

‘Communists versus Socialists’ from Le Monde (10 October 1947)

Caption: On 10 October 1947, the French daily newspaper Le Monde considers the political objectives of Kominform and comments on the power struggle between Communist and Socialist parties in Eastern Europe.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 10.10.1947, n° 840; 4e année. Paris: Le Monde. "Communistes contre socialistes", p. 1.

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Communists versus Socialists

The founding in Belgrade of an 'International Bureau' for Communist Parties has already created a few rumours that may help to indicate the goal of the Soviet initiative.

Zdenek Fierlinger, Vice-President of the Council and President of the Social-Democratic Party of Czechoslovakia, states that it is an attempt to weaken and split apart the Socialist parties in Europe. Such a move, in that event, would be nothing new: it would be part of an offensive that the USSR has been pursuing since the end of the war, one which, for the USSR, has had satisfactory results, it should be noted.

The goal of the offensive is to force the Socialists to merge, or at least collaborate, with the Communists, with the latter in charge. In Bulgaria, the merger has happened; only a small group of dissident Socialists remain. In Rumania and Hungary, the merger is on the agenda. The Rumanian Socialist Party recently denied the news, which is sufficient proof that it is being discussed. In Budapest, proposals along those lines have been dismissed over the course of the past few months. Will this always be the case? Already the news that emerged yesterday described the schism in the Socialist Party as inevitable.

In Poland, for the time being, there is no question of merging or splitting, since collaboration between Communists and Socialists is fairly close. It would not be surprising to see Henryk Jablonski, Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, approve of the creation of the Communist 'Bureau' in Belgrade. In Czechoslovakia, the Socialists are already less in line with the Communists, who run the government under Klement Gottwald. Their recent quarrels attest to it, as do Mr Fierlinger's statement quoted above and the decision concerning the Marshall Plan, revoked by order of Moscow. The Socialists' position in this country is becoming increasingly difficult: it is one of forced collaboration, with a certain resistance that will shortly have to become more active or completely give in.

Soviet policy, as it takes shape in the light of the revival of the Comintern, is to increase pressure on the Socialists so as to force them to give in, even at the cost of further schisms. In the countries of Eastern Europe, the result could be a consolidation of Soviet domination. In countries such as Italy, where the Communists are not in power, the result will be different.

Pietro Nenni has come out in favour of the new International: a rumour is already circulating that, as a result, a second splinter group in his party will break away and join Giuseppe Saragat. The merging of Communists and left-wing Socialists will only be hastened. We shall therefore shortly find ourselves looking at a considerably strengthened Communist Party constituting the Opposition. Moscow apparently considers these parties, which appeal to most of the working class, more useful for its purposes in 'capitalist' countries than real Communist parties, which are fewer and less likely to have a say; Socialists being the link with the non-Marxist parties.

Such a development will not fail to accentuate the divisions and worsen both national and international conflicts. If, in some countries, the working classes could be pitted against the middle classes and the peasants, this would almost constitute a class struggle: the dream of the revolutionaries.

In Moscow, they would then use those internal struggles to wage the wider war with the United States. If the nations of Western Europe were to refuse to align with the USSR, what help would they be to its adversary, with a large part of their population constituting a fifth column?

Great Britain, where the Communist Party has few followers, is the only European country that has, to date, escaped this political manoeuvre. France and Italy have been targeted. We must not forget Germany, where the Socialist Unity Party (SED) has already brought about a Socialist-Communist union in the Eastern zone. This party is naturally requesting admission to the 'Bureau' in Belgrade, from which it has been temporarily excluded so as not to complicate Soviet policy in Germany. But Social-Democracy is still opposed to Moscow's aims. On its policies, as on those of the workers' party and of the Italian and French Socialist parties, will depend the success of the offensive that has just been launched.