

■ Is it: Prosperity for the Soviet Union first — and good luck to the rest of the comrades?

## THE SHATTERED MONOLITH

EDWARD CRANKSHAW

Fifteen years ago the Western World deployed itself to meet a very real menace. This was the menace of Russia under Stalin, but it was called, confusingly, the Communist challenge.

When Stalin died, in 1953, that menace died with him — but it has taken 10 years for this fact to be brought home to us. Three years later Stalin and Stalinism were denounced by Khrushchev, who, at the same time, rejected Lenin's teaching about the inevitability of war and violent revolution. At that point the international Communist movement, which had been held together only by Muscovite single-mindedness, began to fall apart at the seams.

The idea of the Communist monolith was always a simplification. It distorted, perhaps stultified, political thinking in the West for a

show every sign of oversimplifying the Sino-Soviet quarrel as we once oversimplified the Communist menace itself. Already people who, until a few months ago, refused to believe that there was a rupture of any kind are busily dividing the Communist world into pro-Russian and pro-Chinese factions, and totting up the scores: the French Communists, we are told, are 100 per cent pro-Russians; the Malaysians, 100 per cent pro-Chinese, the Brazilians, all 50,000 of them, 50 per cent pro-Chinese, and 50 per cent pro-Russian. And so on.

### *Private aims*

The assumption underlying these statistics appears to be that the pro-Russian and pro-Chinese parties, or factions, are being used as passive instruments for the

furtherance of the aims of Moscow and Peking. In fact, long before the Sino-Soviet quarrel began, at least some of the fraternal parties were using Moscow to further their own private aims; now they are using both Moscow and Peking.

One simple example, to set the tone. The Rumanian comrades have lately been making inviting gestures in the direction of China, which is a long way, and defiant gestures in the direction of Russia, which is just across the border. Nobody in his senses would believe for one moment that Mr. Gheorghiu Dej and his colleagues, desperately trying to make the Rumanian economy work, are eager to join with the Chinese in a militant revolutionary crusade, conducted in the teeth of Soviet disapproval, to shatter the last bastions of imperialism and capture Asia, Africa, Latin America for the cause.

Like all Eastern or Central European Communists, the Rumanians want, and need, a quiet life, not a nuclear holocaust. They are not interested in the outer world,

except as an outlet for trade. Their object in appearing to flirt with Peking has no other purpose than to warn the Russians of the present limits of Moscow's authority.

The Communist world, they are saying in effect, is not what it was. This is no time for you, Nikita Sergeievich, to start bulldozing our legitimate national aspirations. You could do this once upon a time because you had all power; we lay in your shadow, and there was nowhere else for us to go. Now there is somewhere else for us to go.

Moscow lost its virtue as the headquarters of a coherent and disciplined international movement when, with the death of Stalin, it lost the will and the strength to conduct itself imperially. When it comes to imposing an alien system on weak neighbors, there is no stable halfway house between ruthless discipline and chaos. The public defection of China from the Muscovite cause (in which she was never seriously joined) merely highlights chaos.

The first thing the West has to do is to start looking

at the world as it is and to think of it in terms of peoples, races, nations (ancient and newly emergent) instead of in terms of blocs. Communism means one thing in Italy, another in East Germany, another in Poland, another in Sweden; something quite else in Indonesia, in Venezuela, in Syria.

Stalin ruled by rigid discipline. In the interests of the Soviet Union, Russian power and Russian gold were used to subvert idealists, rebels and intellectual thugs all over the world and to discipline them into fifth columnists active in the cause of Moscow. Those who queried Stalin's orders or produced ideas of their own were expelled from the brotherhood, killed.

Of course the idea of international Communism, of the dynamic of world revolution, existed. It burned with a smoky flame in innumerable souls, some noble, some envious, some power-seeking, some merely destructive, all conspiratorial by nature. Some of these were Russians, a rapidly decreasing band; but Stalin and his

functionaries were not among them.

This is not to say that their way of thinking was not heavily conditioned by ideas received from Lenin. It was. But the ends to which they applied this way of thinking were not Leninist ends; their assumption of absolute power inside the Soviet Union was facilitated by the almost schizoid dualism of Russian people.

Lenin himself was driven by dreams of international brotherhood — until, with the responsibilities and harassments of power upon him, he was forced increasingly to identify himself with Russian ends and to adapt himself to Russian, as distinct from Marxist, methods. But the dream was real enough, and for a long time it had nothing to do with nationalism or Russian power. All the peoples of the world were to advance on lines evoked in a clearcut historical formula, involving violent revolution and the temporary dictatorship of the proletariat. After that (here the vision was hazy, but all the more exciting for it) they were to dwell together in

concord, according to their different national habits, each for each and all for all. In this dream, which did not last long in the Soviet Union, there was indeed a Communist menace — not a Russian menace as later, under Stalin, but a world-wide series of linked internal menaces to the then ruling classes of all lands.

#### *Seamier side*

The Leninist dream still lingers on in some quarters (not Russia; not, one would say, China; and not noticeably among the leading cadres of the 89 fraternal parties), but it does not cut much ice. The remarkable thing is that it survived Stalin at all.

Khrushchev discourses upon it with warmth, enthusiasm and, sometimes, wit. "We shall bury you!" he cheerfully exclaims. But this prophecy is full of semantic pitfalls. Who are "we"? And who are "you"? If by "you" Khrushchev means a whole range of entrepreneurs, from the late Mr. Rachman up to quite a height, symbolizing the seamier side of what we optimistically call the capitalist system, then how

right he is: but then "we" includes all the rest of us.

If by "we" he means the Soviet bloc — the Warsaw Pact Powers — and "you" the Western Alliance, then he is asking for trouble and he knows it. But if he means by "we" Moscow Communism and by "you" everything against it, then the West has an imposing new comrade in arms disposing of 650 million souls, increasing at the rate of 30 million a year.

It is more to the point to ask what Khrushchev means by Communism, and only he can supply the answer. His statements, as so far delivered do not take us very far. Lenin's apocalyptic dream appears in his mind to have been reduced to the quest for material abundance, leisure, and culture to fill in time: the kind of thing British Prime Ministers are rebuked for in the leader-pages of *The Times*. A menace to the higher values it may well be; but it is not what we mean by the Communist menace, or even the Russian menace.

Nor is it what many of the fraternal parties mean by

Communism. The Chinese have shown themselves especially bitter and contemptuous of Khrushchev's unexpressed slogan: Prosperity for the Soviet Union first — and good luck to the rest of the comrades! And Chinese criticism here is sharply echoed by poor, weak and aspiring people who inhabit backward areas over the greater part of the globe.

### *No Rome*

Not for them the dream of "catching up with America": many of them would settle for a loaf of bread. The spectacle of Khrushchev presiding comfortably over one of the "have" Powers, and arranging the world to fit in with his personal prosperity drive, does not appeal. To the have-nots, Chinese methods seem to have more to offer. But this is not to say that the fraternal comrades wish to exchange regimentation in the interests of Soviet prosperity and power for regimentation in the interest of Chinese imperial ambitions.

If the Communist monolith never really existed, the current image of two rival

Communist Romes is equally misleading. There is now no Rome at all.

The focus of interest has shifted from Moscow and Peking to the individual fraternal parties all over the world, with more to come. Each has to be studied in the context of its own historical and geographical setting and tackled accordingly. But we know little about them.

For example, we know that the Brazilian party which, though small, used to be so brilliantly organized under that most intelligent and perceptive of Communist leaders, Prestes, is now split right down the middle. We know that his rival, Grabois, is leading a militant, pro-Chinese wing, which has now captured half the party, on a rapidly anti-American ticket.

But we do not know to what extent Grabois is a fanatic, a convinced believer in Mao's Road, recoiling in righteous indignation from the sophisticated gradualism of Prestes and looking for support from the angry, the impatient, the desperate who see their only hope in violent action soon or whether he is using China as a stalk-

ing-horse in a personal bid to steal power from Prestes.

If it comes to that, we do not know whether Prestes himself, so skilfully arguing Khrushchev's line, regards the Russian comrades as the guardians of the true faith, or as Gringo barbarians useful to Brazilian or Latin-American Communism because they have money to burn and an armament that frightens the Americans. The gentleness and sophistication of Prestes's speech at the Moscow conference of November, 1960, warmly supporting Khrushchev against the Chinese, was in itself a reproach to the crudity of Russian methods.

At the same meeting, Jesu Faria of Venezuela, who also supported the Russians, nevertheless indicated clearly that his respect for Khrushchev stopped well this side of idolatry. He supported Moscow because he thought Khrushchev's policies more intelligent in the atomic age than Mao's, and particularly because the Chinese had been actively engaged in trying to undermine his own authority over the Venezuelan party (oil again?). But he thought

that many of the speakers at that meeting had been altogether too uncritical of the Soviet comrades, who he said, had themselves committed many errors. He hoped that the Russians would be clever enough in future to devise a system that would put an end to inter-party quarrelling and prevent future schisms.

#### *Exasperation*

These remarks were a foretaste of more to come. The Cuban adventure last autumn did not at all redound to Khrushchev's credit. If the Chinese had been more subtle and had made at least some attempt to present their invasion of India as anything but old-fashioned power-politics, had disguised their eagerness to do a *Real-politik* deal with Pakistan, had shown more concern for the fraternal comrades in S.E. Asia and less for Chinese nationals in that area, and had resisted the temptation to boast of their contempt for the nuclear threat, which frightens most comrades, like all of us, out of their wits, they might have made much more headway.

It is probably not too much to say that, for a whole variety of reasons, the general feeling among Communists in most countries about Russia and China is "A plague on both your houses!" Dismay, exasperation, sometimes contempt, are felt by many Communist leaders who were not privileged to be born Russian or Chinese in the face of the imbecilities and crudities displayed by the heirs of Ivan the Terrible and Confucius.

In purely practical terms this quarrel, or the way it has been conducted, has alienated fellow-travellers and the eager members of "front" organizations all over the world, has bored to distraction the faithful who are trying to get on with the march towards the millennium, has caused neophytes in darkest Africa to raise their eyebrows. In intellectual terms, it has plumbed depths of mental squalor which make the flesh of the more intelligent Communists creep. In political terms it has indicated that the senior partners of the Socialist camp are more interested in their own power

struggle than in the future of the movement.

In the last resort, and for the time being, Russia will win when it comes to commanding the allegiance of the party as a whole. She has the money, the power and the prestige. It has yet to be proved that Mao's solicitude for the weaker brethren is any deeper than Khrushchev's: it is easy to appear solicitous when you have nothing much to give.

Khrushchev, though an inferior dialectician to Mao and his worshippers has much more good sense. He is closer to the age we live in, and he is being dragged ever closer by the demands of fraternal comrades, such as Togliatti of Italy, who actually live in it.

With his very vivid sense of the calamitous nature of nuclear war (no doubt the Chinese are just as afraid but they dare not say so), he appeals directly to all those good comrades who do not want to be blown up. On a lower level, he is beloved by many smaller parties, who know that their only hope of survival is to lie low for sometime to come.

He is one, also, with those parties who either rule or inhabit countries with comparatively advanced economies, which, though they may diligently beaver away (as in Britain) to make things difficult for their present masters, would nevertheless prefer to live as destructive minorities in a comfortable land than inherit a ruin. More than this, Russia really has the last word, if she cares to say it, with parties which would naturally gravitate, one would say, to China: she has, for example, more to give to Laos (if she cares to give it) than the Chinese.

But what does it all amount to? And where is the central leadership on the march to revolution? Khrushchev may reassure himself with Leninist slogans, but knows very well that for the foreseeable future he is interested above all in consolidating Soviet power and security, avoiding war, and augmenting the prosperity of his country. There is no dynamism here.

#### *Warnings*

China cannot begin to pretend to leadership of a world

that embraces Europe and North America. Other parties, though they may value Moscow's support, have their own problems. When the Swedish Communist leader, Hagberg, announces to the Moscow Conference that the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is outdated and that Swedish Communists are determined to cooperate with the Swedish Social Democrats, whom they see as a true workers' party, the writing is on the wall (this was a secret speech among Communists, not an essay in propaganda).

When Mr. Gollan, of London, at the same meeting, reads the Chinese a lecture explaining that they have no conception of British ways and true appreciation of the strength of the British Labour movement, he is also warning the Russians.

As for Italy, Togliatti and Longo are already far out in a deeply heretical move towards "reformism." They are meeting with opposition within their own party, but it is not at all clear whether the "Chinese" wings in Padua and elsewhere are motivated by admiration for Mao



or dislike of Signor Togliatti. These uncertainties are legion. The only certain thing is that the proper way to approach the Communist menace is to pay less attention to Russia and China and a great deal more to the problems of the separate countries of the "Socialist

camp" and to the discontents in our own midst. Each country that feels it can produce a better solution than the Communist solution should strain itself to the utmost to *prove* that it can — and help, even at a sacrifice, the weaker brethren. — *The Observer*, July 28, 1963.

### **LESS DEMOCRACY?**

Carl L. Becker writes that one of the conditions essential to the success of democracy is a measure of economic security. "Democracy does not flourish in communities on the verge of destitution. In ancient and medieval times democratic government appeared for the most part in cities, the centers of prosperity. In modern times democratic institutions have, generally speaking, been most successful in new countries, where the conditions of life have been easy for the people. Democracy is in some sense an economic luxury, and it may be said that in modern times it has been a function of the development of new and potentially rich countries, or of the industrial revolution which suddenly dowered Europe with unaccustomed wealth. Now that prosperity is disappearing round every next corner, democracy works less well than it did."