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Commentary:

THE SOVIETS DISCOVER SOCIOLOGY

The great social engineering characteristic to soviet society has been carried on a basis of a priori Marxist sociology and impressionistic interpretation of reality. At least in the area of social and ideological engineering Marxist "impressionism" predominated. Only in recent years have the soviet social engineers realized the potential effectiveness of sociology as an instrument of social and cultural policies. It is being gradually acknowledged that sociology can direct the ideological workers in their work, providing them greater effectiveness.

A good example of this discovery of sociology is provided by a recent study of the social and religious environment of Lithuania's collective farmers. The official organ of the Communist Party of Lithuania *Komunistas* in its December 1964 issue announced the results of one investigation, which among other things emphasized the status of religion among collective farmers.

The persistence of religion among the Lithuanian peasants has always been one of the most important objects of attack on the part of ideological workers of the regime. Lithuania is a predominantly Catholic country. Religion has been for centuries an integral part of the peasant's life. Equally important is the fact that Catholicism is very closely connected to Lithuania's nationalism; especially in the tense post-war years this relation was obvious when the clergy wholeheartedly supported and participated in the partisan war against sovietization of the country. Thus, the soviet regime directs its attack on religion with increasing intensity, for victory over religious consciousness of the people would also contribute to a victory over national consciousness of the people. Indicative of this intense attack on religious beliefs are the following statistics, provided by the soviet regime. In 1954 only 1,853 atheistic lectures were delivered, while during the first 9 months of 1964 28,430 such lectures were presented. In the period between 1954 and 1964 229 titles of atheistic books, with 2,393,000 copies, were published. (*Komunistas*, Nov. 1964). It is, therefore, significant to consider the effect of such an extensive antireligious propaganda. The above mentioned study provides interesting answers.

The study was conducted in the kolkhoz *Černiachovskis* in the district of Radviliškis. This collective farm is considered as one of the more progressive. There is an eight-year school and two primary schools on the farm (180 children and 15 teachers), a library, a movie theater, and various social and artistic circles. 94 families with 328 members live on the farm. A collective farmer here gets one kilogram of grain and one ruble per work-day (the average pay in Lithuania is about 25 kopeks per day). The families possess altogether 99 bicycles, 19 motor-cycles, and 6 automobiles. Modern household appliances are appearing in the apartments of collective farmers. Original paintings or reproductions were displayed in apartments of only 11 families. The collective farmers buy mainly cheap decorations in local markets. The families had 82 radios and 11 TV sets. There are about 3 newspapers or periodicals available per family.

Most attention was centered on the "vestiges" of religion among the peasants. It was revealed that in 36 apartments (out of the 94 studied) religious symbols are still kept. Thus 62% of the apartments lack religious articles.

Individual families differ religiously. Often children are non-believers even though the parents still adhere to religious practices. Members of 32 families under investigation can be considered as non-believers. In 19 families the parents are religious, while children are atheists. Members of 43 families are either believers or doubters. An "inner struggle" is under way in a group of families, divided internally on religious grounds. Conflicts occur, but in most cases tact and mutual respect are maintained. In one family of believers the researchers were told about church attendance: "We are accustomed to it."

In interpreting the results of the investigation the researchers are still naive and too schematic. They try to correlate religion with "backwardness". Thus, those that do not read, listen to the radio, or are, in general, unorderly and uneducated tend to

be believers, while those that are exemplary in these respects and good collective farmers are atheists. There is no conclusive data to support such schematization — it more reflects the wishful thinking and ideological bias of the researchers. The most important fact that emerges is, that even in one of the most progressive collective farms about two thirds of the families are either believers or doubters, a fact which raises great problems to the soviet ideologues and indicates low efficiency of current anti-religious policies.

It is possible also that the results of the research do not correctly reflect the dispositions of the respondents toward religion, for fear of social and economic sanctions by the regime might discourage genuine responses from the subjects. Reluctance to reveal true feeling toward religion on such basis is conceivable, as one recent report in Tiesa (December 20, 1964) on the discrimination of believers indicates: "...There have been instances when religious people were transferred to other work from collectives struggling for the title of a communist working unit.

It has also happened that in such units religious workers were not given the appropriate documents... Unfortunately, there are still economic officials who are reluctant to give moral encouragement to outstanding workers only because they are religious. .. Such 'innocent' self-insurance by some officials, and sometimes even directly administrative measures, give rise to more negative phenomena. Hipocrisy among people is fostered, conditions are created for careerism, lack of sincerity..." One wonders, therefore, how "sincere" were the respondents in the *Černiachovskis* collective farm. Totalitarianism and discrimination against those who do not fit the ideal criteria of a "communist man" thus provide the greatest stumbling bloc to soviet sociological research.

The limited effectiveness of soviet propoganda affecting the consciousness of the people, as revealed by this study, has suggested to the soviet officials that a new approach must be made in ideological work. An important aspect of this would be sociology, which would constantly point out problem areas and evaluate effectiveness of various campaigns and methods. Thus the researchers have suggested that there is a need to co-ordinate sociological studies. Perhaps even a special sociological institute or council should be established to continually conduct various studies. In fact, the Lithuania SSE Academy of Sciences announced that soon sections for sociology and law will be organized. The effectiveness of such studies may be doubted in advance, for they will be examples of Marxist sociology, incapable of distinguishing other bases for human behavior than economic. This bias is already reflected in the sociological study conducted in the *Černiachovskis* collective farm.

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