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SUBJECT: Swedish Communist Party Pretends Self-Criticism and Freedom of Speech

"Ny Dag" (Stockholm), the leading organ of the Swedish Communist Party, has lately opened its pages to articles written by leading Party members who in notably frank language criticized the Party Executive and its policies which were said to foster bureaucracy, personality cult and "intolerance". The Party was also censured for echoing too uncritically Soviet Russian propaganda while paying little heed to Swedish "national" interests and the welfare of the Swedish labor class. It is yet too early to say whether this self-criticism reflects a real sentiment among the Party rank and file or if it is only a cloak for new tactics designed to make Communism or "Socialism" appear democratic and nationalist minded.

The first article, written by Allan BJÖRK, former CP Treasurer and former editor of "Norskensflamman" (Luleå), a Communist provincial daily, appeared on November 20. In it, the author complained that the Party Executive had failed to draw the conclusions for Sweden's part of the uprooting of the personality cult which was said to have been effected in the Soviet Union. This, it was claimed, had made it impossible for the Swedish CP members to understand the great re-evaluations that had taken place within the Russian parent party in the past two years. Björk found it particularly strange and serious that the Party leadership had almost entirely ignored or belittled the strong condemnation of the personality cult voiced by the Soviet Communist Party Congress in the spring of 1957 and had thereby allowed continued "bureaucratization of Party life, lacking tolerance vis-a-vis Party comrades entertaining a dissident view on non-principle questions, and unwillingness or inability over a number of years to encourage and develop political and ideological discussion within the Party". The working method (wrote the author) has been for the Party Executive to present ready-made views where different opinions or nuances have had no place and specific Swedish conditions and characteristics have not been taken into account. As an anomaly was pictured the fact that of the 35 members of the Party Central Committee only two are trade unionists and two or three more directly engaged in productivity, all the others being paid Party functionaries or writers in the Party press, and that all eleven members of the Executive Committee are Party employed functionaries. Of the nine Communist members of the Riksdag only two were active in production when elected. The centralization of the Party's activities and "remote control" of the Party press and the Party districts were other causes of complaint: "It is the bureaucratic methods and ennui, jog-trot and inability

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From Stockholm

to listen to members and the working people which are primarily responsible for the present conditions within our Party". The remedy urged by Björk was to open wide the doors of the leading Party organizational bodies to "the men in the field", to active trade unionists, sympathizers from the popular organizations and from among the intelligensia.

A second article, published November 21, was written by Henning NILSSON, of Gävle, a former member of the Communist Riksdag group. He criticized the Party leaders for insisting on preserving the ideas of 20 or 30 years ago and paying no heed to modern developments. "That the Communist Party is part of the international labor movement has been stressed to a degree where many Communists have become more international than national, that is to say, many Communists feel and think, suffer and rejoice over what is happening in the Soviet Union and the people's democracies but have little feeling for what is happening in our own country and in our own Party... The Swedish Communists' immediate worries and sources of joy lie in Sweden, not in the Soviet Union, in Stockholm, not in Budapest. This means that we are not responsible for the events in Hungary, just as we have no part in the enormous successes of the Russian scientists. It is not we who put up the earth satellite."

This author stressed the need for creating a Swedish Communist Party, looking more to Swedish than to Soviet interests and having better direct contact with its individual members and their every-day sources of sorrow and happiness: "Try to understand those members who are concerned about the events in Hungary and about personality cult instead of branding them as victims of bourgeois propaganda".

Thus far, "Ny Dag" has not replied editorially to this outspoken criticism of the Party, but on November 22 it featured a signed article by a Party member who defended the Party Executive and characterized "comrade" Allan Björk's article as "trash" and directly harmful to the Party, but this writer, too, admitted that there were many shortcomings that would have to be overcome if the Swedish Communist Party was to regain the ground it lost in recent years.

In his reply, published November 26, Allan Björk disclosed that he and others had been directly invited by the CP Executive to discuss what should be done to heal the weaknesses from which the Party was still suffering "as a consequence of the harmful personality cult". He reiterated his various points of criticism and said that he had believed that he could do this without being branded inimical to the Party and given other of the names "so frequently used by us during the heydays of the personality cult".

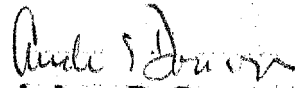
This interesting internal debate and soul searching among the Communists - which shows every sign of being continued - has thus far not been commented upon by the democratic press, but this may be partly due to a tacit agreement not to pay attention to or quote what is printed in "Ny Dag". This poorly circulated daily paper, mouthpiece of the numerically small Swedish Communist Party, is by

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this method not given the benefit of having its views reaching a wider audience.

For the Ambassador:

  
Andrew E. Donovan II  
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