

ing about the Soviet Union and the Communist countries of Eastern Europe. I have visited that area fifteen times, and I speak three of its languages well enough to dispense with interpreters. My acquaintance with the area and its people convinces me that an examination is long overdue of our present policy of rigid opposition to a communism as ill-defined as it is in our current legislation. To speak in 1968 of a centrally controlled, monolithic world Communist conspiracy is as misleading as it would have been a hundred years ago, when all the monarchs on the thrones of Europe professed Christianity, to draw the conclusion therefrom that all the nations of Europe formed part of one centrally controlled world Christian movement. The Communist faith has shown itself to be no more capable of doing away with nationalistic rivalries among countries ruled by Communists than the Christian faith has been among countries ruled by Christian kings and presidents. Nationalism in large nations—whether Communist or non-Communist—tends to be an expansionist force; and nationalism in small nations, Communist as well as non-Communist, tends to be a force for national independence.

In the 1920's there actually was a world Communist movement, with its headquarters in Moscow. By the early 1930's, when Stalin had consolidated his control of this movement, world Communism was no more than an instrument of Soviet nationalism, a tool of Soviet foreign policy. After the Second World War, when Communists gained control of eleven more East European countries, the ground was prepared for the growth of eleven more kinds of Communist nationalism, and the fruits of those various kinds of nationalism are now beginning to ripen.

ECONOMIC STAGNATION AND POLITICAL FERMENT IN THE COMMUNIST WORLD

But the growth of nationalism is not the only thing that has thrown world Communism into disarray. Another problem it has faced is the stagnation produced by the Communist effort to maintain centralized, bureaucratic control of each national economy. This stagnation has forced the Communist leaders to experiment with a measure of decentralization and with the introduction of certain elements of a market economy. One Communist country, Yugoslavia, has led the way in this direction, and it now has succeeded in making its currency internationally negotiable. Other East European Communist countries are expressing interest in assuming the international responsibilities required for participation in trade arrangements with the West.

Along with pressure for liberalization of the economy, Communist countries have also begun to feel pressure for relaxation of political controls. It is highly significant that the Soviet Union and the other Communist countries of Eastern Europe have their New Left too, just as we have in the United States. But what the New Left in the Communist countries is struggling for is freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to travel, freedom from the arbitrary power of a bureaucracy and police uncontrolled by a system of constitutional government that guarantees justice and personal security under law. In other words, the young dissenters in the Communist countries are struggling to achieve the very rights that the nihilistic revolutionary Left in America seems to dismiss as bourgeois prejudices standing in the way of its effort to take control of what it calls the American power structure.

It will help us to understand the real nature of the Communist problem if we make a clear distinction between its economic aspect, which is socialism, or the ownership and control of the chief means of production by the whole community or the state; and its political aspect, which is merely a rather efficient form of the old-fashioned despotism that has appeared and reappeared all through human history. The socialism in their economies gives Communist countries something in common with such vastly different countries as Sweden, Great Britain, and India. The despotism in their politics gives Communist countries something in common with a wide variety of so-called capitalist countries, such as Spain, Guatemala, present-day Greece, Haiti, and Paraguay.

THE DECLINE OF COMMUNISM AS A PSEUDO-RELIGION

In addition to the economic and political, there is one more aspect of Communism that can perhaps best be called the pseudo-religious. Marxist-Leninist Communism has traditionally claimed to have in its doctrines of dialectical and historical materialism the one infallible key to all truth. The break-up of