

Letter to the Editor

Wanted: A Study of Soviet Communism

SHRI AMLAN Datta's remarks on the recent East European developments in the issue of Dec 1, 1956 have been timely and provocative. Shri Datta has however failed to mention one point of cardinal importance; the great need of a thorough and dispassionate re-appraisal of the nature of communism within the bounds of the Soviet Union. The need is particularly pressing because the Soviet State has proved itself to be the unchallengeable master of the art of double-talk and falsification. The one serious attempt in this direction was made in the United States of America but the studies were largely vitiated by the "cold war" outlook. Indian scholars generally can be expected to be more or less free from such bias and would thus be in a better position to make & more objective assessment of the Soviet system.

What is the most characteristic feature of the Soviet system as evolved in Russia? Material and cultural progress has been common to all countries in more or less measure. It can hardly be called a specific social phenomenon. What on the other hand characterizes all phases of Soviet system in the past four decades is, I submit, the denigration of the preceding leaders by the successors accompanied by loud claims of continued progress and the infallibility of the current leadership and policies. Thus Trotsky, the outstanding leader of the October Revolution and the builder of the Red Army, was declared to have been a "spy" from a very early date before the victory of the Revolution. Zinoviev and Kamenev were declared imperialist agents—yet precisely under their leadership the Communist International successfully surmounted its period and problems of infancy while fully contributing to world revolutionary development. Lastly, Stalin the once infallible "leader", "guide" and the "greatest son" of humanity, the "builder" of the Party and the State in Russia during whose tenure of leadership the old Russia was transformed into the world's second industrial power—has now been discarded as a second rate egoist who had always acted wrongly. Had this not happened in our generation, it would be hard

to believe such an event. Suffice it to recall the universal adulation of 1949—even of 1952—to realize the magnitude of the hoax of the Soviet system. It is not my intention to pass judgment on the merits or otherwise of this or that leader. The point is that the Soviet system has grown up by denunciation of its past leaders—conveniently overlooking the fact that the major fact of present Soviet strength and prosperity is largely the product of past policies now being discarded as having been wrong from inception. The implications of the persistence of this nihilist tendency on the part of the proposed researches should be designed to throw light on this aspect of Soviet system.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Soviet State is the repeated inability of its leaders to comprehend the realities of world politics. A parallel is difficult to find. Leaving aside initial Soviet blunders in the European and Chinese revolutions of the early twenties, Communist appraisals (initially) of such figures as Mussolini, Hitler, Pilsudski, and of the second world war went all wrong requiring "corrections". They denounced Chiang's confinement by democratic Chinese leaders in 1936 as a Japanese coup; decried Yugoslav National Revolutionary movement during the second world war, decried Gandhiji as a feudal reactionary. After having been diplomatically cut off from China for nearly two decades, the Soviet Government recognized Chiang Kai-shek's Government as the sole government of China at a time when as a matter of fact it was crumbling to pieces. The Soviet appraisals of the British withdrawal from Asian countries were also equally erroneous. More recently, the events in Poland and Hungary were flashed as imperialist manoeuvres.

The element of scheming and deliberation in this "mistaken" appraisal is there, no doubt, though it is difficult to measure the degree of such scheming and deliberation. Yet the element of incapacity of Soviet leadership to comprehend reality is equally unmistakable. The recognition of this inherent weakness of the Soviet system is a matter of great importance in any assessment of the Soviet order.

It is however a matter of great pity that notwithstanding such unquestionable evidence of Soviet mistakes and crimes some people, notably members of Communist parties, still show a tendency to accept all Soviet statements at their face value. How far would a man's judgment be correct if anybody tried to evaluate British rule in India from official British statements only? Yet the British had allowed a degree of freedom of speech and propaganda inconceivable under Soviet rule. Is it not all the more necessary therefore, particularly against the background of the Khrushchev revelations and the post-war developments in Eastern Europe, to accept Soviet statements only after searching scrutiny? Yet the communists refuse to do so. On the contrary they do not hesitate to denounce anyone who dares to question Soviet integrity, even if the questioner be of the eminence of Pablo Picasso. The mental imbecility betrayed by the gullibility of such people is a pathetic sight indeed!

There is yet another tendency to minimise Soviet crimes with reference to the crimes of the Western Powers. While I myself have been and 'still am an anti-imperialist I fail to see how a wrong committed by a fourth party can absolve a third party of its crimes.

Subhas Chandra Sarkar

31, Harinath Bey Road,
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