

Ten Years of Comintern Publications

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THE years of the peak point of the revolutionary wave, 1919 to 1921, did not leave a large amount of literature behind them. Of the far from attractively produced publications of that period the first place was occupied by translations from the Russian of *State and Revolution*, *The Coming Catastrophe* and *Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?* by Lenin, and later the publications from Smolny, which made their way with difficulty through the cordon of enemies. And these constitute the first slender pamphlets of Bolshevik post-revolutionary publication in the West.

Only rarely preserved, isolated specimens are left to remind us of the first attempts of the press propaganda of the Comintern during the years of civil war. These quite numerous brochures, printed largely on cigarette paper or news paper, and almost on packing paper, in German, French, English, Czech, Roumanian, Greek, Polish and other languages, made their way from hand to hand over thousands of miles, by the most unexpected and tortuous of ways, to those who eagerly awaited them. And did not many of the comrades in Britain, France, Italy receive those little packets of reports and resolutions of the First and Second Congresses, or the first numbers of the "Communist International," rich in their content, and printed on fine silk paper so as to render them easier of concealment?

How great was the demand for literature is evident from the fact that *State and Revolution* was translated in a very brief period into all the widely used languages, as also were the *A B C of Communism*, the *Russian Communist Party Programme*, the *Constitution of the R.S.F.S.R.* When, in 1922, the larger parties began to build up their own legal publications departments, the first books issued found a wide demand, not only among the Party members and the working class but also far beyond their confines. It was not for nothing that the French edition of the theses and resolutions of the Third or Fourth Con-

gress of the Comintern were on sale in all the bourgeois bookshops of North America.

The slogan of "The Struggle for the Masses" and the task of organisational and ideological Bolshevisation demanded that the Comintern and the C.P.'s of the leading capitalist countries should considerably extend their production of literature and should establish literary bases for the theoretical education of Party members.

In 1923 began an unbroken growth of activity, both quantitative and qualitative, in the publication of Communist literature, in spite of the repressions and obstacles of this or that social-democratic, democratic, Fascist or colonial regime.

In its development that growth reflected all the inequality of development of the Communist and revolutionary movement in various countries and all the heterogeneous political-economic and cultural-historic pre-requisites of the class struggle in those countries. In such countries as Germany, where before the war social-democracy had built up a rich Marxist literature, the Communist publishing companies occupied first place, surpassing the traditional social-democratic publishers in the quantity, the realism, the theoretical level and the make-up of the books they published. By occasionally publishing the classic works of Marx and Engels in a revised and mutilated form, the social-democratic publishers only pay tribute to the demands of their own left-wing, which still pretends to be Marxist. In the majority of countries the task of supplying the workers' movement with propagandist and agitational literature naturally lies entirely on the shoulders of the Communists.

The unfailing source for the propagandist activities of the Communist Parties is the continually growing stream of Marxist-Leninist scientific research and scientific publication work, both in the ranks of the larger C.P.'s and, in particular, in the U.S.S.R., a work which is profoundly interesting in its char-

acter and which answers to the primary demands of the international workers' movement.

The Marx-Engels Institute, the Lenin Institute and the Communist Academy give, and promise to give much more, valuable material for translation into the languages of other sections of the Comintern. Already such a gigantic enterprise as the international publication of a complete authoritative edition of the works of Marx and Engels is in process of realisation; already translations in four languages of the thirty volumes of Lenin's works, published in Russian by the Lenin Institute, have seen the light. There is no doubt that the five-volume collection of Lenin's works promised by the Institute will be quickly translated by the Communist publishers into the majority of the written languages.

A selected edition of the works of Marx and Engels would find widespread distribution, and the necessity of such a publication has long since been obvious and has found reflection in the decisions of the Comintern.

An indication of the certainty of their widespread distribution is found in the result of the German revolutionary Marxist publishing company, the Verlag für Literatur und Politik, and the "Marxist Library" already well-known in the International, the first volume of which was issued at the end of 1926. Since that date sixteen little books have been issued, and this library has become a valuable equipment of every active Communist. Since the end of 1927 the "Marxist Library" has been published in France, where eight volumes have been published, and also in Britain, America and Japan; only very recently have publishers in Mexico and the Argentine also begun their publication.

The "Marxist Library" is characteristic of the international level of the Marxist-Leninist theoretical book. In addition to these, and to the agitational brochures and works devoted to special problems of world policy and the workers' movement, no small place in the production of the Communist publishers is occupied by investigations, reports and reminiscent impressions devoted to the struggle and the construction proceeding in Soviet Russia.

Books throwing light on the problems of the Comintern, its decisions, and reports of its Congresses, Plenums and commissions, are appearing to a greater or less extent in all the well-known languages.

Revolutionary novels and memoirs are carving out a broad highway for themselves.

Translations of the works of Lenin occupy quite a separate and incomparable place, both as regards numbers of languages and of editions and issues.

Naturally the publishers have yet much work to do in order to give the international proletariat everything of Lenin's. There is still much leeway to be made up in all spheres.

The number of Marxist manuals which have found or could find international circulation is quite inadequate. The task of working out and popularising the basic problems of Leninism must also be enlarged and developed. The publication of a series of works commenting on the programme of the Comintern is entirely a task for the future.

An extraordinarily small amount has been done so far for the unmasking and the dissection of social-democracy as the agent of the bourgeoisie and a most dangerous enemy of the coming proletarian revolution.

The publication of a series of works devoted to an analysis of the present condition of capitalism is a task of moment.

One of the big tasks of immediate importance is that of making the masses of the C.P.'s familiar with and fixing their attention on colonial problems. The same has to be said of the task of continually illuminating the threatening danger of war.

If there are not a few tasks awaiting the Comintern in the direction of enlarging the character of the productions of the Communist publishers, the number in the field of distribution is still more considerable.

In the work of distributing their productions, the bourgeois ideologists, literateurs and publishers exploit, first and foremost, expert advertising. In the work of distributing Communist propagandist literature the chief weapon is the Party organisation and the entire Party mass with its immediate environment.

Our task is not only to learn to publish well and to publish what is most necessary, but also to ensure its wide distribution. In essence, together with the successes in the task of strengthening the organisational basis of the Party, in the task of winning the trade unions and attracting the unorganised into active struggle, a good test of the degree of Bolshevisation of this or that Party is the level of its achievements in distributing propagandist literature.

Reasons of space prevent one from citing concrete figures, but we can say that in the distribution of propaganda literature Germany holds first place. In that country the Party has succeeded in creating reasonably good machinery and the attention of the Party masses is sufficiently fixed on the necessity of constant theoretical study and on the task of agitation among the non-Party masses with the aid of press material.

The situation is otherwise in France, where, despite the existence of well-organised publishing firms, the Party has not succeeded in appreciably extending the distribution of literature. For the purpose of comparison it is worth mentioning that the Communist publishing firm of the Italian emigrés, also established in France, distributes its literature with much greater success. Whilst it is true that the French worker takes a different attitude towards books from that of the German worker, the fact that the Italians succeed in distributing books in France much more than do the French themselves hardly testifies to the ability of the French Communists to make use of their Party literature and to carry out propaganda on its behalf.

Of the Anglo-Saxon world one can only say that whilst during the last two years considerable successes have been registered by the Communist Marxist publishing firms in Britain, and especially in the United States, in regard to the distribution of literature one very considerable defect has to be put to their debit: the inability (especially of the British) to pass beyond the bounds of their own country, to penetrate into the corners of the colonies and to pour books into the dominions.

One has but to mention that only single copies, not only of Comintern literature, but

of theoretical literature generally, find their way into Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and India. It was not without reason that the Communists in Johannesburg decided not to send a comrade in prison the British edition of "Materialism and Empirio-criticism." They were afraid to risk it; there was only one copy in the whole of South Africa. Even though this may be an exaggeration, it is quite a probability.

The situation is considerably more difficult in those sections of the Comintern which have been completely driven underground by the Fascist regime. None the less, certain of these sections have given splendid examples of ability to combine legal and illegal possibilities and tackle the problems of widespread distribution and successful publication of mass propagandist literature.

The colonial and semi-colonial countries are quite a new sphere, and a very fruitful one. Here the neglect of propaganda in the colonial countries, which was the Second International's glittering "virtue," has had heavy consequences. During the past year, the demand from the colonies and semi-colonies for red books has grown appreciably; the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of India, and of Japan even considerably earlier, the national intelligentsia of the Arabian East are all demonstrating increased interest in Marxism and Leninism, the U.S.S.R. and the Comintern. Of course, the influence of the Chinese revolution and also the wave of emancipation movements of the Arab peoples, as also the growth of the revolutionary movement in India, all have their share in this. The Japanese publishers are issuing—it is true, in a form badly emasculated by the censor—literally everything which the large-scale left-wing publishers in Europe are putting out. In this respect Japan comes before China, which has now lost much of the funds of propagandist literature which were so plentiful during the Wuhan and Canton periods. None the less, despite the ferocity of the Kuomintang reaction, Communist books are still multiplying in China.

The intelligentsia of India are using literature in English, and the C.P. has so far been too weak to create literature comprehensible to

the masses of workers and peasants in even a few of the innumerable tongues which those masses speak. The Communist Party of India is now endeavouring to fill this breach, having instructed a number of comrades to enrich the native languages with an adequate terminology and to translate the chief productions of Marxist literature and the most important documents of the international Communist movement into those languages.

The situation is approximately the same in the East, where the sole published edition of Lenin in Arabian has been a translation of *State and Revolution*, issued by the Wafd publishing firm in Egypt in a translation which is brilliant as literature, but inaccurate as a translation. The publishing problem of the Arabian East is rendered more complicated by the fact that although there is a single Arabian literary script, it is accessible only to the educated sections of the population, as the masses of the various Arabian countries speak separate dialects which are very distinct one from another. Here, as in India and Indonesia, as in South America and Mongolia, as also essentially even in certain European countries, the task consists not only in enriching the languages and translating into them the 18th Brumaire of Marx or the Programme of the Comintern, but also in the parties themselves creating divisions of their own popularisers, agitators and propagandists, who have been leavened with the yeast of revolutionary Marxist and Bolshevik literature, and who have to create, and are already partially

creating, an idiomatic literature for the masses. There are still few such workers in the parties, especially in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, too few mass propagandists who know Arabian or Spanish, Malayan or Mongolian, and can talk to the masses or write for the masses on their most urgent problems in the language of Marx and Lenin, the language of the Comintern.

But the sources are not exhausted, all the forces are not mobilised, the possibilities of those cadres of theoreticians, propagandists and literateurs which the Comintern already has at its disposition and which every day has fresh forces added to them are by no means fully exploited.

One of our most important tasks is to harness all our forces, which are growing up every day in the theoretical and practical school, to know how to find within every party such books and such authors as can be exploited internationally, to compensate for the comparative scarcity of proletarian intellectual workers (writers, artists, translators, etc.) by their international exploitation, to assemble them around the agitation and propaganda committees, and publishing firms, to organise their work.

Another of the many vital tasks of international and national Communist publishing activity is to afford systematic assistance to the Communist publishing firms of all the world, and to conduce to their more active participation in the work of preparing the Communist Parties for the forthcoming battles.