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9 November 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Use of Youth Unemployment as a
Propaganda Weapon

Communist propaganda, whether in the Soviet Union or in the principal countries of Western Europe where the party is strong--Italy, France, Finland--makes extensive use of the issue of youth unemployment. But there is no overall campaign controlling this propaganda. Moreover it is inhibited in several Western European countries, paradoxically, by the political ambitions of the Communist parties and their close relation to the labor unions.

The overall theme struck by Soviet propaganda is that capitalist society is incapable of assuring full and secure employment; youth unemployment obviously relates closely to this as a striking case. But the first target of Soviet propaganda in this field is the Soviet domestic audience, which must be saturated ~~and super-saturated~~ with the assertion that only Soviet-style socialism assures the good life. While the Soviets were able in the late 1940's and the 1950's to orchestrate international propaganda campaign: on themes of their choosing, their capability has narrowed over the years to a restricted range of foreign policy themes. Well established national Communist parties with a broad trade union base formulate their own domestic propaganda themes, which do not automatically coincide with those of the Soviets.

The West European Communist parties approach the problem of youth unemployment with some trepidation. It is far too important to be neglected, but it presents complications. Finland is a clear example: the Minister of Labor in the present government, Arvo Aalto, is also the Secretary General of the Finnish Communist Party.

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The Italian Communist Party too is increasingly involved in governmental responsibility, takes partial responsibility and expects credit for governmental programs designed to cut down on youth unemployment. It is inhibited by its general gradualist tactics from backing a demagogic propaganda campaign striving to make maximum political use of the bleak unemployment prospects for Italian youth. The Italian party's first concern is job security for those who already have jobs--the preoccupation of the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Italian Labor (CGIL). Recognizing that a frightening number of unemployed youth want white collar jobs in an already swollen bureaucratic system, the Italian party must try to appeal to them but cannot afford to be their champion, because it understands the necessity of streamlining the bureaucracy of the state and the nationalized industries. Though worried by the danger that unemployed and unemployable students will swell the ranks of extremists and terrorists, the Italian party has chosen, like the Finnish party, to cope with youth unemployment through governmental action.

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