

NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

The Twenty-First Party Congress and Soviet Orientalology

Contributed by Mark Mancall

In his speech "On the Control Figures for the Development of the Economy of the USSR from 1959 to 1965," delivered at the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held from January 27 to February 5, 1959, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev set forth the problems, plans, and goals of the Seven-Year Plan, now in effect. In the days and weeks preceding and following the Congress, these goals were discussed in every institution throughout the Soviet Union, each making or approving the plans for its part in the country's development. In university meetings, in meetings in the various institutes of the Academy of Sciences, and in scholarly journals, these matters were discussed. Khrushchev's remarks were applied to Soviet oriental studies in an article in the first issue of the new journal of Soviet oriental studies, *Problems of Orientalology*, published by the Institute of Orientalology and the Institute of Sinology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR ("The XXI Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Orientalology," *Problemy Vostokovedeniya*, I [1959], pp. 18-25). A summary of this article indicates the present state of oriental studies and the expectations of the next seven years.

Problems and Plans

The first paragraphs summarized Khrushchev's theoretical assumptions which were to serve as a basis for the discussion of Soviet orientalology's role in the Seven-Year Plan:

As the Congress showed, the Soviet land now enters a period of its development—a period of developing communistic construction. . . . A great new contribution to the theory of scientific com-

munistism is the further development of Marxist-Leninist learning about the two phases of communism, about the laws of the growth of socialism into communism. Khrushchev showed in his report that, "The transition from the socialist stage of development to a higher stage—this is the unavoidable historical process which cannot be arbitrarily violated or avoided." . . . Thanks to these laws, the socialist countries which were in the past economically backward, relying on the example of other socialist countries, on mutual help and aid, have the possibility of quickly overcoming economic and cultural backwardness. . . . Examining questions of the international situation, the Congress paid great attention to the analysis of the heroic struggle of the peoples of the non-socialist countries of the Orient against the colonizers. . . . The very fact of the existence of socialism positively influences the development of the national-liberation movement.

There follows a discussion of the problems facing social scientists in general, and orientalists in particular, during the next seven years.

In the decisions of the Congress, it was emphasized that in the area of the social sciences, a great problem of creative generalization and daring theoretical solutions to new questions . . . stands before scholars. From the high tribune of the Congress, there was pronounced, sharp criticism of the reluctance of many scientific-research institutions, collectives, and individual works to answer the demands which are placed before the social sciences by the new stage of the construction of communism. It was noticed in particular that many institutes and individual scientists stood to one side from the resolution of the most important practical problems of communist construction, that they were occupied with the working out of abstract themes and were, in actual fact, cut off from life. Published works often have a descriptive character, repeat positions, facts, and arguments long ago obvious, and in some works there are mistakes and distortions.

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With regard to oriental studies, this discussion continues:

It must be recognized that his criticism has the most direct relationship to the activities of Soviet orientalists. In carrying out the decisions of the XX Congress of the CPSU, orientalists achieved obvious successes: they turned to the study of actual problems, they increased the quantity of published scientific works, they strengthened their struggle with bourgeois ideology and with revisionism and conducted a series of fruitful scientific discussions on important theoretical subjects. Nevertheless, the work of Soviet orientalists is still far from satisfying those demands which reality itself places before them. The deep study of the actual problems of the contemporary period should become central and basic. The creation of such works—monographs, brochures, articles, publications, etc., which would aid in the future creative solutions to the problems of foreign policy of the Soviet Union in relation to the countries of the Orient, is a matter of honor to our orientalists.

In this manner the basic assumptions of the Congress were first defined in general terms, and then applied directly to the social sciences and to Soviet oriental studies in particular. They clearly implied criticism of past performance and suggested the role that orientology should play in the Soviet state in its relationship to foreign policy and to scholarship. Having defined the general assumptions underlying the position of Soviet orientology following the Twenty-First Congress and its role in the Seven-Year Plan, the article proceeded to discuss specific problems relating to geographic areas and to certain disciplines. In the Soviet Union, as in the United States, China looms as one of the largest, if not the largest, question marks on the horizon, and this is publicly recognized by Soviet orientalists both in practice and in theory.

The decisions of the XXI Congress of the CPSU indicated the great significance of the peaceful system of socialism for the fate of mankind. Therefore, the problems of the construction of socialism in the people's democracies of Asia and above all in the great Chinese People's Republic demand the primary attention of Soviet orientalists. . . . The particularities of the historical development of China, its productive forces, its national culture, its original revolutionary creation of the popular masses, generated their own methods of

construction of socialism in China, in many ways not similar to the methods adopted in other socialist countries. The study of the problems of socialist construction and its originality in the Chinese People's Republic constitutes the basic content of the scientific-research activities of Soviet sinologists. . . . Extreme importance is attached to the study of the history of social thought, literature, art, science, and the problems of philology and linguistics. Based on a rich tradition, built up by Russian and Soviet sinologists in the study of the culture and the language of the peoples of China, the sinological scientists, widening the circle of their research, will still further acquaint the Soviet people with the distinguished role of the Chinese people in the development of world culture.

It is most interesting to note that in 1949 and after the number of applicants for the Oriental Faculty of the University of Leningrad, and especially in its Chinese departments, rose markedly and has remained fairly high. The establishment of the Institute of Chinese Studies in Moscow at the end of 1956 was a further sign of the increasing interest in China. However, it must not be thought that the other countries of the Far East are to be ignored. As the article goes on to say, "Before the scientific workers studying the Mongolian People's Republic, the Korean People's Republic and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, there stands the responsibility for the deep study of the experience of socialist construction in these countries of the people's democracies of Asia, the course of the struggle of the peoples of Korea and Viet-Nam for national unity."

The plan goes on to define the areas in which intensive work must be done in the next seven years. Regarding economics, it said, "With each year the mutual economic collaboration of the countries of the socialist camp widens. Up to now, however, the study of the economic relations between the Soviet Union, the Chinese People's Republic and the other countries of the socialist camp have not occupied their proper places. Without a doubt, in the light of the decisions of the XXI Congress of the CPSU, the problems of the growing economic relations between the socialist countries and the countries of the Orient also merit serious study." Colonialism, imperialism, and economic development also were identified for

investigations. The study of proletarian movements was recognized as a neglected area in Soviet research on Asia:

The study of the position of the working class and the workers' movement in countries of the Orient remains an under-developed part of orientology. The multitude of new problems and phenomena which are related to the entry of the large countries of the Orient on the road to sovereign development, in particular the struggle of the working class for raising the standard of living, the role of the working class in the process of industrialization of economically weakly developed countries and in the entire social-state life have remained outside of the field of attention of researchers. . . . It is known what significant successes were obtained in many of the . . . countries of the East by the Communist and workers' parties. However, up to this time it is still a very narrow circle of researcher-orientalists which is studying the workers' movements of the countries of the Orient.

Still another matter calling for attention, the Soviets claim, are agrarian problems:

In the post-war years, in several countries of the Orient, land reforms were carried out; however, we still have extremely little monographic research relating to the changes which took place in the agrarian structure of the eastern countries. In particular, quite insignificant attention has been paid to the study of problems relating to class differentiation inside the peasantry, and problems of the accelerated capitalistic evolution of agriculture and the consequences thereof. Extremely interesting and important is the problem of the struggle of the working class for hegemony in the peasant movement at this new stage of development.

While the great neglect of serious scholarship dealing with the contemporary scene was emphasized, at the same time Soviet scientists fully recognize the need to develop historical research. "Up to now," the article claimed, "the historical past of many countries of Asia and Africa has remained outside the attention of our researchers. The quantity of fundamental research relating to the history of the peoples of the countries of the Orient in ancient times, the middle ages, modern and contemporary history, is still extremely small."

Language and literature have always been regarded by the Soviets as major weapons in the international, political and social struggle.

Traditional emphasis on these subjects has produced outstanding research in linguistic and philological analysis. The depth and breadth of Soviet language training and research, the proficiency of their college graduates, the productiveness of their scholars in these fields, all testify to this fact. But now a new problem has been posed: "Penetrating research into the creation and development of national literatures of African and Asian countries deals a destructive blow to reactionary theories of Europocentrism. In this regard, the study of problems relating to the interactions of the literatures of East and West is of first importance." This advice refers mainly to Russian literature; and significant studies dealing with the relationship between Soviet Caucasian and Central Asian literatures and Russian literature have already appeared.

Despite Soviet predominance in the field of linguistic studies, the article points out, "It must be noted, however, that many languages of the peoples of the Orient, and in the first place the languages of many peoples of the countries of Africa and Southeast Asia, are hardly being studied in our country. This serious lack must be rectified in the nearest future." It is most interesting to note the ideological and political position in this area of research: "A real problem is also the raising of the scientific level of the theoretical generalizations in this area of linguistics and literary studies, in order to go from descriptive work to the deep Marxist ideo-artistic analysis of contemporary literature and of literary monuments, in order that oriental philology will aid the growth of the authority of Soviet orientology among the intelligentsia of the countries of Asia and Africa."

In sum, the newest Soviet journal or orientology analyzed and criticized the current state of research and training in oriental studies in the USSR and designated the goals for the next seven years. Detailed plans for every field, for future research, publication, training, and seminars were specified; precise projects in the social and linguistic-philological sciences were outlined. Of particular interest is the program for the development of teaching and research materials for the languages of the national minorities in China. The discussion of all these

plans was thorough and penetrating; as a result many fundamental changes were made, most noteworthy of which was the demand for depth rather than breadth in the projects to be undertaken.

Research and Training Institutions

The Seven-Year Plan for Soviet orientology will be carried out by a vast and intricate network of Soviet research and training institutions. These institutions can be divided into three general categories: university, academic, and non-academic. These institutions have been discussed previously in the pages of this journal, but it might be well to review their structure, their functions, and their part in the creation of cadres of orientologists for research and other work.

The university serves mainly as a training institution; its important research functions are of a secondary nature. At the University of Leningrad, one of the two chief centers of Soviet oriental studies, all oriental activities are centered in the Oriental Faculty, the oldest such faculty in the Union. This faculty, as opposed to that of the University of Moscow, has a venerable tradition and indeed has been the center of Russian and Soviet work on the Far East. Vasiliev, Aleekseev, and a host of other world famous figures in the field were members of and deans of this faculty, and its members today include some of the greatest Soviet scholars in the field. The gamut of work in the faculty runs all the way from West Africa to Indonesia and north to Mongolia and Japan. It is primarily occupied with the training of students in languages and social sciences, resembling, to a limited degree, our area specialists. The offerings in language training are wide and impressive, and speaking from personal observation and participation, I would say that the techniques used and the results obtained are of the highest quality. As in all other faculties of the university, the number of students admitted annually is limited and competition for places is keen. Almost without exception, a Soviet university student determines his field of specialization upon application to the university, i.e., at the college entrance level. In the oriental field, this means that once admitted he goes through a five-year

course of very intensive language training. The result is that the five-year college graduate is well prepared to enter research activities on a fairly high level. The diploma papers submitted and defended in the Department of Oriental History at the end of the 1958–59 school year, for instance, indicated a surprising competence in the use of area language materials, both contemporary and historical. Studies of fourteenth century agrarian problems based on original materials and contemporary criticism and research in Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, etc., were the rule rather than the exception on this college level. Some papers were considered of a high enough calibre to be recommended for publication, and the level of technical scholarship demanded of the student was surprisingly high.

While the university faculty members are expected to carry on research, they are also involved in the preparation of teaching and textbook materials. The Department of Oriental History at Leningrad University is currently engaged in the preparation of a textbook on the modern and contemporary history of Asia and Africa. The first volume has already been published.

The second, and undoubtedly the most important, category of research institutions includes the various institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the various academies of the union republics. In addition to the Institutes of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Chinese Studies, research in orientological fields is carried on in such specialized institutes as Linguistics, Modern History, and Economics. The training activities of these institutes are important, though minimal in terms of the total effort of the institute in question. The activities of these institutes are becoming widely known in the United States and can be followed fairly closely through the journals they publish.

The third and least publicized group of research institutions which deal with oriental subjects are the strictly governmental institutions; the various ministries of the central government, such as Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, etc. Although their volume of publication is much less than that of the academies of sciences, important works by ministerial re-

searchers appear from time to time. In the last two years a number of Soviet-Asian trade studies have been published; an area much neglected by more formal research institutions. Furthermore, it is widely known that a great deal of unpublished and non-publishable research takes place in these institutions, as in their Western counterparts. It is interesting to note that sociological research often falls into this last category.

The main source of supply for personnel in all three categories of institutions is, overwhelmingly, the university. Upon completion of a five-year specialized course in one or another oriental field, the student faces several choices, some of his own making, some not. Students may be placed immediately in non-academic, non-research organizations, such as INTOURIST, publishing houses, the various ministries having relations with Asian nations. They may also go into ministerial research organizations. Student specialists wishing to go on with post-graduate training aiming at the completion of a dissertation and the obtaining of the *kandidat* degree,¹ may, if they are extraordinarily promising, be taken on as *aspirants* (roughly a graduate student) by one of the various institutes dealing in his specialty. The further linguistic training of these institute aspirants is determined by whatever training activities the institute may have. Most students going on in academic work, however, will continue as *aspirants* at the university, and on completion of their *kandidat* degree will then be confronted with essentially the same choices as at the end of their college career, i.e., teaching, research, or government work. It must be remembered that these three activities are much more distinct in the Soviet Union than in the United States where most important research is done within the university.

The training system in all areas of Soviet academic work comes under the constant scrutiny of various ministries in Moscow; deficiencies are discussed and attempts at rectifi-

cation are made. It is currently widely recognized that the most important lacuna in language training in oriental fields in the universities is the almost total lack of native informants in the various Asian and African languages taught. A serious effort is now to be made to bring in native instructors, though this will in itself create linguistic problems inasmuch as speakers of Russian in these areas are few and far between. In the school year 1958-59, for instance, an instructor in Indonesian taught in Indonesian, and students of Burmese were receiving instruction in English in preparation for the arrival of an English-speaking Burmese language instructor.

Although research everywhere is essentially an individual undertaking, Soviet orientalists, as members of a society striving toward collectivity, are members of collectives of scholars and, as such, must work under conditions different from those of American scholars. While the basic process of research remains individual, it becomes collective once something is committed to paper. This is true of teaching as well as of research. In the area of instruction, an instructor in the university draws up a total and detailed plan of his course which is then submitted to his department for collective discussion and criticism not only of its content but, in the case of a new course, its ideological approach. The result is a continuous seminar in which junior and senior scholars participate, in which all take part in the editing and correcting of one another's work, regardless of relative academic standings. In reality, the approval of the chair in the university, or the area section in an institute, is necessary for publication. The results of this collective approach to scholarship are difficult to assess if we try to separate them from the basic Marxist-Leninist philosophical framework within which all scholarship is produced. It can be said, at least, that the audience for which the scholar writes is well defined, and the need to satisfy particular personalities in order to reach the publication stage plays, perhaps, a stronger role in Soviet scholarship than in ours.

This is, however, only one of the problems faced by the Soviet orientalist and oriental institutions. Complaints are constantly heard

¹ The exact definition of this degree is a matter of much debate, but in the light of experience it can be fairly safely placed between the American M.A. and Ph.D., though a good *kandidat's* dissertation is easily the equal of the U. S. Ph.D. dissertation.

about other difficulties as well. Finances are not the least of them. Individual scholars, given enough perseverance, can make their work remunerative. Each scholar draws up a plan of work and publication for a year or longer. However, anything published in addition to his planned work is paid for by the publishing institution on a fairly liberal basis, and the scholar with initiative can thus supplement his income. Travel and research trips within the Soviet Union are also normally covered by research institutions; but the problem of financing foreign travel is controlled by other factors. Institutional financing, however, is a subject of much discussion. Expansion of library facilities and the attraction of skilled librarians, in addition to crowded quarters and insufficient funds for the purchase of foreign books, are problems confronting Soviet institutions where oriental research is carried on. Yet it is highly doubtful that ample funds would be decisive in alleviating these problems.

Soviet libraries in general, and those connected with oriental studies in particular, suffer from severe restrictions which hamper research. At the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad there are two catalogs of non-oriental language publications. The author catalog is fairly complete and the more authoritative of the two. The subject or *Sistematičeskij* catalog is analytical only in the vaguest meaning of that term, and the catalog is not always complete or accurate. Books are stored in order of acquisition and by size. Consequently, access to stacks is entirely pointless. Bibliographical work, therefore, must rely in the main on non-library catalog resources—published catalogs and lists, the bibliographical information of the librarians, etc. The shortage of funds and trained personnel make the solution of this problem highly improbable, if not absolutely impossible.

Soviet Sinology

There are two glaring defects in Soviet orientology and especially in the sinological field: ignorance of Western and Japanese scholarship. The former may be attributed in part to non-academic reasons, but organizational and financial problems are also respon-

sible. The centralized purchasing system of the Academy of Sciences, the limited foreign exchange available for book purchases, the difficulties in arranging regular and efficient book exchanges, and the lack of a union catalog system for the main oriental libraries in Leningrad, Moscow, and other orientological centers in the Union, combine to impede access to Western scholarship. Deficiency in the knowledge and use of Japanese sources and research is largely the result of the lack of any real academic exchange with Japan and the lack of Japanese language training for China specialists. Whereas specialists in Japanese, Vietnamese, or Korean history receive training in Chinese, the reverse is not necessarily true, either in modern or pre-modern fields. Soviet sinologists are aware of this problem, and steps will doubtless be taken to correct it.

The extreme centralization of Soviet life is felt in oriental studies. In university work, all theses above the diploma level must be approved by committees sitting in Moscow before defense of them is allowed in Leningrad. The result is time-consuming, frustrating, and the time spent on travel and communications is wasteful. The centralization of most important publishing houses in Moscow creates the same difficulties for research scholars.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the development of Soviet studies on China, however, is the use of the prescribed Marxism-Leninism ideological framework for all research. This is most clearly recognized, of course, by the non-Marxist observer, but its effects are directly felt within Soviet oriental studies in two ways. In the first place, it cannot but affect the quality of research produced, particularly in the area of modern and contemporary studies, though this, of course, would never be recognized by a Soviet specialist. Secondly, and of equal importance, is its influence on the selection of research topics. There is a marked tendency, especially among younger scholars and students, to shy away from work in those areas which would be, even under normal conditions, somewhat tentative. Pre-modern subjects are much more popular for historical research than modern or contemporary topics. A majority of the diploma papers presented for defense in the

Chair of Oriental History in May and June 1959, were in ancient or pre-modern fields. The result must be as expected: public academic work specializes more in subjects not immediately applicable to the current international scene, research on current problems is restricted more to ministerial institutions, and academic publication in the contemporary field, with certain important exceptions, particularly in the university, tends to be of little permanent research value. Here again, one finds a distinction between university and academy research personnel: there is a stronger tendency for senior research personnel in the university to deal with current problems in the Far Eastern field on a serious research basis than there is in the academic institutions.

Given the nature of Marxist-Leninist theory, it is surprising that there is not more of an inter-disciplinary approach to Far Eastern studies. Collective activity in scholarship would also, under normal conditions, tend to support this approach. Several explanations may be suggested for this admitted shortcoming: one is that the concentration of university work in a single oriental faculty, and of academic work in a distinct institute results in surprisingly little communication with specialists in other fields, such as economics, anthropology, and even philosophy. The traditional approach to Chinese studies only serves to reinforce the difficulties of communication. Secondly, the requirements of a Marxist-Leninist approach result in an almost conscious avoidance of an inter-disciplinary approach. A specialist in Chinese literature will, for instance, tend to concentrate almost exclusively, whenever possible, on pure literary criticism or research and neglect social and economic research which would tend to aid his work. Criticism of this is frequent and vocal, especially from the orthodox.

At the same time, Soviet orientalists are not able to remove themselves from the struggle against revisionism, the struggle for increased Marxist-Leninist consciousness in their work. As the article in the *Problems of Orientalology* proclaimed, "The party mobilizes Soviet scientists for the decisive struggle for the purity of the Marxist-Leninist theory against the attempts of the revisionists and falsifiers to distort and pervert the basic position of the doctrine of Marx and Lenin. These instructions of the party lie at the basis of the activities of Soviet orientalists. Soviet orientalists often have come out against revisionists and falsifiers of Marxism-Leninism; however, the new problems which now stand before the oriental sciences demand the strengthening of the struggle against the ideological opponents of Marxism and the apologists of colonialism." It would not be unreasonable, therefore, to expect a finer definition of the Marxist content of Soviet research in the oriental field.

The approaching World Congress of Orientalists and the Conference of Sinologists in Moscow has created a great deal of deep excitement in the Soviet Union. Most Soviet scholars and institutions engaged in research dealing with the Orient are currently involved in the preparation of special research and publication for the Congress. Soviet orientalists are keenly aware that this occasion will provide an opportunity for intensive and extensive contact with their non-Soviet colleagues. In view of the fact that this will be the first opportunity afforded Soviet scholars for such wide contact with non-Marxist scholars, the remarks on revisionism may be taken as something more than just a part of the current anti-revisionist campaign. In the case of Soviet orientological studies, it has a certain immediacy of which the Soviet scholars themselves are not aware.