

THE COMMUNIST CONTROL OF THE MIND

by

J. George Zubrzycki

Much has been written of the philosophy of Communism. Many accounts of bloodshed and brutality are on record associated with revolution. This pamphlet deals with another aspect altogether. The way effective use can be made of the war of ideas.

The Communist Control of the Mind

The international Communist movement is committed to world revolution. To attain this most fundamental objective the Communists adopt a variety of weapons: political, military and psychological. The last weapon is basic to the first two, for the Communists insist that a political or military conquest will not be complete unless it is accompanied by the conquest of the mind.

To establish absolute control of the mind the Communists pursue two related tasks. First, in the words of Stalin, they aim at "organizing, mobilizing and transforming" the world of ideas ranging from religious beliefs to the sciences and arts. But they do not stop at the transformation of the intellectual outlook alone. Their second aim is to remould man's total personality, to redirect the functioning of the will, and to channel the emotions into direction of value of the Party.

Everything that the Communists do in the time of war and peace, rests on the fundamental assumptions relating to the control of the mind and the total personality. Unless this point is completely understood it becomes impossible to perceive that what goes on in the Moscow for Training of Party Cadres, a Chinese village commune, a secret Party cell in an American city or in a POW camp in Korea — is exactly the same thing.

The object of this paper is to answer three basic questions: first, **why** do the Communists attempt thought control? Second, **how** do they do it? Third, **who** are the people who are particularly susceptible to the Communist thought control?

1. Why do the Communists control thought?

The Communists believe that man can be refashioned in a new image, since Communist society will be one in which the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour and therefore also the antithesis between mental and physical labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want . . . the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual . . . all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly . . . and society inscribes on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

This vision, seen by Marx in 1875 implies a radical change in human nature. But how is it to be brought about? Marxism gives a paradoxical answer. For the change in human nature is seen both as a consequence and as a condition of the alternation of the economic basis of society.

On the one hand there is the original determinist tradition of Marx historical materialism: on this showing, man is conditioned by his social environment and the new society will produce the new man as the old produced the old. On the other hand, as Lenin clearly saw, the new society presupposes the new man, who must therefore, it would seem, be created artificially. The apparatus of Communist-controlled education and thought control has this creation as its ultimate ostensible purpose. But the very existence of the apparatus for mass indoctrination and thought control has involved a substantial shift in Marxist theory; for it implies that the Communist leaders in the Soviet Union and all over the world attribute great importance to the influence of ideas and ideology in the life of man.

The shift in theory involved new emphasis on religious, political and social ideologies — or (as Marx called them) "forms of consciousness." All such ideas, according to Marx were part of the "superstructure" of society which in turn was determined by the "base" consisting of economic relationships. "The economic structure of society", wrote Marx in the **Preface to the Critique of Political Economy**, "is the real foundation on which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life conditions the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life".

It was Lenin who discovered that political activity involves the use of ideology and that, consequently, the

superstructure is not necessarily of secondary importance in the Marxist scheme of historical materialism. In 1917, shortly before the Bolshevik seizure of power, Lenin wrote:

"Ideas become a force when they get hold of the masses. And particularly now, when the Bolsheviks ... have embodied in their policy the ideas which move the innumerable toiling masses in the whole world."

These remarks by Lenin, suggesting a definite positive role for ideas were given a new twist by Stalin who distinguished between old social ideas "which hamper the development, the progress of society" and the new "advanced" ideas which "facilitate the development, the progress of society". These new ideas according to Stalin become a most potent force which facilitates the carrying out of the new tasks set by the development of the material life of society, a force which facilitates the progress of society. It is precisely here that the tremendous organizing, mobilizing and transforming value of new ideas, new theories, new political views and new political institutions manifests itself.

"Organizing, mobilizing and transforming": this description (which Stalin repeated several times) of the role of the superstructure represented a considerable departure from the original spirit of Marxism. It is not surprising that the only test from Marx which Stalin found to support it was the familiar **Obiter dictum**: "Theory becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses."

No significant revision of the theory of base and superstructure has taken place since these statements: in spite of all the developments in other fields since Stalin's death, they continue to provide the basis for the official line on the subject. The crucial part played by religion, political ideologies, literature, Press and such academic disciplines as philosophy, economics and history in what the official Soviet **Short Philosophical Dictionary** (1955) describes as "the struggle with survivals of Capitalism in the minds of men" is seen especially in the countries that have recently fallen under Communist domination. North Vietnam and Cuba provide examples of societies in which control of thought is the most important objective of the Communist leaders. They realize that in the long run they will not succeed unless they "educate the toiling masses in the spirit of Communism." In plain language this means the most vigorous mobilization not only of manpower and natural resources but of thought itself.

2. The use of subversive techniques in the moulding of Communist mentality.

Certain techniques have been perfected by Marxist-Leninists to win over men's minds and, in Communist jargon, conquer the masses. These techniques involve the utilization of man's fundamental instincts and of conditioned reflexes.

(a) The utilization of instincts.

As materialistic psychologists see the human spirit merely as a product of matter, they approach the problem of the conquest of the masses on the physiological and neurological level. Hence, they reduce the 'psychic' motivations of man to three fundamental instincts — or "pulsations" — the aggressive, the nutritive, and the parental. Communist indoctrination and thought control at all levels and in all situations will thus aim first and foremost at rousing these "pulsations" and making them operate as desired in order to remould man's will and total personality.

The aggressive "pulsation", an interest towards domination, must be roused by confronting the masses with the real or alleged injustices which scandalize them to the depths of their conscience. Hence, according to circumstances it will be the "reactionaries", foreigners, whites, the Army or the Church which will be accused of the most abominable crimes. The aggressive instinct will then operate in support of "justice" — that is, in a manner hostile to the institution which is to be destroyed.

The nutritive pulsation is no less violent. It is bound up with the instinct of self-preservation. Propaganda and advertising can appeal to it. The Communist slogan at the French General Elections of 1936 which elected the Popular Front Government, was summed up in three words: "Bread, Peace, Liberty." The first word struck home at the psychology of the appetites. Every time passers-by saw the word "Bread" on the boardings or every time the crowds chanted the slogan, something of a pleasure of eating a kind of subconscious anticipation of the attraction of food was organically identified with support of the Communist election programme.

Finally, the Communists utilize the parental "pulsation". This is concerned with the instinct for the preservation of the species which is more precociously developed in women than in men. "Peace" propaganda in the Marxist sense is often associated with posters depicting children beside the corpses of their parents who have been killed in bombing

raids.

(b) **The Utilization of conditioned reflexes**, may, of itself, not be contrary to human dignity. The teaching of the multiplication table or of piano finger exercises for example, results from the conditioning of the reflexes. The characteristic of subversive technique is not the utilization of conditioned reflexes but making them operate against nature.

This is the fundamental aim of Marxist-Leninist method. It consists in acting on men's bodies and appetites to obtain a conditioning of thought which prevents the force of truth from working on the intelligence.

The experience of the American POW's in Korea, the success of the Communist "Peace" movement and other "front" organizations in many uncommitted countries are examples of whole groups that have been thus conditioned. They have, at one time or another, registered an immediate and quasi-automatic equivalence between religion and exploitation, Communism and peace, conflicts and progress.

The essential element of the psychological aggression which is being forever waged against our societies resides in the process by which Communism substitutes, in place of the logic of intelligence and knowledge, an artificial logic which is conducive to mental attitudes that lead the indoctrinated to adopt the appropriate Communist reaction to all problems as they arise.

An anecdote which is utilized by the most classical Communist teaching makes it possible to understand how Marxist-Leninist technique operates men's passions and appetites almost inescapably for the furtherance of error and deceit.

The following problem is set in Communist training schools as an exercise: "How can one succeed in making a cat eat pepper?" The first answer is to hold the cat's mouth open by force. The answer is wrong — for the acquiescence of the cat is lacking. The second answer is to hide the pepper in a fish. This is also wrong, for the cat will spit out the fish when it discovers the pepper.

The Marxist-Leninist reply is as follows; one must scatter the pepper on the cat's usual rug. When the cat lies on the pepper to sleep it will be made uncomfortable and burned, and as a result will begin licking itself to alleviate the burning.

The result thus achieved is that:

- (1) the cat eats
- (2) of its own free will
- (3) (which has been completely conditioned)
- (4) the pepper which it detests in the natural course of things.

The cat has not seen or felt in any way that some outside will was impelling it to an act contrary to its nature. So it performs that act spontaneously and naturally — when it has been conditioned.

This example is profoundly significant. The fact that it concerns an animal is perfectly in pattern, for the psycho-social action of Communism introduces a new logic of behaviour not at the intellectual level but at the physiological level of the nervous circuits.

In the same way (once they are conditioned) a Catholic will oppose the Pope, the Bishops and the unity of the Church because of his Catholicism; citizens will oppose the common good of their country from a sense of citizenship; militant labour unionists will oppose social reforms from a desire of social progress.

And thus we see Christians who habitually defend the actions of persecutors of the Church; prisoners of war who believe that for patriotic reasons they should denounce their country as "imperialist aggressor"; workers who habitually support the systematic aggravation of social conflicts and men who in the name of social justice refuse to reveal or seek to conceal the existence of a slave world in the USSR. And so "the cat eats the pepper" and the Communist psychological warfare wins battle after battle without the losers being aware of the fact.

The psycho-social action of Communism operates either at the individual level (brain washing) or at the collective level (propaganda, utilization of "pulsations", disintegration of enemy morale). It employs terror, threats, promises, but only as a powerful auxiliary element and not as the main constituent of its method. We have not yet realized the true nature of Communism if we blind ourselves to the classical methods of psycho-social strategy which it uses.

3. Susceptibility to Communism.

Not all the people exposed to Communist thought control are equally susceptible to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism or become collaborators and fellow travellers. When we speak of susceptibility in this context we do not necessarily mean complete acceptance and espousal of Communism. To serve the world Communist movement a person need not be a member of the Party. A "fellow traveller" in the ranks of a democratic political party or a labour union, a prisoner of war who broadcasts peace appeals to his country or a college student who joins an organization that pledges itself to promote unconditional nuclear disarmament by the United States — are performing vital duties in the furtherance of the Communist cause without necessarily embracing the doctrines of Communism.

In many situations amongst the people who, over a period of time, are exposed to the same kind of thought-conditioning, some become militant collaborators or even Party members while others successfully resist the appeals of Communism. Why is it for example that the Polish and Hungarian writers and intellectuals were in the forefront of revolt that swept Eastern Europe in 1956? Why did Boris Pasternak write **Dr. Zhivago**? It could be argued that these intellectuals would become corrupted by the insidious methods which the Communist masters of Poland, Hungary, and Russia have used to capture the minds of the people. Yet, the writers, the journalists, the scholars resisted and maintained their critical faculties intact and ready to challenge Communism. Similarly, why did none of the Turkish and only an insignificant proportion of the British, the American Marine Corps and Air Force POW's collaborate with their captors in Korea while one of every three members of the United States Army was guilty of some sort of collaboration? And yet the treatment afforded to all groups of prisoners in Korea was about equal and the horrible conditions under which they lived did not differ substantially from one camp to another.

In our search for factors that explain why some people can successfully resist the onslaught of their mind while others surrender, allow their personality to be moulded according to the needs of the Party or even voluntarily espouse Communism — we must turn to psycho-social characteristics that account for the different levels and types of susceptibility.

The example of the intellectuals in Eastern Europe suggests that a conscious rejection of Marxism-Leninism as a scientific method is a key to successful resistance. One of the positive features of Communist policy in Eastern Europe under Communist rule has been that, since 1945, opportunities of education for children of workers and peasants have been greatly extended in comparison with the pre-war regimes. The Communists hoped that this new intellectual elite, of worker and peasant origin, would be a strong support for their regime, would act as the brains of the totalitarian system. But their hopes were disappointed. The workers' and peasants' children made good use of their education and thought for themselves. In spite of a powerful apparatus that was set up to indoctrinate them, they were not deceived by official hypocrisy, they rebelled against the crushing of critical thought the disarrangement of their national cultures and the abject adulation of all things Soviet. They rejected the new regime and became the most active element in resistance of it.

In Russia, Pasternak, perhaps the most important literary figure to emerge during soviet rule, succeeded in preserving his integrity, independence, and reputation even during the worst periods of Stalinist rule. And when he was finally forced to renounce the Nobel Prize he had the courage to say this in an interview with the British newspaper **Daily Mail** on October 24, 1958: "Actually the demands of the hierarchy are very slight. There is only one thing they really want. **You should hate what you like and love what you abhor.**"

The experience of the American POW's in Korea points to the sociological factors at work. The units of the Army that had relatively large number of collaborators in their midst and those that suffered considerable losses through illness and death, were the ones where there was little or no semblance of internal discipline and solidarity. These included the very young, many relatively new recruits, the under-trained, and probably found among them would be those who had little or no solid value or religious orientation. The Communists of course, encourage the chaos and the quarrels among the wounded, the sick, the naive, the ill-formed, and the ideologically unstable. The breakdown of discipline and the disintegration of social controls in whole units enabled them to single out the men who lost all self respect and were therefore ready to be moulded to the design of their captors. By contrast those who successfully resisted, like the Marines and the Air Force prisoners, together with the Turkish and the British soldiers, were not only better prepared to exist without the daily comforts to which an average American infantryman had become

accustomed. As the subsequent investigations revealed these prisoners never ceased to think of themselves as members of a military organization. Although their actual units might have disintegrated they continued to act as if the social controls of their battalions, companies and squadrons were maintained. Because their chain of command and discipline remained unbroken — they were able to present a completely united front to pressure of indoctrination.

Conclusion.

The foregoing analysis of Communist thought control has barely touched on two important types of susceptibility to Communism, namely the neurotic and the ideological types. It is not denied here that the feelings of confusion, disturbances of personal relationships occurring in conjunction with certain moral and intellectual patterns, as much as real or perceived ideological interests, may account for the decision to espouse the cause of Communism. These types of susceptibility are important in situations other than the ones discussed in this paper. Both the neurotic and the ideological susceptibility have to be taken into account in an analysis of membership of the Communist Party in say, Italy or France. These factors, however, play a lesser part in the situations of stress experienced by an individual who is physically present in a communist country.

The aim of the Communists to remould not only the intellectual outlook but the total personality is, however, identical on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Bibliography.

- Almond, Gabriel, *The Appeals of Communism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1954.
Conquest Robert, *Courage of Genius: The Pasternak Affair*, London, Collins, 1961.
Kinkead, Eugene, *Why They Collaborated*, London, Longmans, 1960.
Marks, K. and Engels, F., *Selected Works*,
London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1950. Meyer, Frank S., *The Moulding of Communists*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1961.
Milosz, Czeslaw, *The Captive Mind*, New York, Knopf, 1953.
Sargant, William, *Battle of the Mind*, London, Penguin Books, 1962.
Hunter, E., *Brainwashing in Red China*, Vanguard Press, New York.
Lifton, Robert, J., *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, Gollancz.
Brown, J. A. C., *Techniques of Persuasion*, Penguin Books.

Nihil Obstat:

BERNARD O'CONNOR, Diocesan Censor.

Imprimatur:

JUSTIN D. SIMONDS, Archbishop of Melbourne.

3/3/1967

The writer, Mr. J. Zubrzycki is the Professorial Fellow in Sociology at the Research School of Social Science, Australian National University, Canberra.
