

COMMUNISM IN ACTION

A DOCUMENTED STUDY
OF COMMUNISM IN OPERATION
IN THE SOVIET UNION

PREPARED AT THE INSTANCE AND
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT M. DIRKSEN
OF ILLINOIS

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HOUSE RESOLUTION 720

[SUBMITTED BY MR. DIRKSEN]

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

July 22, 1946.

Resolved, That the manuscript of a documented study and analysis of communism in operation in the Soviet Union be printed as a House document.

Attest:

SOUTH TRIMBLE, *Clerk.*

Passed July 26, 1946.

FOREWORD

By Representative EVERETT M. DIRKSEN, of Illinois

In the fall of 1945 I addressed a group of farmers and farm leaders in Chicago. A portion of that address was devoted to the march of communism in many areas of the world. Those remarks were based upon personal observations made in many countries in the winter and spring of the same year.

At the conclusion of the speech several members of the audience wanted to know if I could recommend a short, simple treatise on how communism operates which dealt fairly and impartially with the subject and which did not employ a heavily slanted or biased approach. Offhand I could think of no such treatise.

But the inquiry prompted me to explore the matter. I thought of the emotionalism with which this whole subject had been surrounded for a long period of time and how ineffective it was in dealing with this new totalitarian philosophy which has admittedly made some gains in the United States in recent years. One conclusion kept reasserting itself. The real antidote to communism lay in a diffusion of knowledge and information on how it operates.

On the plane which brought me back to Washington I blocked out in my notebook the kind of a book I would write on this subject if time permitted and what should be included in such a volume to meet the inquiry of my farmer friends.

If farmers could but know what the Soviet system of agriculture is really like; if laboring men had a better working knowledge of the status of labor in the Soviet Union, and especially the system of forced labor which is so common; if people who are devoted to God and who value a free conscience above all else could better know how religion fares in the Soviet Union; if our people generally, who enjoy the highest living standard in any time or place, could know more about living standards under the Soviet scheme; if those who see in the free-enterprise system as it has been pursued in the United States for more than 150 years the greatest instrument for material human advancement could know a little more about industry and management in the Soviet Union; if those who at some time or other may have found themselves toying with the idea of bringing about a change in our form of constitutional representative government had a better perception of government and governmental methods under communism; if those who have at one time or another felt that a perplexing world required a planned existence, had a broader knowledge of how leisure time is employed under communism; if those who feel that a regulated system of education might be preferable to the free system in the United States had a better perspective of how the educational system operates in the Soviet Union, it would halt the march of communism as nothing else could do.

As I pondered this matter, several things were constantly in mind. Such a treatise should be reasonably short. It should be couched in understandable language. It should not be wearisome with too much historical detail. It should concern itself with communism in action. It should be well documented. That is to say that every authority for each observation should be quoted so that it could not be impeached on the ground that it was merely naked and unsupported opinion. It should be fair and impartial.

Having blocked out the chapters to be covered and indicated the method and manner in which the whole subject should be treated, the next problem was to assemble the material and make it available to the Congress and the country.

My first thought was to introduce a resolution in Congress to authorize the creation of a joint committee of Senators and Representatives who would be empowered to select a dozen scholars of outstanding reputation in the fields of history, agriculture, labor, economics, business, education, religion, and government to undertake this task. This idea, however, did not appeal to some of my colleagues and friends whom I consulted because they could foresee difficulty in bringing about the enactment of such a resolution and even greater difficulty in securing agreement upon the names of those who should be considered for the task.

It then occurred to me that there was at hand an agency of Government which was well equipped to do the job. It was the Legislative Reference Service in the Library of Congress under the very able direction of Mr. Ernest S. Griffith. This Service—as a component of the Library of Congress—was under the immediate direction and control of the Congress. Its very business and its primary function was to probe for facts, to document those facts, and make them readily available to Members and committees of Congress. Here then was a public agency, supported by public funds, and an integral part of the legislative branch of Government itself, which seemed most appropriate to this labor.

Mr. Griffith and his staff cheerfully accepted the assignment. We had many conferences, in the course of which the scope and method of approach was carefully determined. At the very outset, I made it plain that the Legislative Reference Service was to have a free hand in the matter. Personally, I wanted the facts, good and bad. I wanted an unbiased account of communism in action and I am sure the people of this Nation who are interested in this problem would be equally interested in a thorough and unadorned treatment of the subject.

At long last, the task has been accomplished. It represents a long and patient labor. The treatise embodies the careful and painstaking labor of many scholarly men and women who spared neither time nor effort in exploring books, documents, files, and even confidential sources of information, to make available to the Congress and the people a short, practical, well-documented report on this vital subject.

To Mr. Griffith and his associates, I express my personal appreciation for the useful and notable contribution to better understanding of the challenge of communism. I esteem it a valuable work which deserves wide distribution.

PREFACE

Twenty-five years ago communism as an operating system was in its infancy. It has now grown up. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a Communist State, emerged from World War II in position to play a leading role in world affairs and to exert a powerful influence on the political, economic, and social institutions of many nations.

The purpose of this study is to explain to the lay reader briefly and in simple terms how communism operates in the Soviet Union. It does not pretend to be an analysis of the theory of communism. Neither is it an appraisal of communism. It is primarily a description of the operation of the economic, political, and social institutions of the Soviet Union in recent years. Communism has proved to be like democracy in at least one respect; it has expressed itself in many and varied ways. No attempt is made, however, to trace its entire evolution in the U. S. S. R. The dates of the more significant developments are noted in the chronological chart.

Part I deals with the Soviet economic system. In keeping with the Communist emphasis on the economic basis of society, it includes three-fifths of the chapters of this study and even more than that proportion of the space. Part II contains chapters on the political system, national defense, education, the use of leisure time, religion, and individual freedom.

In order to help the reader to visualize the institutions, practices, and policies described, comparisons and analogies are frequently made with the United States. These comparisons and analogies are not to be taken as measures of the success or failure of communism, or as an indication of the precise form which communism would take if it were ever put into effect in the United States.

It will be noted that references to monetary values in the Soviet Union are in rubles. It is recognized that the American reader would like to know the equivalent in dollars; but this is not really practicable. The ruble is used only in domestic transactions in the Soviet Union; it does not enter into trade like the dollar. In the U. S. S. R. the official exchange value of the dollar is 5.3 rubles. To put it the other way around, the ruble would be at that rate the equivalent of approximately 19 cents. The exchange value of the dollar for persons in the United States diplomatic service, however, is 12 rubles, indicating that the official rate may not constitute an accurate measure of the purchasing power of the ruble. After consideration of this and other factors, it was deemed less confusing to make no attempt to convert.

The direct sources used are nearly all in English. All chapters, however, have been read and commented upon by persons familiar with Russian sources in their respective fields.

The study was undertaken at the request of Representative Everett Dirksen, of Illinois, who also indicated its general scope. Representative Dirksen had for some time felt the need of such an objective and comprehensive study so as to make the facts about the Soviet Union available to the American public.

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Director, Legislative Reference Service.

AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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