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MEMORANDUM

concerning the political conditions
in East-Central Europe

- For -

The Members Of The United Nations

- By -

The Polish Freedom Movement

“Independence And Democracy”

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Memorandum

Contrary to the Moscow Declaration of 1943 and the United Nations' Charter, which binds all members to "refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state," Soviet domination has been imposed on the whole of East-Central Europe. The Red Army has been used both to enforce the incorporation of the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Carpathian Ruthenia (altogether 22 million people and an area of 164 thousand square miles) into the Soviet Union, and to bring into power in all countries behind the Iron Curtain insignificant political minorities led by a handful of Communists, highly trained in the methods of internal aggression, and directed in this task from Moscow.

FIRST STAGE

How Power Was Seized

The seizure of power by the Communist minorities was made possible by constant Russian pressure, and the unrestricted rule of Secret Political Police, subject to the Minister of the Interior, this post being held in all these countries by an experienced and trained member of the Communist Party. (Georgescu in Rumania, Yugov in Bulgaria, Rajk in Hungary, Nosek in Czechoslovakia, Radkiewicz in Poland, Kardelj in Yugoslavia.)

The methods used by the Secret Police were always the same: arbitrary arrest, imprisonment without trial, intimidation, threat, maltreatment. They struck down the determined opponent, silenced and beat into submission all others by fear of reprisal and punishment.

Opposition parties were thrown into confusion and rendered helpless by staged demonstrations, the breaking up of meetings by the use of force, political blackmail, infiltration tactics, and splitting the opposition into dissident groups.

No parties were permitted to start activities without the consent of the Government, which accounts for the existence of so many illegal organizations.

No free expression of views critical of Communist activities and methods were allowed. The press was either

taken over or licensed by the State, and thus subject to full Government control. In Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia the printers refused "spontaneously" to print the licensed opposition papers, and they ceased to appear at all. In Hungary and Poland they were severely censored and restricted by the "shortage" of newsprint. Complete suppression of independent views and criticism may well be a matter of timing with other measures intending to ensure the Communist pattern of power.

"Elections" were held in all these countries. Except in Czechoslovakia, and in the first election in Hungary—they were neither free nor unfettered. The Governments of Great Britain and the United States officially stated that they could not consider them as genuine expressions of the will of the peoples concerned. But their protests were of no avail, and the "elections" were used by the Communist regimes to strengthen their grip, and to seize power more firmly and unrestrainedly.

Same Pattern Everywhere

In Rumania:

Premier Radescu was removed in 1945 by the personal intervention of Vice-Commissar Vishinsky, backed by the Red Army concentrated round the capital, and saved his life only by taking refuge in the British Mission. M. Radescu was replaced by M. Groza, who was both an ardent admirer of M. Vishinsky and in his confidence. The Communist domination was then consolidated by the usual methods of a totalitarian regime. The Opposition parties were split and weakened by terror and arrests. Their press was either censored or banned, their leaders tried and condemned, until finally, the parties themselves dissolved, or turned into Communist stooges.

In Bulgaria:

After an uneasy period of a bogus "Coalition Government," the Soviet authorities helped the Bulgarian Communists to obtain supreme and unchallenged power. The technique used was the same as that in the case of Rumania, only applied more ruthlessly and thoroughly. One trial followed another. The life of M. Dimitrov, Secretary General of the National Peasant Party (not to be mistaken with the Communist of the same name, the present Premier of Bulgaria) was saved only by the protection offered to him by

the American Mission. M. Petkov, the leader of the Party, after trying to co-operate with the Communists, came out in open opposition to their Government, and paid for it with his head. Even General Stanchev, who led the Partisans against the Germans and commanded the Bulgarian army fighting under Marshal Tolbukin, did not escape arrest, trial, and life imprisonment.

In Yugoslavia:

The Yugoslav People's Front, led by Marshal Tito, who gained his position by waging simultaneous war on Germans and his political opponents, showed from the beginning no consideration for any other views but their own, and annihilated every sign of opposition.

In Hungary:

Although it took two years of Russian pressure to split and demoralize the powerful opposition of the Smallholders' Party, the Government there has now been brought into line with the systems established in Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. By familiar means and manoeuvres the leaders of the majority Party were imprisoned, exiled, or immobilised by fear.

In Czechoslovakia:

Events there move forward gradually and at a slow pace, with more regard to save the appearances of a democratic way of life. There are no Russian troops in Czechoslovakia, but the fact that the Red Army is stationed in all neighbouring countries is not forgotten in Prague. The key Ministries are controlled by the Communists, and so is the Army. The activities of the Security Police are less apparent than in other countries under Soviet domination, although no less ruthless and effective. "Plots" are now being discovered in both Slovakia and Bohemia. The way towards the fate of other Soviet satellites is already laid out.

In Poland:

After the removal in 1945 of the 16 Underground leaders who, after being invited by the Soviet Authorities to participate in the formation of the Provisional Government, were arrested, tried, and sentenced in Moscow for "diversionary activities against the Red Army," a bogus "coalition" assumed power. As in the case of Hungary, the attempts of the genuinely independent parties within the

"coalition" to assert their share of power and responsibility by democratic measures failed. The non-Communist members of the Government were ultimately ousted, and the Communist ascendancy established itself firmly and openly.

SECOND STAGE

Towards A One-Party Soviet State

The unchallengeable seizure of power by the Communist minorities marks the first stage of post-war developments in East-Central Europe. The second stage is now in progress.

Once the removal from power and influence of those unwilling to believe in or to follow the Communist creed was an accomplished fact, the situation was ripe for the complete liquidation of all opposition. Accordingly, tumbrils began to rumble behind the iron curtain.

In Rumania:

The trusted and respected leaders of the National Peasant Party, Maniu and Mihalache, together with 13 other eminent members of this party, were arrested in July, and the Party dissolved some days later. "Maniu's arrest is insufficient," declared the Rumanian Minister of Industry and Commerce, "we must strike at everything that is gathered around Maniu's flag." Numerous arrests both preceded and followed the dissolution of his party.

As a political trial can have only one end—opposition to the Government being considered as an act of treason—M. Maniu and M. Mihalache were sentenced, to confinement for life, the death penalty having been abolished in Rumania. On their fellow victims the court imposed sentences of long imprisonment.

In Bulgaria:

M. Petkov, leader of the Peasant Party, famous for his life-long struggle against every form of an arbitrary or totalitarian regime, was hanged for plotting a military *coup d'état*. "To a dog, a dog's death," declared the Sofia Radio. "In the opinion of His Majesty's Government," stated the British Note, "Petkov died for the cause for which he had always fought—the right of man to hold and express according to their personal conscience, their own political convictions." The party which M. Petkov led was dissolved shortly before he met his death. On the day of passing the Bill of its dissolution, the Communist paper "Trud"

demanded that the Opposition Social Democratic Party should suffer the same fate.

In Yugoslavia :

No political opponent of the People's Front was ever allowed to act. M. Machek, the Croat Peasant Party leader, managed to escape abroad. General Mihailovitch was executed, Archbishop Stepinac was sentenced to 16 years' hard labour. M. Trifunovitch, the former Premier of the Yugoslav Government in London, was sent to prison for 8 years. M. Jovanovitch, member of the Presidium of the National Assembly and former Secretary General of the Serbian Peasant Party, was sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment for organizing a Peasant Bloc on the alleged orders of "foreign spies"—a British Press Attaché and a British journalist. The dissident groups are being hunted down by OSNA, who are one of the most efficient political police forces in the world. A group of 15 Slovene intellectuals, who made the mistake of being friendly to their Western war Allies, were last August sentenced to death, or to long years of imprisonment. Following the sustained pressure of indignant world opinion, the death sentences on Professor Furlan and Ljoubó Sirts were commuted to 20 years' imprisonment.

In Hungary :

The Soviet NKVD, distrustful of the efficiency of its local counterpart in Hungary, last March arrested Bela Kovacs, Secretary General of the Smallholders' Party. Three months later the Russian authorities produced his confession in which he accused himself, the Premier Nagy (then abroad) and other eminent members of his party, of a plot against their own Government. M. Nagy was forced to resign, and numerous arrests followed. The party, already weakened by hundreds of political arrests and convictions during the preceding months, disintegrated under the leadership of its new chairman, who undertook to purge it of "all who make common cause with conspiracy in their hearts, their ideology, or their conduct."

M. Zoltan Pfeiffer, leader of the Hungarian Independent (Opposition) Party, which did exceedingly well at the recent elections, bearing the brunt of the Communist attacks, had to flee the country under the threat of immediate arrest. A fortnight later the Ministry of the Interior disbanded M. Pfeiffer's Party, and the Hungarian Parlia-

ment annulled the membership of its 48 deputies. M. Pfeiffer was soon joined in exile by Charles Peyer, the veteran Socialist leader, who upon the suspension of his Parliamentary immunity just managed to avoid arrest by escaping abroad.

In Poland:

A long, new series of trials started last June. Members of the Polish Peasant Party, priests, genuine pre-war Socialists, and members of the illegal political organisation called "W.I.N." (Freedom and Independence) were put together into the dock to show "the clandestine links" between the legally authorised Opposition party, the Church, and the Underground, for the purpose "of espionage, terrorism, and subversive activities." Referring to the Cracow trial of a group of such persons, the Warsaw Radio quoted the Communist press as saying: "The trial has proved irrefutably that the Polish Peasant Party is only a legal branch of the Underground."

Peasant Party members succeeded each other in the dock. In Warsaw, M. Augustynski, editor of the party's only daily paper, was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. In Cracow, 8 accused were sentenced to death, among them the leader of "W.I.N.," while an eminent leader of the Polish Peasant Party and an editor of its weekly paper, were condemned to long-term imprisonment. Genuine Socialists shared the fate of the Peasant Party members. In June last the Ministry of Public Security disclosed the arrest of some 36 leading Polish Socialists. Among them was M. Puzak, who knew the prisons of Czarist Russia after the 1905 Revolution, was for many years Secretary General of his party, and during the war led the Underground Council of National Unity in its fight against Nazism. The end of the year was marked by two more death sentences and four of long term imprisonment. "As a Pole, as a citizen and as a man," said Professor Lipinski, one of the accused on whom the death sentence was imposed, "I cannot consider myself guilty."

The rank and file suffered together with the leaders. Hundreds with names unknown to the world at large have been sentenced to death after trials held *in camera*. Their executions were not made public. Thousands of others are kept in prisons, defenceless against the "law" administered by the Security Police.

Under these circumstances—after the dissolution of the Peasant Party in Rumania and Bulgaria, the scattering

of the Hungarian Smallholders, the execution of M. Petkov, the imminent verdict on M. Maniu—the bells tolled for M. Mikolajczyk and his party. If he did not wish “to be killed like a sheep” (as he said himself in London), he had to flee the country. The leadership of the Party was then taken over by the so-called “left-wing elements” which in the vernacular used in this part of the world denote Communist stooges or their submissive tools.

Travesty of Justice

All these trials show common characteristics. The accused are kept in prison for a long period, and when brought before the Court they usually confess to every charge against them. Exceptions, however, do occur. In Budapest, M. Balint Arany, a Smallholders' Party leader, tried to retract his written confession. He was removed from Court, and when he reappeared the confession “rolled from his lips like hoops.”

M. Koyev, a Bulgarian Peasant leader, referring to his former trial, declared in the National Assembly before his re-arrest: “I know I am seeing you for the last time . . . I consider it my duty to declare that nine-tenths of my confession was suggested to me and was not the product of my will.” He also added: “Confessions incriminating me were made by Colonel Abramov when he was in such a state that when they brought him to confront me, he was unable to stand upright.” In M. Petkov's trial, the confessions of Colonel Zlatev, known to have been tortured to death in prison, were used against the defendant.

People serving prison sentences from previous trials are commonly used as witnesses for the prosecution. Political pressure and threats to their families are brought to bear on many witnesses. “Spontaneous” meetings are held throughout the country before the trial demanding an exemplary punishment for the “enemies of the people's democracies.” They do not fail to impress the judges, who, indeed, are often members of the Communist Party. In Poland the Deputy Minister of Justice openly stated that “the administration of justice must be adapted to the ideology of the new regime—to a democratic ideology and to new conditions.”

When, as in Poland, the “offenders” are tried by military courts, the accused is not given a copy of the indictment—he only learns the charges against him during the

trial. He cannot choose his counsel, but must accept one licensed by the Ministry of National Defence. He may be interrogated at any time by officials of the Ministry of Security. He has no right of appeal. He may be held in prison without trial as long as it is convenient.

How The Iron Curtain Is Rung Down

The best-guarded frontiers do not prevent men and news from crossing them clandestinely in both directions. Subsequently their impenetrability must be secured by other means. To ring down the Iron Curtain, fear, suspicion and hatred of foreign countries is, therefore, sown in human minds.

Following the masterly pattern of the notorious pre-war Moscow trials, the indictment of spying for Foreign Powers, then invariably identified with Great Britain or the United States, returns with monotony in practically every trial. The fantasy of this accusation is disregarded, no proofs are offered, reliance on its effectiveness being placed on its repetition and on the severe punishment imposed.

Practically anything may be construed into supplying foreign intelligence services with information. Special attention is paid to intellectuals with a profound knowledge of the Western world, e.g., in Yugoslavia to Professor Furlan, and in Poland to Professor Tarnawski, the greatest living Polish authority on English literature, recently sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

Foreign Embassies are isolated by arrests, and severe sentences are laid on those who come in close contact with them. In Yugoslavia, M. Stefanovitch, a journalist employed by the American Embassy, was sentenced to death. In Poland, M. Grocholski suffered the same fate for his friendship with the British Ambassador there. Mme. Marynowska, an employee of the British Embassy, was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment under the pretext of "spying for the Anglo-Saxon Powers." Another employee of that Embassy, Mr. Whitehead, was arrested, as well as Mme. Czarnecka, a translator at the Swedish Consulate, and Mme. Ablamowicz, employed at the Belgian Legation. A sustained and virulent campaign of hate in the press completes the education of suspicion.

Further Offensive Begins

Travesty of justice is a gauntlet thrown at our moral sense, cast no less openly than the massacres and persecu-

tions of Jews in 1938 under Nazi Germany. It coincides with the public reappearance of the Comintern under the new title of the "Cominform," to proclaim the Soviet arrogation of the monopoly of truth, and to announce in no ambiguous terms the intention of imposing the Soviet system on the whole of Europe.

The "dissolution" of the Comintern in 1943 now acquires its true meaning. At that time it was stated that the Comintern had ceased to serve its purpose, which was literally true. Gatherings round the table in Moscow no longer served any useful purpose. The members and trusted officials of the Comintern departed to their respective capitals of East-Central Europe, to become there either the heads of Governments, or their real masters acting from behind the scenes: Anna Pauker and Bodnaras to Rumania, Dimitrov and Vlahov to Bulgaria, Tito to Yugoslavia, Rakosi and Rajk to Hungary, Gottwald to Czechoslovakia, Bierut and Berman to Poland.

Thorez in France and Togliatti in Italy have, so far, been less successful. But, they discarded their pretence of leading a bona-fide national party on the formation of the "Cominform," and they associated themselves with its intentions and purposes. The re-assembly of the Comintern can only mean that, in the opinion of its members, the time for travelling to capitals further West draws near.

FACTS AS THEY ARE

From what precedes we may conclude that:

1. Agreements which guaranteed democratic governments and free elections to peoples of East-Central Europe have been broken and violated by Soviet Russia for her own ends:
2. Subsequently the countries there did not regain their independence, but are undergoing step by step the process of integration into a new World Empire:
3. Following these developments, 100 million men and women of these countries have been deprived of their fundamental human rights, and live in constant fear of their lives. Justice has been travestied and degraded into violence, contempt for the human individual, its dignity and worth; crimes against humanity, not unlike those of the Nazis, are daily committed under the eyes, and with the full knowledge, of the whole world.

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WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

These facts constitute acts of aggression, threaten world peace, and bring discredit on every purpose and principle of the Charter of the United Nations. We beg, therefore, that they should be brought forthwith for investigation to the attention of the recently established Interim Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, to enable the Assembly itself to take decisions adequate to the danger, at its next regular or special session.

PEACE AND FREEDOM ARE INDIVISIBLE

We are aware that mankind has for many reasons which cannot be enumerated here, reached a critical stage in its development. The maintenance of international peace is more precious than ever before in history. It can be saved only by the rapid and firm action of the United Nations to restore the respect for the principles and purposes of their Charter, as the instrument of establishing peace and security for all nations and all individuals.

Freedom, like peace, is indivisible. It cannot be trampled down in one part of the globe and flourish for long in another. Western public opinion was not sufficiently aware of it at the time when the Nazi Totalitarianism started its attempt at world domination. There is no essential difference between a concerted plan of an internal and an external aggression. Will the same mistake be made once again—to be realised only when the immediate danger is actually upon the free world which remains?

Polish Freedom Movement

“Independence and Democracy.”

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