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Soviet Policy in the Far East, 1944-1951 **by Max Beloff**

Review Author: H. de la Costa

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SOVIET POLICY IN THE FAR EAST, 1944-1951. By Max Beloff.
Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. London, Oxford University Press, 1953.
Pp. v-278. 21s.

This book is an attempt to discover from the available evidence whether, and to what extent, Soviet Russia followed a fixed and consistent policy with regard to the Far East during the eventful period between the Yalta Agreement (February 1944) and the San Francisco Conference on the Japanese Peace Treaty (September 1951). The author quotes with approval Mr. C. P. Fitzgerald's rejection of "the simple belief in a world communist conspiracy planned years ahead, and foreseeing every turn of the world situation." Soviet statemen are no different from their Western rivals in that they must deal with the unforeseen, and in doing so "are as likely to make mistakes in their appreciation of concrete situations" as ordinary non-Soviet human beings. This does not mean, however, that they are incapable of formulating a master plan flexible enough to meet even "a rapidly and unexpectedly developing situation" such as that of the Far East during the crucial years that saw the unconditional surrender of Japan to the Allied Powers, the reduction of China under Communist rule, and the breakdown of colonialism in Southeast Asia.

The question, therefore, is not whether improvisation played a part in the development of Soviet policy, but how far that improvisation extended. Was it limited to the means of implementing fundamental objectives, or did it include the objectives themselves, the essential bases of Soviet foreign policy?

Mr. Beloff considers the possibility that for a brief period before the Japanese surrender, Soviet policy was inspired by "old-style nationalism;" that is, that "the Soviet Union seemed to be justifying its policies and gains" in the Far East "by the same consideration of national interest as had inspired the Government of the Tsars." Thus, the second article of the Yalta Agreement demands as a condition of the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan that "the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored." This seems to imply a return to the Tsarist policy of dominating and eventually annexing Manchuria as Russian territory, regardless of the outcome of the Communist revolution in China. It was only later, when it became clear that the Chinese Communist Party stood a fair chance of supplanting the Nationalist Government, that the makers of Soviet policy switched back to the orthodox Marxist line of

subordinating Russia's role as world power to its role as agent of world revolution.

Mr. Beloff claims that this interpretation fits the known facts as well as any. One might be permitted to suggest, however, that the question is not whether it fits, but whether it is necessary. Mr. Beloff himself points out earlier that "the primary method of forwarding the interests of Communism has come to be either the direct increase in the area of Russian political control, or at least the acquisition of predominant Russian influence through indirect means." If we assume this to be the keystone of Soviet policy in the Far East, it will at once be seen that that policy has been a remarkably consistent one, and there is no need of postulating any fundamental variations of objective.

The case of Manchuria, far from betraying any vacillation in the Soviet policy-makers, suggests, on the contrary, their possession, to a remarkable degree, of the ability to adapt variable means to fixed ends. In 1945, the Chinese Communists were clearly not in a position to secure Manchuria by their own unaided efforts. It was therefore necessary that the Soviet Union should declare war on Japan in order to preempt Manchuria before Chiang Kai-shek or the Allied Powers could step in. No further hypothesis is needed to explain why Stalin, having refused to enter the war against Japan for so long, suddenly agreed to do so on the precise terms that he laid down at Yalta.

Subsequent developments in Manchuria, as far as our evidence goes, confirm the impression of a fluid situation being intelligently exploited to further a clearly envisaged and consistently held objective. Manchurian industry was rapidly and systematically stripped of equipment worth, according to the Pauley Commission, \$858 million, with a replacement cost of \$2,000 million. The official Russian figure says 594,000 Japanese troops surrendered their arms to the Soviet authorities, and immediately thereafter the Chinese Communists took the offensive against the Nationalist Government with every sign of being plentifully supplied with "captured" Japanese equipment. The Soviet Union could not very well deny admission into Manchuria to the Nationalist troops, but they permitted it only after the Chinese Communists had overrun North China. The significance of these moves is well brought out by Fitzgerald: "By handing over the cities to the Kuomintang, but allowing the Communists to occupy the rural areas in Manchuria, the Russians induced Chiang Kai-shek to over-extend his military power and engage in a hopeless campaign in Manchuria which could not be supported by land communications.

The Kuomintang strength was thus consumed in the far north-east and the Communist triumph in China proper made possible. By looting Manchuria of its potential, Stalin made sure that the triumphant Chinese Communists would be dependent on Russia and could not break away and stand on their own feet" (quoted by Beloff, p. 247).

Thus, the later surrender of Manchuria to the Chinese People's Republic need not be read as a change of Soviet policy, but as a move which, if not foreseen, was at least allowed for from the beginning, since it merely exchanged "direct political control" for "predominant influence," in this case economic and of a particularly effective kind.

There is no reason to suppose that Soviet policy towards the other countries of the Far East was any different from that which succeeded so well in China. The evidence, while always indirect, is cumulative that Russian control of one kind or another is the fixed objective, although the form of control may vary according to the circumstances, the most unobtrusive form being always preferred. Thus, while we have no direct proof that the Korean War was decided upon by Stalin and Mao Tse-tung in the winter of 1950-51, the fact remains that, as Mr. Beloff himself points out, "the Korean war doubly benefited the Russians: it locked up a large part of the available strength of the Western world in the remotest and least important of the threatened fronts, and it confirmed the breach between Communist China and the Western world, thus underlining . . . its need of Soviet support." And he adds: "The drain on the resources of the Communist bloc, which was severe, fell mainly on China." (pp. 255-256). "Benefits" of such generous proportions and timely occurrence do not come about purely by accident or improvisation.

The course of events in Japan and Southeast Asia during the same period brings out the significant fact that Soviet approval and support were extended only to those nationalist movements which were controlled by Communist élites, as in Indochina, or still open to such control, as in Malaya. But as soon as a nationalist movement limits itself to purely nationalist objectives, not only is the movement itself denounced, as in Indonesia and in the Philippines, but even the native Communist leaders, who were ungracious enough to fail, are repudiated, as in Japan.

One gathers that Mr. Beloff's main concern in this study is the objective presentation of the evidence, admittedly incomplete, to which we have access regarding Soviet policy in the Far East. In this he has been quite successful. It might fairly be remarked, however, that in his anxiety to preserve

a judicial impartiality, he sometimes places on an equal footing interpretations of the evidence which differ markedly in probability. He concludes with the statement that there is an underlying incompatibility in the dual role of the Soviet Union as a center of political power and as agent of world revolution, and that "Soviet statesmanship has as its major task the problem of their reconciliation." One is inclined to suggest that on Belloff's own showing, the problem does not exist for Soviet statesmen; as far as they are concerned, the two roles are complementary, if not identical. But non-Soviet statesmen would do well to recall that there is often a divergence, if not actual contradiction, between *their* political objectives and the legitimate aspirations of those peoples for whom Communism exerts so fatal a fascination; and that therefore *their* major task is how to reconcile these objectives with the necessity of presenting a united front to a common enemy.

H. DE LA COSTA

CATECHISM ON THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By Vitaliano Gorospe, S.J. Catholic Trade School, Manila. 1954. Pp. 226. ₱2.65.

Here is a book on the social order which has long been badly needed and it is very well done.

For years the complaint has been heard that the Papal Encyclicals make hard reading and all too few have the courage to read and master Catholic Social teaching in the original documents. Both those who would like to be acquainted with the social teaching of the Church but shy away from thick volumes, and high school teachers who despair of having their students study directly from the originals will find the answer to their prayer in Father Gorospe's Catechism.

A catechism is not an attempt to say something new. The less new things that it says and the more clearly it sums up old doctrines the more successful it is as a catechism. Father Gorospe makes sure to say nothing new and says very little in his own words, choosing, for the most part, to let the answers come in the exact words of the Popes from the documents which Pope Pius XII has told us are binding on all Catholics and not a matter of choice. Consequently the book speaks with authority and you can be sure that you are getting not Father Gorospe's opinion on the social question but the clear teaching of the Church. For the Catholic who wants to