The Purges: Villains and Scapegoats

BY MARK GAYN

Paris

WHAT is the secret of the current Communist purges? Why does Moscow sacrifice its ablest foreign operatives, who have served it so faithfully for decades? Why is it willing to arouse the doubt and anxiety that purges produce in the satellite states? Why does it launch an anti-Semitic drive that will both alienate millions and supply the West with an effective propaganda weapon?

The Communist movement has developed from its "romantic" or "idealistic" stage to its bureaucratic stage. Moscow no longer requires pure faith from its followers. I could name a dozen ex-Nazis, ex-Fascists, and war criminals who have joined one of the East European parties and are now holding key posts in the "people's democracies." Moscow measures the usefulness of a party member today by his loyalty to the Soviet Union and his effectiveness in boosting production. By this yardstick a war criminal released from prison and given a high post in the Hungarian army may be a good Communist, while Rajk and Slansky, who between them had given nearly seventy years to the cause, were traitors.

As viewed from within the Red world, the purges fall into four categories. In the first are those that seek to remove the inner rot I described last week. A Communist government, of course, is a tremendous dispenser of patronage. Matyas Rakosi has put the number of card-holding workers and peasants placed in key posts in Hungary at more than 100,000. In Poland and Czechoslovakia the figure is twice as large. If countless thousands of officials and managers are eliminated, competent replacements are hard to find. I knew a bank president who could barely sign his name and a worker assigned to keep an eye on textbook writers in the Ministry of Education who had not gone beyond primary school.

But a modern state and economy cannot be run on loyalty alone. Thus incompetent officials must be purged. In Hungary two years ago the party discovered that everybody in a certain industry—workers, foremen, managers—was involved in a wholesale wage fraud. Workers and management falsified their reports to show higher production, and of course claimed bonuses. When the figures were added up, the total exceeded the industry's known output. In addition to fraudulent wage claims, there have been health-insurance frauds and frauds in the delivery of grain to the state. The cheating is universal, and the Communists take advantage of it like everybody else.

The standard cure for this inner rot is the surgery of a purge that goes on around the calendar and hits hundreds of thousands of Communists a year. Probably 90 per cent of all purges are of this type. And yet they do not and cannot cure anything. As long as the worker is underpaid and overworked, as long as government functions are performed by a double-decker bureaucracy (party apparatus superimposed on the state), as long as every party boss wields unlimited power, and as long as there is a premium on denunciation, the inner rot must continue.

The second type of purge aims at erasing every sign of disloyalty, actual or potential. Since intra-party conspiracy is extremely difficult and rare, purges of this kind are directed largely against nationalism, which Moscow regards as the greatest danger to its primacy. By Communist definition, nationalism takes various forms—doubt of Moscow's good intentions, excessive devotion to one's homeland (as in Tito's horrible example), or even faith in the unbreakable unity of the Jewish people—but it is always a dangerous infection, to be burned out mercilessly.

Nationalist deviations have been very much in the Communist mind in the past six months. In several of the Soviet republics, for instance, the party and the secret police have uncovered plots by native writers to glorify ancient fighters for independence or to depict czarist Russia as an aggressor ("this distorts the fact that Russia has always sided with native peoples in their courageous battle against foreign imperialism"). In the satellite countries any half-heartedness in extolling the Soviet Union or in pushing the Russification of the "people's democracies" is promptly branded as a nationalist deviation. And of course Zionism and its Socialist foe, the Jewish Bund, have always been targets of Soviet fire. As Walter Kolarz notes in his well-documented book "Russia and Her Colonies," published recently in the United States by Praeger, Stalin's first long ideological article, Marxism and the National Question, written back in 1913, was largely an attack on the Jewish Bund. Kolarz recalls that even in 1941, when Stalin was wooing Jewish groups abroad, he did not halt his "special little war" on the Bund but executed

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two of its outstanding leaders, Etlich and Alter. The creation of Israel, by inspiring nationalist feeling among Russia's Jews, immediately provoked a series of anti-Zionist and sometimes even openly anti-Jewish steps, such as the closing of a Jewish publishing house, the newspaper Aynikeit, and the Jewish Theater.

Moscow will not tolerate "divided loyalty," A Kazakh who dreams too much of the ancient glory of his people, a Jew inspired by the re-creation of his ancient state, a Traicho Kostov who tries to get the highest price for Bulgarian tobacco—each is a traitor to the "peace camp" and to the "homeland of socialism." The penalties for such treason are severe. If a thriving factory manager gets seven years in prison, a "bourgeois nationalist" is lucky to escape with his life.

Nationalist deviations provide the most spectacular trials in the satellite countries. Moscow is not content with eliminating persons of doubtful loyalty; it must also make the lesson clear to all. "Bourgeois nationalism" must be shown to be a Western conspiracy, and those guilty of it must be presented as professional spies, saboteurs, and sometimes murderers. Since the men thus blackened have often been top-ranking leaders, it is necessary to explain how this deception could have been carried on for decades. So the explanation is produced. "The enemy," declare Bulgaria's Chervenkov, "cannot always be identified by his bad work. On the contrary, the enemy usually tries to work 'well' and to rise to some responsible post. He works with a long-term objective. He disguises himself, dresses himself in loyalty, votes, does not quarrel, and awaits the decisive moment of difficulty to betray and injure us."

There is every sign that a new set of highly publicized dramatic trials in this category will be staged in the next six months. And Zionism is certain to be one of the villains in the coming war on "bourgeois nationalism." The trial of the "Zionist doctors" in Moscow will have all the trappings of a major propaganda effort. Ana Pauker is yet to be tried in Bucharest, and Zionism will surely sit in the dock with her, Zoltan Vas, for sixteen years a prison comrade of Rakosi himself, may be involved in a "Zionist" trial in Hungary. Many reporters in the West suggest that Moscow's anti-Jewish moves are intended to please the Arab world or the ex-Nazis in Germany. These also may be dividends of which Moscow is not unaware.

THE third type of purge meets the Communist Party's need for scapegoats. Since the party is the absolute master of any country in which it is in power, it must logically be blamed for all failures of judgment and performance from food shortages to wholesale frauds. Thus it searches constantly for villains. Wall Street and Tito are the invariable first choice, joined more recently by the Zionists and "right-wing Social Democrats." In Hungary the last-named have been blamed for the restlessness of the underpaid workers and the failure of the vital coal-mining plan.

But villains and scapegoats must not be vague or remote. They are needed right on the scene, in trembling flesh. In Rumania, where food is in tragically short supply, Foreign Minister Ana Pauker is blamed. In Czechoslovakia, Slansky was held responsible for every economic failure. At a mass-meeting at the Roztoky penicillin plant a microbiologist explained why production had dropped: "One example of Slansky's sabotage here was the building of a boiler house with second-hand material, so that steam capacity would not be sufficient." Almost in the same tone of voice President Gottwald blamed Slansky for the failure of the entire Five-Year Plan. In Hungary, where the scarcities and strains are as great as in any "people's democracy," the responsibility is now being pinned on the Planning Office of the veteran Communist, and Jew, Zoltan Vas.

Trials of this type provide a means not only of dramatizing villainy but of whipping up production. They are always accompanied by an intense campaign "to show the traitors what honest workers can do." It is a proved fact that production soars immediately after each trial, only to dip again when the fear of denunciation and arrest dies down.

The purges which began last summer have still another purpose. Stalín may assure the faithful in his latest theoretical work that the capitalist warmongers are about to start fighting one another. (This is not a new doctrine, General Dercyvanko, the Soviet ambassador to Tokyo, told me back in 1946 that the United States and Great Britain were the great rivals in Japan and that the Soviet Union was merely acting as a peacemaker between them.) But Stalín's published views to the contrary, deep concern exists in the Communist world. It is clearly revealed in Moscow's startling discovery, after thirty-six triumphant years, that there is a strain of disloyalty in what Pravda customarily calls "the advanced Soviet man" and that purges must be resumed on a large scale. It is seen in the new intensive drive against minority groups afflicted with "bourgeois nationalism." A hint of it is provided by the rumblings in Eastern Europe of a surprising campaign against "pacifism."

As indicated in my first article, the publicized trials are only a part of a great mass purge. And this purge in turn is only a part of a vast plan whose outlines remain vague but which obviously reflects some fundamental—and unpublicized—decisions reached by the
Politburo in Moscow in August or early September, before the party congress in October. The timing may be important. It is interesting to speculate on whether the Moscow decisions were not affected profoundly by the nomination of General Eisenhower. The Communists in Europe made no secret of their preference for Senator Taft for President, less because they counted on his affection than because they expected him to be cool toward continued American involvement in Europe. The views of Eisenhower and Dulles on intensifying the cold war or extending it to Asia must have been studied in Moscow with considerable concern.

In 1947 Moscow created the Cominform as its answer to what it genuinely considered a threat of hostile Western moves in Eastern Europe. If the new purges mark a milestone in Soviet thinking, then they are merely the first of a series of moves. At the moment there is no indication whether Moscow will next appear with an olive branch or a bayonet. It is, I believe, wrong to underestimate Soviet eagerness for some settlement, as expressed in Stalin’s replies to James Reston’s questions, and it would be folly to reject this overture offhand—as President Eisenhower most certainly did not. But it would be extremely dangerous to underestimate the range of action, pacific or aggressive, open to the Soviet bloc.

My own guess is that Moscow will vigorously press peace moves, partly because they promise to widen the existing gap between Western Europe and Washington, partly because the Communists believe that American morale is low and the Korean war thoroughly unpopular, and partly because they are convinced that a peace move is far more likely to send the American economy into a tailspin than intensified rearmament. Almost exactly six years ago Mao Tse-tung told me that the great American depression was just around the corner. This conviction persists in Moscow as in Peking. Moscow may want to help the depression along by bold peace moves, but no such action on the world scene will halt the trials and purges. Both are part of the Communist system.

**Justice in Jersey City**

**BY WILLIAM MURRAY**

THERE is no question of honesty in Jersey City politics. Either you are in or you are out, and those who are out are only interested in getting back in, where the gravy is thicker.” This was the first thing Robert W. Greene, then a young reporter on the Jersey Journal, learned in 1949, when he began investigating the local waterfront racketeers for his newspaper. He also learned that it is dangerous to be honest in Jersey City. A man could go to jail.

When Greene first came to Jersey City from Massachusetts he was astounded by the corruption which seeped down from City Hall and infected all of Hudson County. He discovered that about half the reporters on the Journal and the Observer, then published separately, were on the city pay roll in one capacity or another. It was not hard to link the corruption along the water front to the benevolent patronage of the city administration.

For nearly three years Greene ferreted away in his column at the mobsters and crooked politicians. In 1949 John V. Kenny had been elected mayor on a reform ticket and the Hague regime finally pried out of City Hall. But the voters soon learned that it was only a case of the outs again replacing the ins. The faces changed but the system did not.

Greene discovered that it was easy to get information about the current racketeers from the disgruntled members of the old Hague administration, who were naturally annoyed at having been left out of the stealing. One of the angriest was a thug named Frank (“Biffo”) De Lorenzo, described by Greene as “a middle-grade moron whose stupidity was matched only by his greed.” De Lorenzo and two cronies, Anthony (“Slim”) Lucy and Vincent (“Cockeye”) Brown, had been profitably engaged in running Local 1247 of the International Longshoremen’s Association and were furious when they found themselves muscled out. Greene had reason to hope that “Biffo” could be persuaded to talk, especially about Mayor Kenny’s friendships with big-time racketeers like Charles Yanowski.

In September, 1951, Greene became an investigator for the New York Anti-Crime Commission, a private organization which had been delving into waterfront crime since March of that year. Meanwhile Mayor Kenny and his administration were in trouble. The public had been jolted out of its apathy by the increasing violence along the water front. Under Hague things had been quieter and more efficient. During one of the strikes which have afflicted the Jersey waterfront during the past three years Hague commented to a shipping-company official, “Kenny likes his cabbage. He’s trying to get in four years what it took me thirty-two to get.” Hague had known how to control the mobs. Under Kenny gangsters were dropping hand grenades into

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