

went on using him as a witness long after the F.B.I. claims to have discarded him. This, Matusow says, is the kind of man I was. And this is the kind of man who has destroyed reputations, sent men and women to jail, driven some to suicide and helped create the fear which paralyses American politics.

NORMAN MACKENZIE

Soviet Reactions to the West

WHEN Western commentators depict the changes in the Soviet leadership as the result of a personal struggle for power, they miss the plain connection between the return to a tough line in both domestic and foreign Soviet policy, and the West's attitude toward the U.S.S.R. since the death of Stalin. Yet this connection is familiar: it is part of a recurring pattern.

Originally the Bolsheviks were "Westerners" and modernisers, revolutionary Social Democrats who believed in the withering away of the State in a Socialist society. Two factors have shaped and conditioned the Soviet regime from these very different beginnings into what it is today—(1) the traditions and character of the Tsarist Empire and, (2) the impact of the capitalist world, particularly the Western Powers. In the Soviet Union, as elsewhere, the political centre of gravity rests in home affairs. But again and again the international situation has determined which of various contending domestic policies prevailed.

First, the West resorted to armed intervention to crush the revolution. "Intervention," wrote Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, in his *Memoirs of a British Agent*, "intensified the civil war and sent thousands of Russians to meet their deaths. Indirectly, it was responsible for the Terror. Its direct effect was to provide the Bolsheviks with a cheap victory, to give them new confidence, and to galvanise them into a strong and ruthless organism." In the beginning, he explains, the Bolshevik regime was fairly tolerant. "The cruelties which followed later were the result of the intensification of the civil war" for which "Allied intervention . . . was largely responsible."

In the Twenties the Soviet Government's appeal to the League of Nations to help it combat the pandemic of typhus, and the famine following upon the great drought, met with a mean and hypocritical response. Chicherin's offer in 1922 at the Genoa Conference to enter the League of Nations and to allow Western capitalists to take up concessions in the Soviet Union was spurned. The Bolshevik dream of international economic planning in co-operation with the first Labour Government was shattered by Ramsay MacDonald's demand for the repayment of Tsarist debts. These events helped to ensure the victory of Stalin and of the tougher, more nationalist and Russian part of Lenin's heritage, over the "Westerners" and internationalists.

In the early Thirties, when the capitalist world split into the aggressive Fascist powers and the apprehensive democracies, the C.P.S.U. leaders, after much heart-searching, decided to seek alliances with the Western democracies in order to halt Fascist aggression. The Soviet Union entered the League of Nations for that purpose. Kirov, at that time Secretary of the Leningrad Committee of the Party and a member of the Politbureau, was a great favourite of Stalin and looked upon as his successor. He and Maxim Gorki persuaded Stalin that the time had come to democratise the regime, by reconciling the

opposition in the Party, enlisting the active co-operation of public-spirited citizens not in the Party, and adopting a democratic constitution. The revolution, they said, had won: there were only remnants of enemy classes left, and they were no longer dangerous. On the other hand, they wanted the maximum of unity to face the danger abroad. To this Kirov added the very interesting argument that democratising the Soviet regime would make it easier to co-operate with the Western democracies.

The assassination of Kirov by a minor member of the Opposition stopped these promising developments: instead of being reconciled, the Opposition were liquidated in the great purges. Nevertheless, the "Western" orientation in foreign policy persisted through a mounting series of rebuffs until Munich. In that period, the Chamberlain Government ignored increasingly sharp warnings from Stalin that, if they went on appeasing the Fascist powers and procrastinating about a Soviet alliance, the Soviet Government would have to make other arrangements. Finally, they did. Litvinov was demoted to Fifth Assistant Foreign Secretary; Molotov took his place, and Stalin concluded his friendship and non-aggression pact with Hitler.

During and after the war, there was a widespread belief in the Soviet Union, that, once victory had been won and the worst difficulties of reconstruction had been surmounted, the regime would become milder and the Soviet peoples would enjoy the full application of the 1936 Stalin constitution, which had so far remained on paper. This belief assumed that the war-time allies would be partners in peace. When it became clear that the American and British Governments regarded the Soviet Union and the Communist and Socialist parties in the People's Democracies as potential enemies, the belief faded and vanished. The change came in 1947. The founding of the Cominform in October of that year was the outcome of the proclamation in March of the Truman Doctrine of anti-Communist containment and intervention. The Soviet Government began to draw together its allies and speed up their advance to Socialism. The regimes in Eastern Europe ceased to be broadly based Communist-led coalitions and became straight Communist dictatorships.

The driving force behind these developments was the search for strength and solidarity against what was regarded as the growing menace from the West. Ever since the Thirties, indeed, the argument used in the Soviet Union for the State becoming stronger instead of withering away, and for all the purges and policing, has become the external danger. Malenkov, it seems, thought the West might listen to reason and respond to a conciliatory policy. He made several minor concessions and friendly gestures. He cut the Defence budget by £800 million. He kept pleading for conferences and talks. At home, he paid attention to producing more and cheaper food and consumer goods. He amnestied many thousands of prisoners, curbed the police, and loosened the grip of the Party on science and art. Western statesmen regarded all this as signs of weakness, remained intransigent, and dismissed Soviet warnings about German rearmament as mere bluff. They were not bluff. The Soviet Government has come round to the Anglo-American view that it is necessary to "negotiate from strength." So they are going all out to build up positions of strength, by drawing closer their alliances in the East and West, putting an extra £1,000 million on the Defence budget, and building up the armaments and industries of their allies. Internally, the period of relative mildness in the regime is likely to end.

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The facts bear out what common sense suggests: cold war makes Communist regimes tougher, not more conciliatory. The more we arm, the more they arm. The more obvious the Western "line-up," however defensive its professions, the closer grow the bonds between Moscow and Peking.

K. ZILLIACUS

Thoughts in the Wilderness

THE NEW DROLLS

EVER since I used to sit, as a lad, in the fourpenny balcony of the Empire, Bradford (which was known in the profession as the "comedians' grave"), I have been a collector and connoisseur of drolls, clowns, zanies. About thirty years ago I contributed a series of studies and appreciations of comedians to what was then a very stately morning paper. (It was I, in these columns, who wrote a tribute to Sid Field.) But the comedians I described in the middle Twenties, unlike the star performers of today, had reached the top only after years of either concert party work or provincial music hall tours. The old music halls were a matchless training ground. The fellows we watched from that fourpenny balcony (and there was a twopenny gallery behind us), as we sat on benches about six inches wide, packed closely together by experts at the job, had to be good—or God help them. Night after night, year after year, the old comedians worked away, getting an instant grip on those tough critical audiences, bringing their acts nearer and nearer to perfection. Just as a lion-tamer must have at least one lion, so a performer must have an audience, there in front of him; an act cannot be perfected except in the constant presence of a paying public, preferably from the North, where they want their money's worth.

Now the new droll who has natural ability and a genuine odd personality goes whizzing up to stardom in a few years. One really successful TV or radio series can put him up there. Then he will be paid hundreds of pounds a week to appear on the stage, not necessarily because he is thought to be funnier on the stage than on the air (though he should be), but because managers know that hundreds of thousands of his B.B.C. fans will want to see him in person. The result is that our most successful light entertainment is now dominated by these new stars from the B.B.C. who have risen since the War. So let us take a look at some of them, bearing in mind that these men are now important public figures. Humour is a very personal taste; but I will try, as if still endeavouring to please the examiners of my youth, to give reasons for my choice.

Jimmy Edwards has been extremely successful, both on the air and on the stage. He is fortunate in having a radio programme, written by two excellent wits, that provides him with some good foils and is economic in its use of material. (The nightmare of radio comedy is its appalling consumption of material.) He is a bustling, larger-than-life comedian, with an engaging informal style on the stage, an air of doing charades for us; never suggesting an actor, but rather a certain type of schoolmaster one used to know, the type that in anger would threaten to go out of its mind; and Jim, one may say, has done it and gone. Frankie Howerd, who is much funnier on the stage than he is in radio, is best as a kind of desperately worried zany, who arrives to do some-

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