soviet-Chinese relations were surrounded before the breach became too wide to be papered over, it is difficult to set with absolute precision the moment when Soviet-Chinese relations shifted from friendly alliance to coolness leading to open hostility. The exclusion of the Soviet Union as a "white" European power from the conference of Afro-Asian states at Bandung, in Indonesia, in 1955 may have been one omen of the shape of things to come. Khrushchev's belated repudiation of Stalin in 1956 did not sit well with Peiping. The Chinese Communist leaders also seem to have resented the turn of events in 1958, when Khrushchev failed to support them with anything but words when they launched their bombardment of the offshore islands, Quemoy and Matsu.

How far the rift had gone by 1960 was evident from the Soviet action in abruptly recalling all Soviet specialists who were working on new industrial projects in China. The specialists packed up their blueprints and left the Chinese with the problem of completing scores of partially finished installations without the aid of foreign advisers. Periodically there were attempts to restore amicable relations; but these were quickly followed by new bitter recriminations. It would take a book to describe all the details of this great communist schism; but two quotations show how bitter personal and national relations between Moscow and Peiping had become by 1963. An excerpt from a Soviet statement of October 18 reads as follows:

"Serious differences . . . are being used in Peiping to unfold a campaign against the fraternal parties, unprecedented in its scope which is sharply hostile in tone . . .

All the resources at the disposal of a large state have been set in motion to wage a struggle within the Communist movement. . . . Enormous harm is being done and every Communist is obliged to do everything possible to stop the development of events in the direction Peiping wants to give them. If this is not done in time, the consequences for the entire communist movement may be extremely grave."

The Chinese response, in tones of heavy handed revolutionary satire, was even sharper and couched in terms of personal abuse of Khrushchev:

"The United States imperialists have not become beautiful angels in spite of Khrushchev's Bible-reading and psalm-singing. They have not turned into compassionate Buddhas in spite of Khrushchev's prayers and incense burning. However hard Khrushchev tries to serve the United States imperialists, they show not the slightest appreciation . . . They continue to slap Khrushchev in the face and reveal the bankruptcy of his ridiculous theories prettifying imperialism."

Here is a clue to one element in the schism. The Chinese represent themselves as the orthodox Leninist revolutionaries, convinced of the inevitability of war until "imperialism" is consumed from the face of the earth. By contrast they depict the Soviet leadership as bogged in a swamp of "revisionism," playing with theories of "co-existence" and cooperation with the capitalist powers. Moscow is especially sensitive to this line of attack, because it opens up the possibility of driving a wedge through the whole international communist movement.

Already the Chinese have won over the powerful Indonesian Communist Party to their viewpoint and Chinese influence seems predominant in the parties of North Korea and North Vietnam and, curiously enough, New Zealand. Peiping is vigorously contesting Moscow's influence in Japan

and India and has created splinter groups in France and Belgium. Little Albania is a Chinese satellite in Europe. Slyly using appeals to race and color, the Chinese have been pushing into Africa and their influence has been noticeable in the revolt in the eastern Congo.

Khrushchev's last phase in power was darkened by the persistent feud with Peiping. He devoted much time and energy to trying to organize a conference of international communist parties which would drum Red China out of the movement; but met only a lukewarm response. At first there was speculation that his abrupt removal from power on October 15 might be a prelude to reconciliation between his successors and Mao Tse-tung. But events have not taken this course. The Chinese asking price was apparently too high and Brezhnev and Kosygin were no more willing than Khrushchev to sacrifice Soviet interests for Chinese, to risk involvement in nuclear war, for instance, in order to support Chinese aspirations for the conquest of Formosa.

The doctrinal feud is only one aspect of the schism. There is also the inevitable conflict of interests between two great powers, one, the Soviet Union, essentially a "have," the other, China, a "have not." Not overpopulated and with enormous undeveloped territories and resources, its western frontier projected far into historic Europe by its belt of satellite states, the Soviet Union has nothing to gain and much to lose from aggressive war. Its national objective, whoever may be in power in the Kremlin, is, if possible, to make its cumbersome state-controlled economy work more efficiently, to make its standard of living compare less unfavorably with that of the "capitalist" countries.

China is a much younger revolutionary state (fifteen years old, as the Soviet Union is approaching fifty) with unsatisfied

territorial ambitions, of which the most obvious is the acquisition of Formosa. Large as it looks on the map, China is overpopulated in relation to its arable land and its rulers look hungrily to the rich rice-lands of southeastern Asia. Another factor exacerbating the feud with Moscow is that China has been carrying on subversive activity in Outer Mongolia, once a part of China, now a Soviet satellite, and has voiced claims to a considerable amount of territory in Siberia and Central Asia that once belonged to the Chinese Empire.

On nationalist and ideological grounds the breach seems to have reached the point of no return and this has stimulated some cautious groping for more freedom from Moscow domination in Eastern Europe, especially in Romania. Here Western commercial and cultural contacts are being sought and the earlier subservience in all matters to Soviet models is being discarded. And, despite the ruthless crushing of the freedom movement in 1956, Hungary is now moving in the same direction. The Czechs are the most cautious of all the subject peoples of the Soviet satellite area. But Czechoslovakia, with an economy that ranks with East Germany's as the most advanced in that area, has experienced a severe crisis of stagnation and is now experimenting with a new economic system which gives individual enterprises much more freedom from rigid state-planning directions.

And this brings one to the second factor in the present disarray of communism. Almost half a century after it was established, the system has simply not made good economically. The resident Moscow correspondent of *The New Statesman*, a British weekly of left-wing sympathies, recently gave the following candid account of living conditions in Moscow, which has

always been better supplied than the Soviet provincial towns:

"Russia is still the only major world power which cannot provide an adequate supply of fresh milk, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables for its population. Distribution is still shocking. The quality of the meat makes it fit usually only for stewing. The waiting time for a telephone is from three to five years, depending on where you live. Buses, trains and the underground are hopelessly overcrowded at most times of day, making traveling to work and back much more of a nightmare than the rush hour in London. Laundries and shoe repair shops perpetually ruin or lose things and the consumer has little redress. The housewife has fewer laborsaving devices than anywhere else in the rest of Europe, although a great number of women go out to work."

And, what with the inflow of foreign tourists, foreign broadcasts, and a limited amount of permitted Soviet travel abroad, the Soviet citizen is becoming more and more aware of how comparatively low his living standard is. So, and several of their public statements bear out this point, Brezhnev and Kosygin face an urgent problem of creating more tolerable living conditions. And it is in the field of internal economic policy that they have so far made the most visible departures from Khrushchev's policies, indicating that failure on the home economic front may not have been the least of the causes of Khrushchev's downfall.

Khrushchev wanted to tighten the control of the Communist Party over every aspect of industrial and agricultural production. His successors propose that the Party stick to the task of "general political

guidance" and leave management to the new trained-professional managerial class. Khrushchev had been cutting back on the limited plots of land available for private farming. These cuts have been repealed. There is now an apparent intention to give a broader trial to the ideas of Professor Yevsei Liberman, who wants to give the state-run industrial plants more autonomy and initiative, and more incentives and discipline, by introducing a freer pricing and marketing system.

So communism is in disarray on two counts. Its monolithic unity has been disrupted beyond hope of repair. The prospect that the Soviet Union, in Stalin's boastful words, will overtake and outstrip America is merely laughable. This does not mean that all is well with the world, from the standpoint of the outlook for a free and humane society. Many shadows have been cast, by General de Gaulle and others, on the vision of a Euro-Atlantic union, secure against attack and potent for economic and scientific progress. The question of how to effectively counter communist guerrilla subversion still awaits an answer. This is also true as regards the successful transition of many former colonies to conscious, responsible nationhood. The replacement of cooperation by hostile rivalry in Soviet-Chinese relations in certain circumstances can lead to new dangers.

But the spectre of world communism triumphant as a result of the steady snowballing of a gigantic unified empire has proved a mirage. And, on balance, the world is a safer place with the Soviet Union and China fighting each other as well as the noncommunist societies.