

NEW WORD FOR TITOISM: IT'S 'POLYCENTRISM' NOW

Moscow's New Rule Is Not the Law It Was in Stalin's Harsh Days

By HARRISON SALISBURY

The newest word in international communism is "polycentrism." It was coined last week by Palmiro Togliatti of Italy to indicate that communism now has many centers of inspiration and leadership. No longer do all roads lead to Moscow.

Actually, what Signor Togliatti means by "polycentrism" is what the rest of the world has been calling for some time "Titoism." That is to say the right of individual Communist movements to adjust the philosophy and tactics of Karl Marx to fit varying national conditions.

Signor Togliatti accompanied his excursion into semantics by giving an object lesson of how he conceived "polycentrism" in practice. He demonstrated his individualism by hurling a half brick in the general direction of Moscow's Communist leaders. The explanations that Messrs. Khrushchev and Bulganin and company have offered of their role in the era of Stalin's crimes do not satisfy Italy's long-time Communist chief. They have got to come up with something better.

Hardly had Signor Togliatti shown off polycentrism than his example was seized by the French Communist party. The French party leaders, particularly Maurice Thorez, have been notably cool to Moscow's downgrading of Stalin. Probably no foreign Communist leader was more subservient to Moscow in his day than M. Thorez.

Now, however, he has suddenly found his tongue. He echoed Signor Togliatti's plaint and added one of his own. How come Moscow had not provided the foreign Communist parties with a copy of Nikita S. Khrushchev's secret speech to the twentieth congress of the Soviet Commu-

nist party? Why did the French party have to depend upon a text released by the somewhat less than communistically sympathetic United States State Department? The least Moscow could do was to fill in Paris on what was going on.

These were not the only examples of "polycentrism" in action.

The English Communist party, having retired its long-time Stalinist leader, Harry Pollitt, for "reasons of health" began to speak up like an angry backbencher. And the bedeviled fractions of the American Communist party blossomed forth with a whole bouquet of dissenting opinions. They wanted to know why Mr. Khrushchev had kept his speech secret, why he had not given a better explanation of his own role under Stalin and, in particular, why Stalin's anti-Semitic crimes had been exposed only in Warsaw and not in Moscow.

Moscow Communiqué

To get the real explanation of what this was all about it was still necessary to go to Moscow. There, in the communiqué that marked the conclusion of the State visit of President Tito of Yugoslavia, the essence of polycentrism was all spelled out in neat and tidy terms.

Imbedded in the communiqué on future relations between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Communist party of the Soviet Union was this paragraph:

Abiding by the view that the roads and conditions of Socialist development are different in different countries, that the wealth of the forms of Socialist development contributes to their strengthening, and starting with the fact that any tendency of imposing one's own views in determining the roads and forms of Socialist development are alien to both sides, the two sides have agreed that the foregoing cooperation should be based on complete freedom of will and equality, on friendly criticism and on the comradely character of the exchange of views on disputes between our parties.

There is more to polycentrism than this, of course.

But the essence of it is obviously Titoism, that is, the right of the individual party to be the judge of its own course of action. It was for this that Marshal Tito fought. It was over

this that Stalin broke with him. And it is this right that Tito has now won for himself. As well as for himself he has apparently won it—within certain boundaries not yet too well defined—for all of the other Communist parties of the world.

It is difficult for a generation brought up in the tradition of Moscow's steel discipline of the world Communist movement to grasp the idea that Titoism, i.e. nonconformity within Marxist limits, is rapidly emerging as the new conformity of global Marxism. But something very close to this is happening before our eyes.

Moscow Plan

What is now evident is that polycentrism is no mere play on words. It is a calculated rationale originating in Moscow and, like most Moscow rationales, deeply rooted in Soviet self-interest.

Stalin had insisted on literal control of all Communist movements beyond the Soviet frontier. Time and again he demonstrated that he was willing to sacrifice anything rather than risk his domination of the foreign parties.

There was one exception to Stalin's program of rule-or-ruin; one man whom he was unable to destroy. Mr. Khrushchev tells us that Stalin said that he would shake his little finger and Marshal Tito would disappear. But Marshal Tito would not disappear. Marshal Tito did not crumble. He defied Moscow and got away with it.

This was the situation that Stalin's heirs inherited. Among all the Communist party relationships there was not one that was normal and healthy.

Except for Eastern European security and possibly the special situations in the Far East, the party in many cases was more of a liability to Soviet policy than an asset. And even in Eastern Europe it was questionable how much longer the security police could keep the lid on.

With the same flexibility and ingenuity that has marked so many of their policies, the new Soviet leadership decided to change all this. First, a visit was paid to Peiping and the ulcerated Chinese-Soviet ties were poulticed, if not completely cured.

Then Tito

Then Mr. Khrushchev boldly grasped the thorniest nettle of them all—Marshal Tito. A laugh rocked the Western world when Mr. Khrushchev and Marshal Nikolai A. Bulganin, their pants baggy, their brows sweating, emerged from a plane in Belgrade a little more than a year ago. Mr. Khrushchev could hardly get down from the plane before proclaiming the most abject of apologies. He groveled before Marshal Tito. A Soviet Canossa, the commentators cried.

Perhaps. But it looks as if it may have been the shrewdest Canossa of our time. The path of inter-Communist relations undoubtedly conceals many an unexpected barrier, many an unpredictable turning. But in the new doctrine of polycentrism, the new conformity of nonconformity, Mr. Khrushchev has armed with a new dynamism the movement that still hails Marx, Engels and Lenin as founding fathers.

Permitted to tailor their Marxism to fit the cloth of the countries in which they live, the Communists, both East and West, may prove a challenge far more formidable than Stalin's iron yes-men.



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