

## Pigs and Tragedy in Soviet Science

The story of the Russian Pig-in-Boots, which your editorialist was kicking around joyfully the other morning, is funny all right—but it really is not a laughing matter. It brings to everybody's attention, in a sort of reductio ad absurdum, a catastrophe that has overwhelmed Russian science, a catastrophe that goes by the name of Lysenko.

The crux of the matter is in those words, "the root of the trouble." According to you, he didn't go there; by his own Lysenkoist-Michurinist-Marxist-materialist-socialist lights, that is exactly where he did go, to the very root of the trouble. For did not the great people's-plant-scientist and biological theoretician (along materialist lines), Michurin, say that man must not wait for favors from nature; he must wrest them from her? And didn't Michurin and his great disciple, Lysenko, prove, by experiment and by Marxian dialectics, that to change the heredity of an organism one must change its environment? Well then! The environment of pigs is a hard one. Now, if we change their environment, give them a few generations of comfort until their feet get better, we'll have a new breed of pigs with the constitution of a floor-walker.

Lysenko claims to have done exactly the same thing with wheat. Spring wheat will not grow adequately in certain regions? We will play around with its environment for a few generations; we will accustom the tender spring wheat to winter conditions, and get an entirely different species. Durum wheat becomes vulgare wheat; twenty-eight chromosomes become forty-two; spring wheat becomes winter wheat—and all this by two, three or four years of autumn planting. No cross-breeding. None of your nonsense about introducing different strains. None of your nonsense about formal genetics, either.

The tragedy for Russian science

is that, in 1948, by Government decree, (on the orders of the great corypheus of the Russian people, the greatest scientist of the age, the universal genius of our time—I refer of course to Comrade Stalin) the teaching of genetics as we know it was interdicted in Russian universities, as anti-Darwinian, Weismannist-Mendelist-Morganist - chauvinist-idealist-imperialist (and definitely not peace-loving) garbage, and Michurinism-Lysenkoism elevated in its place. Many of the greatest genetic institutions in the world were destroyed, and along with them, the world-famous scientists who had developed them. Others recanted. "It is so," they said humbly, "we are wrong; they are right. We are good Soviet citizens. The interests of our fatherland are always first in our hearts. What we saw to be true yesterday, we see to be false today." The facts remained the same; only the party's orders were different. The party was obeyed, and the facts left to fend for themselves.

Now we hear that the Kremlin is displeased with the gentleman who shod pigs. But it has no right to be. He is following the party line in science—and he has his own great leader as an authority for the statement that the most important principle in science is the party principle.

Good signs or bad signs, the fact remains that the blessing so many of us hailed in the thirties, the whole-hearted support given to science by the Soviet Government, has now shown itself to be an evil.

And let us not be too complacent. For in our country and the United States, more and more of our science is supported, if not by the Government directly, then by its defense arm. And if now defense supports science, it may in time control science. If we are not careful, we may one day find that we too have our Pig-in-Boots.

Toronto.

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