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SOVIET SECRECY MEASURES

Summary

Soviet secrecy measures have been tightened considerably since the end of the war. The list of state secrets has been broadened; penalties for unauthorized divulgence have been stiffened; foreign representatives have been restricted in their activities by the erection of barriers preventing informal contacts between foreigners and Soviet citizens and preventing travel in many parts of the USSR. The Soviet regime, in addition, continues to apply a strict censorship to publications in the USSR and to news dispatches originating in the USSR.

No country in history has established such extensive categories of state secrets as the Soviet Union did in June, 1947, two years after its avowed enemies -- Germany, Italy and Japan -- had been destroyed as great powers. Few countries have manifested such an obsession for secrecy, an obsession which has been officially intensified concurrently with a campaign to end "subservience" to foreign influences and admiration for the achievements of other countries. The Soviet security measures go far beyond the limited secrecy measures instituted by other countries. The comprehensive character of Soviet censorship, particularly its concern with matters which on the surface lack military significance, necessarily suggests that the Kremlin (1) fears that such information is at variance with the vague claims of economic, cultural, and social accomplishments advanced by the Soviet Government, and/or (2) is carrying on activities which are at variance with the Soviet Union's postulations of peaceful intentions and desires to collaborate with other countries.

The extravagance of current Soviet claims probably explains much of the present censorship blackout on all parts of Soviet life. If conditions were really so superior within the borders of the Soviet Union there would be no need to prevent foreigners from testing with their own eyes the veracity of the Communists' claims.

The postwar period has witnessed a feverish intensification of spy scares in the USSR and a progressive stiffening of laws restricting the flow of information. A new list of state secrets was issued in June, 1947. It included military, economic, and scientific information and contained a significant omnibus clause permitting almost anything to be classified as secret. Typical of its contents is the clause classifying scientific information as secret:

The discoveries, inventions, technical improvements, research and experimental work in all branches of science, technology, and national economy are secret until they have been finally completed and permission to publish them has been given.

THE SOVIET WORKER AND COMPULSORY SOCIAL INSURANCE

Summary:

The significance of the Soviet social insurance system as a compensating factor for low wage payments has been flagrantly overstated by Soviet spokesmen. Their glib generalizations convey false impressions not only on the adequacy of the benefits and the proportion of the working population which is insured but also on the question of who finances these services. Moreover, the insurance provisions are geared to achieve objectives which are alien to the common conception of the function of a social insurance scheme.

World public opinion is becoming increasingly aware of the falsity of Soviet claims for the superiority of the Communist system of government and economy as concrete and incontrovertible evidence accumulates concerning the lack of freedom and the low living standards of the Soviet people. A recent example of the disclosure of Soviet reality to the world outside was the report of a Norwegian trade-union delegation which visited the USSR in the summer of 1948. One of the many significant facts in this report reveals that the average wage within the Soviet Union is barely sufficient for the purchase of the commodities most necessary for subsistence. Apologists for the Soviet system, however, are likely to attempt to counter such evidence with assertions that wages in the Soviet Union are only a portion of the real income of the worker; the allegedly "liberal" social services provided by the government are adduced as a factor which compensates for any difference between the real earnings of the Soviet worker and his counterpart in other countries.

The compulsory social insurance scheme is pointed to as one of the most important in the Soviet system of social services. An analysis of the provisions of Soviet social insurance legislation, however, lays bare the serious deficiencies in the system and reveals the wide gulf between propaganda and reality.

THE SOVIETIZATION OF TRADE-UNIONS IN THE USSR

Summary:

The conquest of the trade-unions in Russia by the Communists following the October Revolution led to a completely reconstructed system of trade-unions. The central idea, essentially Lenin's, was that trade-unions should not administer the economy but serve as schools of Communism, inculcating the orthodox philosophy of work into the masses. The trade-unions were not to operate along the lines of unions in capitalist countries, because that would throw them into opposition to the "workers' state." Stalin's emphasis on the role of unions in spurring productivity led to the removal, in 1929, of the last trade-union leaders who had stood for a conception of unions as defenders of the workers' rights.

Formally, the Soviet trade-unions are not a Party organization but, in fact, they are carrying out the directives of the Party. All leading organs of the trade-unions consist primarily of communists who execute the Party line in the entire work of the trade-unions. 1/

After 17 years without a top-level trade-union congress in the USSR, the Tenth All-Union Congress of Trade-Unions is scheduled to meet on April 19, 1949 in Moscow. The increasing gap between trade-union meetings in itself reveals the decline of trade-union democracy in the USSR, for the congresses are supposed to be the policy-making bodies of the trade-unions, composed of democratically elected representatives from the various trade-unions. The real purpose of the April Congress is to maintain the fiction that the trade-unions in the Soviet Union are self-governing, and that they express the opinion and wishes of the organized workers (over 90 percent of employed persons in the USSR are union members). This fiction has received very little sustenance from facts since 1929, when the

1/ A. I. Denisov, Sovetskoye Gosudarstvennoye Pravo (Soviet Public Law), Moscow, 1940, p. 60.

RESTRICTIVE LABOR LEGISLATION IN THE USSR

Summary:

Despite its claim to be a workers' state, the USSR has fastened on its workers a system of restrictions unparalleled in other countries. Particularly important are the restrictions imposed in 1940 as "temporary" emergency measures but still enforceable several years after the war's end. Under these laws Soviet workers can be imprisoned for quitting their jobs without permission and can be heavily fined (up to 25 percent of wages for six months) for absenteeism.

The ability of Soviet officials to control the movements and activities of workers is strengthened by the fact that the Soviet worker has three official documents -- internal passport, labor book, and pay book -- in which are entered the salient data about his life.

Many of these restrictions, originally introduced to meet an emergency situation, have apparently been imposed permanently on Soviet workers.

The USSR began drastically to tighten its system of compulsory labor discipline as early as 1938. The war brought vastly stricter regulations governing labor, but its end did not result in a loosening of these bonds. Today workers in the Soviet Union are subjected to labor restrictions unparalleled in any other country. Their freedom to improve their lot is circumscribed within narrow limits: collective efforts through trade-unions run up against the Communist Party's monopoly control of public organizations, including the unions; individual efforts run into the prohibitions against leaving a job without permission. The present requirement that every Soviet worker have three official documents--passport, labor book, and pay book--gives the government effective devices for controlling workers' activities and movements.

The labor book, which was introduced in 1938, copied the practice of the Nazis in controlling German workers. Each worker was issued a book in which was entered information relating to his education, profession, and employment, as well as all changes in employment with their causes, and any premiums and rewards received. Upon entering a job, a worker was required to surrender his book to the employer, and no worker could be hired except upon

REGIMENTATION OF LABOR IN THE SATELLITE COUNTRIES

Summary:

With the ascendancy of the Communist Party in the satellite countries, violation of labor's rights proceeded apace. The disappearance of independent trade-unionism and the institution of general labor regimentation subjects the workers throughout this area to varying degrees of compulsory labor. Forced labor in the sense of assignment to hard labor in work camps without formal judicial trial is also encountered in these countries.

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Although publicizing themselves as "workers' regimes," the Communist-dominated countries of Eastern Europe in practice operate in a manner opposed to the interests of labor as traditionally understood by the labor movement. Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Albania have all adopted elements of the Soviet pattern of subjecting their working force to a network of compulsions and restrictions.

As soon as the Communist leadership gained power in each of these countries, basic trade-union rights were swiftly denied. Under the aegis of the Communists, trade-unions have been transformed into an instrument for executing the directives of the government and consolidated into nation-wide "company unions." Instead of serving as a guardian of their members' interests, the trade-union in the "people's democracies" devotes its main efforts to forcing increased production from each worker through the speed-up system and similar devices and to indoctrinating the workers in Communist ideology. With the trade-unions operating as an arm of government and with the latter the owner of the predominant portion of the country's industrial resources, collective bargaining in Eastern Europe is actually nonexistent. In matters concerning wages and working conditions, the government's policies are decisive. The right to strike, although not forbidden by law, has in effect been abrogated in each of these countries. Without the effective right to strike or otherwise protect and improve their economic condition, these workers are actually working under conditions of involuntary servitude.

The freedom of the workers has been violated not only by the perversion of trade-unions into instruments of compulsion. For the very reason that the unions, permeated with Communists in key positions, no longer have the protection of their members' interests as their primary aim, the governments of the Soviet orbit have been able further to infringe on labor's rights through a variety of manpower controls. As there is some variation in the

HOW WELL OFF IS THE SOVIET WORKER?

Work Time Required in the USSR and Sweden for the Purchase of Certain Consumers' Goods

The Soviet publication Professionalniye Soyuzy (Trade Unions), No. 5, May, 1948, asserts on page 6 that the Soviet order, "...providing the conditions for a rapid rise in the postwar economy, has made possible a significant increase in the workers' standard of living."

Undoubtedly, the Soviet worker's position has improved over that of the stringent wartime level, but he is still far from achieving the standard of living enjoyed in other countries.

The relative well-being of the Soviet worker can be roughly measured by comparing the period of time he and his counterpart in other countries must work to buy certain necessities. The following table indicates this comparison between the worker in the Soviet Union and the worker in Sweden.

To buy the various foods represented in this table the Soviet worker must work from three to 14 times as long as the Swedish worker. For example, to purchase a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of wheat bread the Soviet worker must pay a sum which takes him 2 hours and 20 minutes to earn. The Swedish worker can make a similar purchase after only 26

PASSPORTS, PLEASE

SUMMARY:

The minute administrative regulations governing the lives of Soviet citizens are illustrated by the internal passport system, first introduced in the USSR in 1932. This system requires that passports be carried by all citizens, except those in specified localities, most of whom are collective farmers. The Soviet citizen must obtain police permission for any change of residence and must register with the police within 24 hours after arrival at the new residence. The principal purposes of the passport system are: to maintain surveillance over suspicious individuals, to prevent further overcrowding of cities, and to reduce labor turnover by hindering migration of workers.

“What does this mean, this freedom to move from place to place? It means that the peasant must be free to go where he pleases, to move wherever he wants to, to choose for himself the village or the town he prefers, without having to ask for permission. It means that passports must be abolished in Russia too (in foreign countries passports were abolished long ago), that no police officer, no Zemsky Nachalnik must be allowed to stop any peasant from settling down or working wherever he pleases. The Russian peasant is still the serf of the officials to such an extent that he is not free to move to a town or free to settle in a new district. The Minister issues orders that the governors should not allow unauthorized settlement. The governor knows better than the peasant what is good for the peasant. The peasant is a child who dares not move without authority. Is this not serfdom, I ask you?”¹

Karl Marx once predicted that after the chains of capitalist exploiters had been broken mankind would achieve a society in which there would be “administration of things” but not of “men”. Though the Soviet Union is said by its propagandists to be advancing rapidly toward Communism, there is no resemblance between the dream of Marx and the reality of Soviet life today. Rather, there is for all Russians a situation that parallels the one which Lenin so vigorously condemned in the case of the peasants of Tsarist times. Nowhere are men’s lives subjected to as minute administrative regulation as in the USSR, where documents of personal registration are so extensively employed to control the movements and activities of citizens.

¹ Lenin, V. I., “To the Rural Poor”, 1903, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 280.

ELECTION OF SOVIET JUDGES

Summary:

The impression, fostered in Soviet propaganda, that all Soviet judges are popularly elected does not correspond to the facts. Despite Moscow's scorn of appointed judges, until this winter there has never been a popular election of judges in the Soviet Union. Elections, apparently of the one-candidate variety, are now being held to fill posts in the People's Courts -- the lowest Soviet courts. Other judges are chosen by various Soviets of Working People's Deputies, i.e. the Soviet version of legislature. Selection by this method involves simply a ratification, without discussion, of an official list of nominees.

At a session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in November, 1946, there was discussion between British Foreign Minister Bevin and Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov regarding the selection of judges for the Free State of Trieste. When Mr. Bevin explained that judges in Britain were appointed to office, Molotov replied that "in the Soviet Union all judicial positions are elective". As if to lend posterior credence to this statement, the Soviet Union this winter is conducting popular elections of several thousand judges in lower court, the first popular election of judges ever held in the thirty-one years of Soviet rule. Molotov's remark was apparently designed to obscure the issue, because the Soviet laws use the Russian word izbirat'sya, "to be elected," not only for popular elections but also for "elections" by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies (the Soviet version of a legislature or city council). The latter type of indirect election is, of course, more properly defined as "appointment".

This appointment process was illustrated when the USSR Supreme Court was "elected" by the Supreme Soviet in 1947. There was not a single word of discussion as to the merits of any of the 67 judges or 25 people's assessors, all of whom were unanimously "elected". This use of the term is for the USSR only: e.g. the USSR Minister of Justice recently described as appointive those few US judges who are elected by State legislatures. These "elections"

LIVING CONDITIONS IN USSR DESCRIBED BY NORWEGIAN TRADE UNION DELEGATION

Summary:

A seven-man delegation of Norwegian trade union leaders visited the Soviet Union for three weeks in August and September, 1948. The report of this delegation is attached.

These trade union representatives were particularly interested in the lot of the workers and the role of the Soviet trade unions in the USSR. They observed that the "Russian trade union organization cannot carry on a wage dispute, because the whole wage system is fixed in connection with the State's economic planning." As a consequence of this "the trade union organization, with its great financial resources, therefore, concentrates on social, health and cultural matter." A visit to Sochi gave the Norwegians a glimpse of some of the vacation and health resorts maintained by trade unions, which, however, could be visited in a given year by only a million and a half of the 25 million trade union members.

The interest of this delegation in the Soviet standard of living could not be fully satisfied because, as the delegation remarked, "information, which in most other countries is available concerning the standard of living, such as wage statistics and price indices or statistics in other fields such as new buildings, clothes, footwear, etc., does not exist in the Soviet Union, or is not available." The Norwegian labor leaders came away with certain impressions, however, such as that prices are "very high," and that "ordinary average wages are only sufficient to buy the most vital necessities of life." The delegation concluded that this caused "great numbers" of women to be engaged "in street and construction work, doing heavy labor at construction sites and as dock workers and in industry." In the report it was stated that "masses of overcrowded, old, dilapidated homes and badly maintained houses are seen everywhere." In general, the members of the delegation concluded that the Russian standard of living was not higher than 60 percent of the Norwegian. They attributed the low standard of living in part to the reconstruction after the war: "Hardly any country exists where the authorities so firmly keep the standard of living low in order to insure quick recovery as in the Soviet Union."

∟The Norwegian labor leaders apparently were not shown the armaments industries of the Soviet Union and therefore could not observe in proper perspective the extent to which the investment for "recovery" in the USSR is being concentrated on military establishments and industries.∟

The prominence of military and police forces in Moscow led to the observation that these Norwegians knew of "nothing corresponding to this apart from conditions in an occupied country during war." On the other hand, the trade union visitors concluded that the individual Russians whom they met were "primarily interested in peaceful development," that they were "simple and sympathetic people, who contributed powerfully to increasing the belief that if nothing foreseen occurs the Soviet Union will gradually attain a more felicitous phase of development than the one existing in the country today." ∟The validity of this judgment must be qualified by the fact that, in the words of the report itself: "The delegation has not, either through conversations or in any other manner, been in close contact with political conditions, either domestic or foreign." The semi-official character of the Norwegians' tour, with official escorts and interpreters always present, made impossible any informal