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THE DOWNFALL OF BERIA

By Abe Stein

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Vol. XIX, No. 3

MAY-JUNE

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The Downfall of Beria

Exploding the Myth of Kremlin Democratization

Surely amidst the many ironies of history, there is none greater than the reason assigned by many observers for Beria's downfall. The liquidator of the Bolshevik Party in the Transcaucasian Republics, the perpetrator of genocide against five minorities during the last world war, and the overlord of a many-millioned slave empire is now being presented in his last hours as the defender of civil liberties and the rights of oppressed minorities in Russia. Beria, we are told, fell because he was the chief author of the new policy of concessions. If this is so, then like Cawdor in Shakespeare's Macbeth, nothing in his life became him like his leaving it.

In what sense Beria became the champion of the oppressed nationalities we shall see. Suffice it to say here that in the complex swordplay that accompanied the struggle for power inside the Kremlin after Stalin's death, each side sought to force the issue on ground where it felt strongest. The general policy of large promises and small real concessions, was not and is not even now, the exclusive property of any particular element in the regime. The visible proof is that the Kremlin propaganda line has not altered in this respect since Beria was purged.

THE EXTERNAL MECHANICS of Beria's catastrophic downfall are meager.

Motorized units of the army rolled through Moscow's streets on the afternoon of June 27th, and just as swiftly withdrew. That evening Beria was not among the group of top party leaders who attended an opera at the Bolshoi theater. The next day this news item was flashed to newspapers in every part of Russia—an unusual procedure in Russia for so minor an item but obviously intended as a signal to party and government officials of what was soon to come.

On July 7th or 8th, a hastily summoned meeting of the party Central Committee took place in Moscow with Malenkov as the main reporter. Beria's crimes (he was apparently already under house arrest) were denounced and his ouster in the name of the party and the "collective leadership." The Central Committee gave its "enthusiastic support" to the collective leadership, now more unified and monolithic than ever, and on July 9th, Pravda carried the official communique of the Central Committee dismissing the Minister of Internal Affairs from his post as a "traitor and capitalist agent" and ordering his case be turned over for disposition to the Soviet Supreme Court.

On June 26th, the day before Beria was presumably put under house arrest, he seemed to be the first or second most powerful figure in the Kremlin hierarchy. As late as July 9th,

foreign observers were still drawing detailed graphs showing a rising curve for Beria and a rapidly descending line for Malenkov. The next day the illusion of Beria's power was unceremoniously punctured before the Russian people and the outside world.

What immediately leaps to the eye is the swift and seemingly painless manner in which this piece of potentially dangerous surgery was executed at each stage of the operation. It immediately raises a question: why was Beria unable to defend himself, if he was the victim of a conspiracy? Or if it was he who was conspiring against the rest of the Kremlin gang, how did he fall so easily into the counter-trap that was set for him without putting up any considerable resistance?

The answer lies in the social nature and function of the secret police. By itself it only has the illusion of power. Separated from the party, it is like a sword without an arm to wield it—it is powerless to strike and lacks direction. Stalin purged Yagoda and replaced him with Yezhov. Yezhov carried out the bloody purges which have entered history under his name—the Yezhovchina—and was then replaced by Beria. Now Beria has been replaced by Kruglov. To continue, to speak, as some observers do, of the secret police in totalitarian Russia as an independent “lever of power” is to demonstrate the power an illusion has to generate the illusion of power.

IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT THAT WAS formed on March 6th, Beria took control of the combined ministries of the State Security Police (MGB) and the ordinary police—slave labor camp administration (MVD). A month later, on April 3rd, Beria created a world sensation when his new Ministry of Internal Affairs announced the “doc-

tors' plot” of January 13th had been a frame-up. The doctors were declared innocent and Beria's wrath turned against the former Minister of State Security, Ignatiev and his deputy and head of the Investigation Section, Ryumin, who had personally fabricated the case against the doctors. Ryumin, Beria's statement declared, had been arrested for violating the rights of Soviet citizens and obtaining confessions by impermissible means. The former Minister, Ignatiev, was censured for “political blindness and inattentiveness.” On April 7th, an even harder blow was struck at Ignatiev. He was dismissed from his post as secretary of the Party's Central Committee.

Why was Beria so interested in destroying Ignatiev? Ignatiev had suddenly come into prominence when he was elected to the Presidium at the 19th Party Congress in October, 1952. At the time it was noted that Beria's deputy, Abakumov, formally Minister of State Security since 1946, had not even been elected to the Central Committee. That Ignatiev had taken Abakumov's place was not known publicl y till February, 1953, when he was nominated by the employees of the Ministry of State Security to the Moscow City Soviet. Ignatiev's loyalties, then, did not lie with Beria. Where they lay was revealed by his appointment in the new March 6th regime to the secretariat of the party. He was Malenkov's representative in the secret police.

If Beria, furthermore, was interested in vindicating the innocence of the arrested doctors, it was not out of some sudden access of conscience, a change of heart, but as a simple act of self-defense in the jungle of Stalinist intrigue. The case which Ryumin-Ignatiev had been preparing against

the doctors must have had Beria as one of its intended victims. Those observers who speculated that this was the meaning of the many editorials in *Pravda* attacking the “intelligence organs” (Beria) for neglect, have been proven right. And behind the underlings, Ignatiev-Ryumin, stood more powerful forces, Stalin-Malenkov.

What, however, is of importance to us here, is the fact that on the day of Stalin's death Beria did not control the state security police. And the events that have occurred since Beria's downfall reveal that neither did he control what had been the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Kruglov, the head of the MVD until March 6th, and then named Beria's deputy, immediately became Beria's successor on July 9th. Since such prizes are rewarded only for disloyalty and betrayal, Kruglov must have had a hand in bringing about Beria's downfall. Had he remained faithful to Beria, he would have suffered the same fate.

If Beria did not control the secret police on the day Stalin died, then he had no real power. Malenkov, whom we can assume was Beria's chief antagonist, had every advantage, Beria none. What brought about the sudden change for the better in the latter's fortune? The only explanation consistent with the events which followed Stalin's death is that Malenkov's retreat was forced, not by Beria, but by a group which was fearful of seeing Malenkov acquire too much power. This group, the “Old Stalinist Guard,” consisting in its core of Molotov, Kaganovitch, Mikoyan and Voroshilov, must have formed a temporary alliance with Beria against Malenkov.

By restoring Beria's position, this group was immediately able to check Malenkov's growing power, which now included not only control of the

party apparatus as party secretary, but of the secret police through Ignatiev. Moreover, this group must have been terrified at the possibility of an open clash immediately following Stalin's death. The possibility that such a struggle might lead to the collapse of the regime must have been very real in their panic-stricken minds. It explains the very first words of the regime, exhorting the Russian people to stand firm and avoid “disorder and panic.” We know now where the panic and disorder prevailed.

The decisive role the “Old Stalinist Guard” played in the struggle, explains the changes which took place in the party and governmental structure during March. The Presidium of 25 members was reduced to 10, giving it the decisive voice in any crucial dispute. The strength of the group was also reflected in the inner cabinet of the new Council of Ministers. Malenkov was Premier, but surrounding him as his four First Deputy Ministers were Beria, Bulganin, Kaganovich and Molotov, with Mikoyan added as a plain Deputy Minister. In late March this group compelled Malenkov to make a further retreat. He “voluntarily” yielded the key post of first party secretary to Khrushchev. Ignatiev's dismissal from the Secret Police and his own removal from the position of first secretary deprived Malenkov of direct control of the party and police apparatus.

With the central police apparatus once more in his hands, Beria moved to consolidate and extend his power. The release of the doctors and the attack on Ignatiev-Ryumin were the first measures. So long as the doctors were under arrest, Beria remained in danger of suddenly being charged with complicity in the plot to murder

the top military and party leaders. And in quashing the frame-up, Beria must certainly have had the support of the "Old Stalinist Guard." It was imperative for the Kremlin clique to indicate to a nervous and fearful bureaucracy as well as to the masses that "unity" prevailed at the top, and that the show trial and purge which had been in preparation before Stalin's death would not be carried through.

The dissolution of the "doctors' plot" and recovery of real control of the police apparatus was conducted by Beria under the cloak of concern for the "civil liberties" of Soviet citizens. The fortune of war now forced Beria to assume the role of defender of the rights of national minorities. An attack on those who "inflamed national antagonisms" provided the propaganda cover he needed for shifting the struggle to a field where he felt potentially strong and the enemy weak.

On April 3rd, Beria had announced the release of the doctors and the arrest of Ryumin. Ignatiev was officially dismissed as party secretary on the 7th. On April 15th, Beria swept out the entire party and police apparatus in his native Georgia. The chief victims of Beria's onslaught were Mgeladze, first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and the head of the state security police, Kotschlabaschvili. These two functionaries along with their underlings went to jail. Out of the same jails, where they had been languishing for some time came the former chiefs of the Georgian party, police and government apparatus, who were restored to their former positions and privileges. In the key position of Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs, Beria placed Vladamir Dekanozov, a long-time member of

his clique and fellow Georgian.* A palace revolution on a local scale had taken place.

Moving with feverish haste as if his life depended on it, (with the wisdom of hindsight we can now say it did), Beria carried through shakeups in the police apparatus of seven national republics besides Georgia. By April 21, that is, in little more than a month, he had replaced the secret police chiefs in Latvia, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Karelo-Finnish Republic, Azerbaijan, Tadzhikistan and Byelorussia. It is curious to note that Beria, the new champion of oppressed nationalities, installed a Great Russian in each of these instances as the head of the police apparatus. On April 27th, Esthonia was added to the list of republics where a change in the police apparatus was effected.

In the case of Latvia, the purge of the apparatus was not limited to the police. The entire government was also ousted and six Great Russians were appointed in place of the Latvian Ministers who had up till then composed the Cabinet. Beria's choice of Great Russians to replace the ousted officials in all these instances was a strange way to act if his interest

*Dekanozov's official biography is of sufficient interest to warrant a thumbnail sketch. It shows the impossibility of disentangling the police from any other apparatus in totalitarian Russia. Until 1939 he was Deputy Premier of Georgia. In June 1939 he was named as Molotov's deputy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A year later Dekanozov appeared in Lithuania as supreme Russian gauleiter after that country had been taken over by Russian troops. Six months before Germany invaded Russia, he became Soviet ambassador to that country. In 1943 he was named envoy to Bulgaria. After the war, he was once more installed as Molotov's deputy, and stayed there until Beria summoned him for the all-important job of reconstructing the latter's apparatus in Georgia. Judging by Dekanozov's career, who always functioned as a police agent for Beria, one is tempted to define Russia as a country where paranoia has been perfected as a social system.

was to win the support of the local population against Great Russian chauvinism. Unpleasant as it is, the right to be oppressed by policemen of one's own nationality or race, can be admitted as an aspiration of racial and national minorities.

THE DESPERATE TEMPO at which Beria set about reconstructing the police apparatus is the compelling proof that he had lost complete control of it before Stalin died. The question naturally arises: when and why had Stalin decided to dispense with Beria? Was Stalin merely following his supreme rule of statesmanship—never trust one man—particularly the head of the secret police—with too much power for too long a time? Or did the matter lie deeper? We shall simply anticipate the answer given by events and say that Beria was a casualty of the never-ending struggle between the local bureaucracies in the different republics and the central apparatus in Moscow.

In 1950-51 the post-war campaign against "bourgeois-nationalism" became a veritable storm. In the first stages it was waged on the "ideological front," to use the horrible jargon of Russian writing. Poets, playwrights, historians, educators and journalists fell under a ban in the various republics for failing to glorify the leading role of the Great Russians—past, present and future. To sing the praises of one's own land was a major crime and to recite its truthful history an outrage. In the Ukraine the poet Sosyura was denounced for his poem "Love The Ukraine," written in 1944 and which simply celebrated virtues of the country. In Armenia, the classic 19th century novel "Flames" which described the independence struggle of the Armen-

ians was banned. The history of Uzbekistan had to be rewritten to show that Tsarist Imperialism had played a progressive role in Central Asia during the 19th century. Russification did not simply remain a negative matter of criticism. A steady stream of teachers poured out of Leningrad and Moscow into the national republics. In Kirghizia, which is a typical example, hundreds of Russian teachers were incorporated into the educational system from the very first elementary grades up.

It is truism that the ideology of chauvinism is the mask of class and national exploitation. Stalin demonstrated this when he transformed the ideological purge into an organizational housecleaning of the non-Russian national republics. In 1951-52, one local bureaucratic clique after another was ousted for the simple reason that each had grown exceedingly corrupt in office, and, intent on its own interests, was unable and even unwilling to efficiently exploit the nationalities for Moscow's exclusive benefit.

Moscow's complaints are familiar enough and need only be sketched briefly. In Uzbekistan, for example, a number of party workers had been dismissed for "financial and other irregularities involving collective farm funds." A letter to *Pravda* from Uzbekistan "cotton farmers" further revealed that the theft of crops, livestock, farm machinery and the like was a common practice. Tens of thousands of acres of collective farm land were being misappropriated by "individuals" for their private benefit. And to make matters worse, the corruption at the top had its effects at the bottom. The peasants were also looking out for their own interests and refusing to give up their private

plots so that the land could be turned to cotton growing. The end result was that production goals for cotton were not being met. What was true of the Uzbekistan Republic was true, with only minor variations, in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Byelorussia, Moldavia, Armenia, the Ukraine, and Estonia. And in all these republics purges of the party-state apparatus took place.

Because they were the original seat of Beria's power, the conditions in the Transcaucasian Republics have a special interest. Bagirov, the head of the Azerbaijan party, lashed out, in a speech delivered to a party meeting in the summer of 1951, at the failure to meet production goals. The oil industry, concentrated in the famous Baku fields had failed to meet 1950 production quotas by a large percentage. The drilling program for new wells was more than 70 per cent behind 1950 schedules. In the fields of power, transportation and building construction the picture was just as dismal.

The peasants Bagirov said bitterly, were committing the crime of trying to serve their own interests instead of the collective farms. The urban consumers, that is, the workers, were being supplied with inadequate quantities of consumer goods. And what was supplied was of poor grade and the food produced under unsanitary conditions. If this was what Bagirov openly admitted, one wonders just how bad the real situation was in 1951.

In Beria's native Georgia, which came under his very special protection, the general picture of corruption on top and a restive population below, was enlivened as so often in Georgia's troubled history, by some especially picturesque features. Not

only were the collective farms being looted on a grand scale of money, crops, livestock and other property by their chairmen, party and government officials, but in addition a violent crime wave was causing a panic in the capital city of Tiflis. Several gangs of auto thieves were making life hazardous for bureaucrats who dared resist their occupational activities.

The corruption of the apparatus was described by the new first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Mgladze, in September, 1952, when he attacked the local and district bureaucrats in the following terms: "Those who think they are going to parcel out Georgia for their own benefit like tribal chieftans are going to be smashed as Stalin taught us to smash such evils."

A total purge of the Georgian party, police and state apparatus was begun in November, 1951, and continued through September, 1952. It was by far the biggest and lasted the longest of the purges that shook the national republics in 1951 and 1952. It had a special significance since the clique of bureaucratic thieves who were ousted were Beria's hand-picked agents. In destroying this clique, Stalin was destroying the original and most important base of Beria's power.

The sweep of the purge is indicated by the fact that among those ousted were two of the five secretaries of the Georgian Communist Party, the first secretary of the Georgian YCL, the chairman of Georgia's Supreme Court, the Minister of Justice, and many other minor figures. Although news of this drastic change was allowed to filter to the outside world, it was not until much later that it became known these bureaucrats had been not only been dismissed from office but also arrested.

The drastic measures taken in Georgia show that Stalin's purge of the non-Russian national republics had, as one of its essential ingredients, an intrigue against Beria, the preparation for his liquidation. But the intrigue in itself was not the cause of the purge, as the facts themselves indicate. The purge began in 1950, but 1950 was the year in which the invasion of South Korea began and war tensions reached new heights. The need to supply Chinese and North Korean forces plus the increasing expansion demanded by the accelerated rearmament program placed a tremendous strain on the Russian economy. This meant the Kremlin was forced to squeeze the masses even harder. But Stalin discovered that instead of getting more, he was getting even less. The very means of exploitation, the bureaucratic apparatus, had turned into a serious obstacle. It had become so disorganized and corrupted in the national republics that a complete shake-up was necessary. It was then, apparently, that Stalin decided Beria had to go, since he and his deputies were no longer able to carry out their police functions of keeping the apparatus in check in the national republics which fell under Beria's supervision, the Transcaucasian Republics, the Baltic states and the area of Central and Western Asia. Abakumov, Beria's deputy, was dismissed, and Ignatiev and Ryumin installed to carry through the purge.

Beria himself provides the proof that just this happened. Not only because the palace revolutions he executed with blitzkrieg swiftness centered on these areas, but in the propaganda barrage which accompanied his reconstitution of his apparatus. As we pointed out earlier, Beria's first move after releasing the doctors and arrest-

ing Ryumin was to completely reverse the purge which had taken place in Georgia between November, 1951, and September 1952. The officials whom Stalin had then placed in power were arrested and the very same corrupt bureaucrats who had been jailed in the course of the purge were "rehabilitated" and restored to power by Beria.*

Beria was not content merely to act. He indicated in his propaganda barrage against whom he was acting. A series of editorials and statements appeared in *Zarya Vostoka* in April, the newspaper controlled by Beria's agents in Georgia which directly linked the case of the Jewish doctors with the fabrication of the case against the Georgian party and government leaders whom Beria had just "rehabilitated." Ryumin, the former Deputy Minister of State Security was denounced together with the former Georgian State Security Minister, Rukhadze, for having prepared the case against Beria's henchmen in November, 1951. *Zarya Vostoka* declared that both cases had leaned heavily on false charges of racial and nationalist bias. If said, further, that both cases were but two facets of a conspiracy which used false evidence to pursue personal animosity and personal ambition. And in an editorial piously entitled "Soviet Legality is Inviolable," *Zarya Vostoka* warned that both the doctors case and the Georgian case would be the "objects of the strictest prosecution . . . and the defendants brought to criminal responsibility." Beria had already arrested Rukhadze and Ryumin, Igna-

*Zodelava, formerly first secretary of the YCL was made deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. Baramija, formerly second secretary of the Communist Party was made Minister of Agricultural Requisitions. Rapava, formerly Minister of Justice, made Minister of State Control.

tiev had been dismissed from the post of party secretary and presumably would be arrested. After Ignatiev, the next object of assault could only be some-one higher up, named Malenkov.

IT IS NECESSARY TO PAUSE for a moment and examine Beria's new-found reputation as a defender of the oppressed non-Russian nationalities. In pursuit of his highly partisan interest, Beria, released the doctors and proclaimed his devotion to the cause of "civil liberties." This act was, there is no doubt, a tremendous event. But his attack on Great Russian chauvinism is another matter. To cover his local palace revolution in Georgia, he took up the defense of those who were unjustly accused of "non-existent nationalism." What Beria did in practice was simply to put one group of corrupt Georgian bureaucrats in jail and take another group out of jail. And in shaking up the police apparatus, he installed Great Russians in an obvious attempt to win support in the Russian dominated Central apparatus. The curious fact is that the two most important measures taken against Great Russian Chauvinism in the world of reality were not the work of Beria's hand. The two measures, which have great significance, were the ouster of the local satraps in two important national Republics, Bagirov in Azerbaijan and Melnikov in the Ukraine.

Bagirov, like Beria, had begun his career as a GPU agent in the Transcaucasus and had served under the latter as one of his chief deputies. While Beria carried out the pacification of Georgia, Bagirov cleaned house for Stalin in Azerbaijan. For his labors he was rewarded by being made party boss of the republic.

Earlier, we quoted Bagirov's complaints on the lamentable state of affairs in Azerbaijan in 1951 and 1952. But while the purge destroyed the career of many a lesser bureaucrat, Bagirov was not touched. Instead, Bagirov received further honors. At the 19th Congress of the Party in October, 1952, he was elected to the Central Committee and became a member of the Presidium which replaced the old politburo. In the new government that was formed after Stalin's death, Bagirov remained as an alternate on the reduced 10 man presidium. It would seem his career had not been affected by Beria's decline even though he had a record of past collaboration with the doomed chief of the secret police.

Observers have noted that after the new regime had been established and Malenkov, to all appearances, seemed in the ascendancy, the Azerbaijan press outdid itself in fulsome praise of the new Premier and studiously avoided mention of Beria. On April 2nd, 1953, for example, the *Baku Worker*, dedicated a long article to the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Caucasian Social-Democratic Party without once mentioning Beria. In the middle of April, Bagirov received still further honors when he was made Premier of Azerbaijan. And in his opening speech to the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, Bagirov called on the party and government to "rally around the Leninist-Stalinist Central Committee of the Party and around Malenkov, the head of the Soviet Lenin and close collaborator of government and the true pupil of Stalin." (*Baku Worker*, April 19, 1953.)

However, on July 18th, a week after Beria's purge, the Moscow radio announced that M. D. Bagirov, had been

expelled from the Central Committee of the party in Azerbaijan. Bagirov's dismissal had been presided over by an agent of the Kremlin clique, Pospelov, a member of the secretariat. What makes Bagirov's ouster puzzling is that no direct link with Beria was made, and that his past history did not indicate he was part of Beria's personal apparatus. We shall postpone an explanation until we have dealt with the question of Melnikov, party boss in the Ukraine.

The acid test of any change in the policy of "Russification" has been, is, and will be till the demise of Russian totalitarianism, the treatment of the Ukraine. No other nationality has suffered so greatly from the repressions and pacifications of the Kremlin as this second-largest national grouping in Russia. While Stalin, for example, allowed other non-Russian nationalities the sop to their national pride of being nominally ruled over by "native sons," this was not the case in the Ukraine from 1938 on. After the terrible purges of the Ukrainian party which saw the wildest excesses of brutality, Stalin installed Khrushchev, the Great Russian as first party secretary in the Ukraine and directly responsible to the Kremlin.

The "Russification" of the Ukraine, both its eastern and western parts was largely the work of this vicious Stalinist careerist. And his second in command during these years was L. G. Melnikov. When Khrushchev was called to Moscow in 1950 to enter Stalin's immediate entourage, Melnikov took his place as the iron fisted ruler of the Ukraine. His reward came at the 19th Party Congress when he, like Bagirov, was chosen to the enlarged Presidium. When Stalin died and the Presidium was reduced in

size, he also was made an alternate, an indication that he was still held in high favor. His links with Khrushchev are established by their long period of cooperation in "pacifying" the Ukraine. His tie to Malenkov is more indirectly indicated. During the brief period when the official press was glorifying the new Premier and still first party secretary, the Ukrainian press was louder and much more unrestrained and for a longer period, than the central organs in Moscow and Leningrad.

The news, therefore, that Melnikov had suddenly been dismissed on June 13 as first secretary and bureau member of the Ukrainian party seemed to point to Beria as the instigator. Furthermore, the crimes of which Melnikov was accused seemed to fit into the propaganda pattern Beria was exploiting to oust his enemies and reconstitute his apparatus. Melnikov was accused of "Russifying" the Western Ukraine,* that is, the section of the Ukraine which Russia had taken from Polish rule. Specifically he was charged with placing persons from the Russian or eastern regions of the Ukraine in leading positions in the Western Ukraine; of imposing Russian teachers and Russian as the exclusive language of instruction in the new higher schools. In addition, the Ukrainian party boss was condemned for having "committed major errors in the work of the organizational and economic strengthening of the collective farm system in the Western

*The charge of "Russifying" the Western, non-Russian Ukraine, while silence is maintained about the Russian Ukraine raises a political question of foreign policy. Is the Kremlin preparing to return to Germany, the eastern areas given to Poland, and preparing to share with Poland the administration of an "independent Western Ukraine?" This is only a political speculation, but why, then condemn Melnikov for abuses in one part of the Ukraine and not the other.

Ukraine." The last charge translated into simple language means Melnikov pushed the collectivization of the peasants in the newly-acquired area at too fast and brutal a rate. This charge, like the others is true, of course, but as his accusers know, the entire policy was ordered by the Kremlin itself.

So far no great changes have taken place in the Ukrainian party and government apparatus—with one significant exception—in terms of appeasing nationalist sentiment. Alexander Korneichuk, the poet and playwright has been named first deputy chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, and on the same day that Melnikov was dismissed, was appointed to the buro of the Ukrainian party. Korneichuk's promotion is directly aimed at the nationalist feelings of the Ukrainians. For it was Korneichuk who achieved an unhappy notoriety for bourgeois-nationalism in 1951. At that time the libretto he had helped write for the opera "Boghdan Khmelnitzky" was subjected to severe criticism by Moscow as a particularly rotten example of "nationalist deviation." And since it was none other than Melnikov who, as party boss, took the platform at a plenum of the Ukrainian party in November, 1951 and attacked Korneichuk and his collaborator, Rylsky, the Ukrainians must have gotten some small sense of gratification to see Korneichuk rise on the day Melnikov fell. The planning of both moves was too deliberate to be accidental.

The cases of Bagirov in Azerbaijan and Melnikov in the Ukraine differ in many circumstances, but they do share two important features. They were both known as "Russifiers" and both had accumulated a great deal of power and glory. Bagirov was at the

same time, first secretary of the local party, premier of the government and alternate to the Presidium of the All-Union Communist Party. Melnikov had acquired a similar garland of position and prestige as first secretary of the Ukrainian party, member of its directing buro and alternate to the presidium. As the undisputed satraps in their respective republics, they were living reproaches to the slogan of "collective leadership." In addition, they had exceedingly unpleasant reputations as "Russifiers."

The possibility arises then that these two local autocrats were pulled down in a struggle that goes beyond the Malenkov-Beria conflict. Their downfall may have been a warning that concentration of too much power in the hands of one man is forbidden. And since both had engaged in an excessive campaign of glorification of Malenkov at the time when he, too, seemed to concentrate a great deal of power in his hands as Premier and First Party Secretary, in the early weeks of March, we can surmise at whom the warning is being directed.

THE REASONS FOR BERIA'S downfall are implicit in the course which he followed. The "Old Stalinist Guard" in our opinion originally restored Beria's power as a counter-balance to Malenkov and to prevent the latter from setting the machinery of a purge and trials of Beria and his adherents once again in motion. Yet here was Beria pursuing a course that was concentrating a great deal of power in his hands and which he was threatening to use to purge Malenkov and his clique. All of this must have caused this group to reconsider the wisdom of its alliance with Beria.

Yet it is possible that Beria might have been subdued behind the pro-

tective facade of the "collective leadership" had not the mighty wave of discontent, with its premonition of revolution, swept the satellite empire. Whatever plans either side had, these tremendous stirrings from below must have sharply accelerated the need to come to a decision. No ruling class can afford the luxury of an internally divided state power, least of all a totalitarian regime, when faced with the resistance of the masses. The demonstrations and strikes in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, to speak only of those events directly known to have happened, were not the sort of trouble that could be resolved by the manipulation of the apparatus. The entire weight and authority of the Russian imperial power had to be brought to bear in support of the feeble shadow power of the satellite regimes if the demonstrations were not to turn into the first stages of a revolution. The independence and conflict of the police power with the rest of the Russian state apparatus had to be ended immediately.

Until that time there was no turn to a line of concessions in domestic affairs either in propaganda or fact. The only measure that remotely resembled the new line proclaimed inside Russia was the amnesty decreed in Rumania on April 4th, a week after it had been announced in Russia. In Hungary, an amnesty was promised by the government on April 12th, but was not put into effect until some time later under very different conditions.

The measures of "liberalization" to which one can point were not at all related to the internal life of the satellites, but were moves in the field of foreign policy. On May 28th, Moscow announced that Eastern Germany had been placed under civilian con-

trol, under the Supreme Commissar, to use Moscow's own phrase, Vladimir Semyenov. The same change was introduced in the Soviet zone of Austria on June 7th. Were these measures intended also to appeal to the nationalism of the population in Austria and Germany? If so, they failed of their purpose, as the Russians learned to their sorrow on June 17th.

The fact is that except for the amnesty measure, the course followed by the Kremlin in the satellite countries was the exact opposite of that taken inside Russia itself. The shadow regimes in Eastern Europe began to increase instead of relaxing the intolerable pressure on their subject peoples.

The clearest example that the Kremlin was continuing Stalin's line was the currency reform of May 30th, in Czechoslovakia, which was intended to solve the inflation at the expense of the workers. No regime which planned a policy of concession would have enacted so crude and naked a measure. But this was not the only measure enacted in Czechoslovakia, although the most far-reaching. On June 1st, the very day on which the Czech workers and the people in general began their protest demonstrations, the regime issued a decree that all men less than 60 years of age and women less than 50 could be forced to work unlimited hours for the state or community outside of regular working hours. The workers had begun to fight the inflation by absenteeism—what point was there in working when wages had no purchasing power? The currency reform and the disguised forced labor decree were the regime's answer to the problem.

The struggle within the Kremlin seems to have been very muted and

not to have extended to the East European regimes in too open a manner. Beria seems to have been content to have regained control of the police apparatus and to have confined the struggle to Russia itself. The only area in which there is a possibility that the Kremlin conflict burst into the open is in East Berlin on the eve of the great demonstrations and strikes.

In April, Semyenov, who had been chief political adviser to the Military High Commissioner of the Russian Zone, was replaced by Pavel Yudin. (Yudin's history is a particularly unsavory one. During the entire course of the struggle with Tito, he played the role of direct Kremlin agent and spy over the propaganda and administrative apparatus of the Cominform.) In May Semyenov returned as supreme Civilian Commissioner and Yudin was demoted to his deputy. Was there a conflict of loyalties between Semyenov and Yudin as some observers and journalists assert? The former representing Beria and the latter Malenkov?

On June 10th, the East German government issued a series of measures "liberalizing" the regime. The distinctive feature of the new policy was that it appealed exclusively to the peasantry and the small shop-keeping, trading and manufacturing class. The peasants who had fled to West Germany were promised the return of their farms they had abandoned or new ones. The promise was made that crop quotas would be reduced and penalties for non-delivery of crop quotas or non-payment of taxes would be revised. Small shopkeepers, wholesale traders and small industrialists were promised the return of their properties and cheap state loans.

The regime also enacted broad measures to mollify the religious feelings of the middle-class. A truce was called in the struggle with the church, and the regime issued a joint decree with the Bishop of the Protestant Evangelical Church promising there would be no further attacks on church youth groups and arrest of Church officials. To further convince the population that a new turn was really intended, an amnesty was immediately put into effect on June 13 and hundreds of persons, jailed since last November were released. On the same day, the *Taegliche Rundschau*, the official Russian paper in East Germany, declared that its former Military Control Commission, which in the meantime had been dissolved, had been guilty of some errors.* The editorial also demanded that the "personal rights and security of citizens of the Democratic Republic must be protected by the Constitution, which is to be adhered to closely by all organs of the state." One of the aims the Kremlin was pursuing with this change of line is indicated in the editorial which declared "The decisions are of greatest international importance. . . . They are aimed at the great goal of re-unification of the German people in a united national German state." We can hardly attribute this change in line to Beria, since the course adopted by the Kremlin has not changed since Beria's fall and will not in the coming period.

WHILE THERE WAS NO conflict ap-

*This explains the recall of General Chuikov and his replacement by an obscure Ukrainian general. Chuikov was saved the humiliation of being blamed for past Kremlin errors. Protocol demanded that a war-time hero Chuikov be spared the humiliation of the demotion implied in being subordinated to his former aide, Semyenov, who was now Supreme Civilian Commissioner.

parently in the East German government on applying these measures to the peasants and middle-class, the question of whether the new "liberal" course should be applied to the workers apparently became a matter of dispute. It is at this point that the question arises as to whether the dispute amongst the East German hirelings of the Kremlin was a private family quarrel or was inspired by the conflict inside the Russian apparatus. The spark that immediately set off the workers' demonstrations was the contradictory statements made by the East German regime on one side and the trade-union bureaucrats, through their newspaper, *Tribune* on the other. The regime promised to rescind the recent 10 per cent increase in work-norms while *Tribune* declared they would be restored in a short time. Some observers have professed to see the reflection of the Beria-Malenkov dispute in this division among the German leaders. They believe that Semyenov, an employee of the secret police before he entered the diplomatic service in 1945, pursued Beria's "soft" line and worked in conjunction with Zaisser, the East German secret police chief to put it into effect. Malenkov, working through Judin and Ulbricht, the head of the Eastern German Communist Party, resisted the extension of concessions to the workers. The alternate and contradictory statements on the cut in work-norms was, therefore, only a reflection of this struggle in the Kremlin.

To attribute the confusions of the regime simply to the struggle within the apparatus between the adherents of Beria and Malenkov would be to oversimplify problems the shadow regime in East Berlin faced in the middle of June. It was face to face for

the first time with a novel force—the workers en masse and it did not know how to deal with the imminent explosion. A similar situation developed in Czechoslovakia after the early June demonstrations when the regime introduced severe penalties for absenteeism. The next week it was compelled to rescind the decree.

Two changes followed in the satellite countries directly after Beria's fall. One was the loss of independent status by the secret police. Under Beria they had remained outside the control of the shadow government and the Communist party in each country, were directly responsible to him in Moscow. They have now been merged with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in each country and subjected to control from Moscow through the party-government apparatus. The second change in the apparatus has been the abolition of the post of secretary-general in the party. The party secretary has now become the secretariat in accordance with the Kremlin's principle of "collective leadership." But if the first measure signified the liquidation of Beria's attempt at independence, at whom is the second measure aimed?

While Beria pursued his aim of reconstructing his apparatus inside Russia under the cloak of "liberal" propaganda, he made no such attempt in the satellites, contenting himself with regaining control of the already existing police apparatus. The turn in the Kremlin line was compelled by the elemental uprisings of the masses. For if we seek to date the first signs of a change in policy, we find that the Kremlin began to retreat after the strikes and demonstrations in Czechoslovakia in the first week of June. This new policy, a careful mixture of real concessions, large

promises and the use of terror became more pronounced after the German workers rose up on June 17th.

The terrible blows dealt to the Kremlin by the uprisings in Czechoslovakia and East Germany have found their strongest reflection in Hungary. The Kremlin evidently decided to experiment with a program of concessions in one of the countries where dissatisfaction had not taken on stormy and uncontrollable features, and the program could be controlled. On July 2nd, the Budapest radio announced a complete reorganization of the government. Rakosi, the boss of the Communist Party and premier resigned from the government and his place was taken by Imre Nagy. The program announced by Nagy is important since it was directed not only to the peasants and middle-class but to the workers as well.

Nagy declared that the country's economy was based on the individual farm. The forced collectivization would come to a halt and persecution of "kulaks," that is, peasants resisting collectivization, would cease. Furthermore, peasants already in collectives could leave them, and the government, to show its good will, would permit peasants to rent land free and would also guarantee their crops. The shopkeepers and wholesalers were promised similar freedom to reopen their shops instead of being liquidated and forced into state controlled cooperatives.

Turning to the workers, Nagy declared that "nothing justifies exaggerated industrialism when we lack the essential materials. The tempo of mechanization must be diminished and emphasis put on consumers goods and food." The regulations punishing workers for lack of punctuality,

absenteeism, or leaving their job without permission were abolished. Overtime work was no longer compulsory and the free time of the workers was to be their own and not subject to the orders of the state or the Communist Party.

Besides the specific economic measures designed to win the support of the different classes and to revive the economy, Nagy announced other and more general measures. The concentration camps were to be liquidated and the middle-class elements who had been thrown into them would be allowed to return to the cities. There was to be greater religious liberty and "forcible measures" against the church would not be tolerated.

Even as mere propaganda, the program the Kremlin has ordered for Hungary is imposing in its sweep. And the peasants and workers did not wait for the government to fulfil its promises. A recent editorial in *Szabad Nep*, the Hungarian Communist paper declares: "In most enterprises the government's program speech has been misunderstood and the clockwatchers proclaiming that 'everything goes' simply stay away from work." Other articles complain that since Nagy's speech, unwilling members of farm cooperatives are leaving them en masse or reclaiming fields that had been absorbed into the cooperatives.

The government, alarmed that the workers and peasants were taking Nagy's program too literally, has attempted to stem the flood. It has ordered a stop to the disintegration of the collective farms and also decreed that farmers who do not deliver their quotas will have them raised ten per cent and be forced to hand them over on the spot.

THE ELIMINATION OF BERIA has not eliminated the acute crisis the Kremlin faces in the satellite countries. The uprising of the masses has caused Moscow to call a temporary halt to the super-industrialization program, the collectivization of the peasantry and the liquidation of the middle-classes—the causes of the economic misery which drove the masses into action in June.

The policy of small real concessions, large promises and the use of terror faces its greatest test in Eastern Germany. For here the problem of reviving the satellites economically by allowing a breathing spell is complicated by the stubborn pressure of the masses which will not permit the Kremlin and its puppet governments to extricate themselves with trifling measures. The strength of the workers in East Germany lies not only in their own magnificent resources, but in the weakness of the Kremlin. The pivot of Russian foreign policy in Europe is to detach Germany from the Western bloc, to prevent its absorption into the Western European Defense Community. It cannot embark on a program of total terror in Eastern Germany while it pursues this aim. Its own internal instability, the economic crisis throughout the satellite empire, the demands of foreign policy, and the pressure of the masses compel the Kremlin to pursue its present general line of "concessions," or more accurately, of vacillation and retreat.

The opinion has been expressed in many quarters that Beria's liquidation would be followed by a large-scale purge. But one must see what this means in terms of the regime and its relation to the bureaucracy and the masses. In his attempts to create an apparatus solely answerable to

himself, Beria ousted or shifted the secret police chiefs in eight of the national republics and overturned the government, party and police apparatus completely in one republic, his native Georgia.

Immediately following his denunciation, the Kremlin clique began to undo Beria's work. Dekanozov, Beria's trusted deputy, whom he had installed as Minister of Internal Affairs in Georgia was expelled from the Georgian Communist Party and from his post as Minister. Along with Dekanozov, the bureaucratic clique Beria had rescued from jail where Stalin-Malenkov-Ignatiev had thrown them in November, 1951, were also expelled. In the Ukraine, the same chief of the secret police, Strokach, whom Beria had ousted in April, was promptly reappointed to his post. And it is safe to say that each of the secret police officials whom Beria got rid of will be returned to his post and the present incumbent demoted or jailed.

While these changes in the bureaucratic apparatus are important as signs of what the struggle at the top was about, they are not yet a purge in the sense of the bloody annihilation that occurred in the middle thirties. One must ask: does the regime have the means to carry through a large-scale purge? It is a remarkable fact, which few observers have commented on that the secret police has suffered three blows in succession, each one greater in intensity than the one that preceded—blows to its authority from which it cannot recover so quickly and which make it an un-serviceable instrument temporarily.

At the time of the "doctors' conspiracy" in January, the secret police was accused of not being vigilant enough in uncovering plots against

the state. This was the Stalin-Malenkov preparation for a blow against Beria and a wide-scale purge. In April, Beria "discovered" that the secret police had been fabricating plots that violated the rights of Soviet citizens under the constitution. This was his propaganda cover for the attack on Malenkov-Ignatiev. And the present collective leadership delivered the heaviest blow of all when it accused the secret police (Beria) of setting itself above the party and preparing to overthrow the state and overthrow capitalism.

A purge is impossible without the use of the secret police, yet how can the present clique in the Kremlin proceed to one with so blunted and compromised a weapon? At the present time the secret police is being purged of Beria's adherents in the name of the party, and party members are being urged to assert the party's control over the secret police. We read in a *New York Times* dispatch of July 23rd that Communist Party meetings in the Azerbaijan and Moldavian republics as well as in the Leningrad area have "subjected local organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to sharp criticism." In Moldavia, one party meeting heard criticisms that "MVD officials were said to pay no heed to the voices of Communists and not to take into account the attitude of primary party organizations." To arrest Beria and to put him on trial is not too difficult an affair. Even to liquidate hundreds of his supposed supporters will not convulse the country. But the present shaky regime simply cannot manipulate the party and mass organizations as it pleases, one day turning them towards an attack on the secret police, the next day subjecting them to its persecution.

TO DISPOSE OF BERIA, the "collective leadership" had to assure itself of the army's support. There is not only the visible evidence of the active participation of the Moscow garrison on June 27th. There is also the fact that the regime called upon the most prominent leaders of the armed forces for declarations of support after Beria had been arrested and publicly denounced. This may be interpreted as one pleases, but it is unprecedented in the political history of Stalinism. It could not and did not happen under Stalin. The only time Stalin called for loud declarations of loyalty from the army was after he had decapitated 99 per cent of the general staff.

Immediately following Beria's arrest, the first military figure of importance to make a public statement was General Antonov, commander of the Transcaucasian military district. Addressing a meeting of army Communists, that is, officers, he pledged full unity to the party and the government. And on July 16th, the leading figures of the Russian armed forces heard Bulganin and a Colonel Zheltov, chief of political administration in the army, report on the Beria affair. The popular Marshals, the heroes of the Second World War, Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Sokolovsky, as well as other important military figures participated in the public ritual of pledging support to the party and the regime. And in every military district a slavish imitation of this rite is being performed. These political demonstrations, they are nothing else, intended to assure the country and the outside world that the regime does not fear the military, are obvious signs of the Kremlin's weakness and the army's strength.

This has immediately led some

journalists to talk about the Russian Army as the real power in Russia and of Zhukov as the new Napoleon. All the talk is concentrated heavily on that incomparable phrase "levers of power," with the army as the favorite "lever," because it has wide popular support, is really progressive and now holds the balance of power.

However, comparisons with other countries and other situations are out of order since this army occupies a unique position in a unique society. True, the army has popular support. That support was heightened by the victory of the army over the Nazi invaders. In the national consciousness it looms large as the armed defender of the nation. And no one can read the stream of post-war biographies, memoirs and fictionalized history produced by the new generation of Soviet refugees without being impressed by how much hope was pinned on the army as the great force which would liberalize Russia or better free the country from the tyrannical yoke. Yet nothing came of these dreams. Zhukov and the others were forced into the shadows while the cult of Stalin as the great generalissimo who had "forged the victory" flourished under official sponsorship.

An army, Trotsky once remarked, is a copy of society—except at a higher temperature. The Russian army is popular, but what other army knows of so vast a gulf between a privileged officer cast and the rank and file? What other army enforces so draconian a disciplinary code? The privileges and power of the officer cast bind it to those who rule in the Kremlin, not to those below who dream of overthrowing the unbearable despotism.

The dramatic events since Stalin's death have given the army greater

bargaining power. Only the army kept the empire from collapsing when its bayonets put down the revolts in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. And the supporting role it played in the liquidation of Beria gives it even more influence. How will it use this new-found influence and power?

The present generation of Russian military leaders, the Marshals and Generals are all in their late forties or early fifties. They are all children of the Stalinist regime, a regime that has rewarded them with incomparable social and economic privileges. They have every reason to defend the source of these privileges. Furthermore, these army leaders were all young, junior officers when the Red Army General Staff, headed by the brilliant Tukhachevsky, was decapitated by Stalin in one dread blow. We can be sure they took the lesson to heart. Military conspiracies, as the unhappy fate of the Decembrists teaches, has always ended disastrously in Russia.

These psychological inhibitions are complemented by certain objective difficulties. In a capitalist or semi-colonial country the seizure of state power by the military can be accomplished without causing a single ripple in the economic and social life of the country. But if the army aspires to power in Russia, it must have a program. It must either envision the overthrow of the present system of state-owned property, the nationalized industry or its maintenance. Since this officer caste was nurtured by the present system and has never known anything else, it is doubtful that any section of it longs for capitalist restoration. This assumption is borne out by the remarkable unanimity of opinion among officers who have fled Russian-controlled territory since the

end of the war. They all express their opposition to the dictatorship but agree that the nationalized industry cannot be uprooted without destroying the economy.

The army has no intention of destroying the social basis of its class. And if it were to overthrow the present regime, it would have to take full responsibility for running the economy. In totalitarian Russia, the spool on which all the economic, social and political threads are wound is the party. The army, therefore, would overthrow this party regime in order to install—another party regime. This is the great obstacle to any military coup d'etat.

The army caste would intervene under one condition—not against the power of the present ruling class—but in order to save it from being shattered. Should revolution break out in the satellites or at home, and the regime prove incapable of gaining control of the situation, then the army most certainly would step forward in the role of savior. The events in East Germany and Czechoslovakia are a premonition of this possibility. Again, should the regime be paralyzed by internecine strife, the army would be compelled to play the role of the arbiter. But feverish though developments inside the Russian ruling class are today, they have not yet, so far as we can tell from the outside, reached this explosive pitch.

Meanwhile, because the regime is weak, because its role has increased in importance, the army will surely push for greater privileges and recognition in the period ahead. The desire to curb the arbitrary power of the secret police inside the army, the desire to play a greater part in making the political decisions, these are the demands the army can and will advance

and which the present regime will seek to satisfy. But there is a limit to what the army can ask for and what the regime can give without bringing down the entire system in ruins.

ANY ATTEMPT TO ASSAY the path the regime will follow is almost an impossibility without knowing something of the mood of the masses in Russia and the attitude of the regime towards them. Fortunately, although the wall of censorship is almost impenetrable, some few pieces of information have begun to filter out. With regard to how the Russian people felt after Stalin's death, we can only cite indirect evidence. In the *New Leader* of July 13, we read of an interview with a Soviet officer recently escaped from East Germany. The officer declares that when Stalin died: "Many soldiers and officers dared to speak freely. Many drank to Stalin's death and left their barracks without permission. Party discipline in the Army was seriously endangered. A political officer in one of the neighboring units was thrown into the water.... During the days immediately after Stalin's death, many soldiers and officers felt emboldened to make friends with Germans and visit in their homes. (As you know, this is punishable by confinement in a forced-labor camp.) Many members of the Soviet Army were arrested, but after a few days an order apparently came that these offenders were not to be punished. At any rate, most of these prisoners were released. These outbreaks were not confined to the Soviet zone. I have heard the same from Poland and assume that things got even more out of hand inside Russia."

Eddy Gilmore, Associated Press correspondent in Moscow for eleven

years, writes in the *New York Times* of July 22nd, that "for the first time in years the Kremlin seems to be showing some concern for Ivan Ivanovich, the average Soviet citizen." According to Gilmore, a rumor spread through Moscow in the last days of June that the ruble was going to be devalued again. Those who had money in the bank began withdrawing it; a wave of scare-buying spread, and the psychology of panic prevailed. Through the Ministry of Finance the government issued a statement declaring there would be no devaluation. Gilmore's comment on this is valuable. He says, "That was a rare step. Under Stalin it would not have happened. The people would have been left to panic, they didn't matter." This, to be sure, is only a small sample of the relation between the regime and the masses. The anxiety of the rulers in the Kremlin, their concern with the slightest change in the mood of the masses, is a sign of fear and uncertainty. It is this which dictates the present and future domestic policy of the Kremlin. The large promises and modest but important real concessions: the amnesty, the reduction of prices, the slicing in half of the compulsory state loan, the ambitious programs announced for producing more consumers' goods; all this adds up to a policy of concession and forced retreat. And the internal divisions within the regime and the tremendous pressures of the masses in the satellites do not make it any stronger. The elimination of Beria has not eliminated the crisis.

The July 9th editorial announcing Beria's doom begins, as all such Stalinist falsifications do, with massive boasts about the growing strength, unity and inflexibility of Stalinist society in its strange downward

march. The Stalinist style did not end with Stalin's death. The weaker the regime, the stronger its declarations. The more disunited within, the firmer the assurances of unity and solidarity.

Every ruling class needs unity of governmental will. Just this is lacking in totalitarian Russia. The disintegration of power which occurred when Stalin died is intolerable and dangerous and cannot be hidden by the present fiction of "collective leadership." Within the regime, a clash of personalities goes on that is governed by the lure of absolute personal power and reinforced by the pressure of conflicting social forces and interests. From without, the regime is menaced by elemental and powerful forces that rise to the surface at the slightest sign of weakness and threaten to tear the whole system apart. The purge of Beria and the June days in Berlin are the first bitter fruits of the new "collective leadership." We can be sure they will not be the last.

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The East German Workers' Revolt

Background and Implication of the Uprising

The June uprising of the workers in East Germany is one of the great events in modern history. What actually happened may be observed by biased or official reports. The implications of the events will not be liked by most governments in the Western world though the inner weaknesses of the Russian empire were openly revealed by the German uprising and will therefore greatly improve their bargaining position in future dealings with Moscow.

The uprising in Germany will open up new historical opportunities which seemed to have vanished with the defeat of the European labor movements during the last twenty years and the emergence of the Stalinist state.

Two world wars, a defeated proletarian revolution in Germany and a "successful" proletarian revolution that failed in Russia, finally the victory of fascism in Germany coincided with the decay and destruction of the old traditional labor movement in Europe. It seemed to be impossible to escape from new wars and the rise of totalitarian states. The hopes which the Russian revolution of 1917 had raised among the radical wing of European labor movements after the first world war had faded away. Already during the Thirties most members of radical labor movements had convinced themselves that the revolution which in Russia had freed the peasants and workers from the rule of an absolute semi-feudal capitalist state had created a new type of oppressive totalitarian monster.

The nature of the new regime in

Russia was not recognized by those who were responsible for political settlements after the second world war in the Western world. It seemed to be possible to arrange a peaceful division of the world in the old style of international cartels. It was believed that "socialist" state planning would make the Russian imperial government more peaceful and self-sufficient than was old Czarist Russia. In such a world—divided up among two or three big powers—there was no place for a German industrialism. Europe was destined to become a subordinated section of the Russian and American empire, permanently divided.

Such plans had to be thrown overboard because they were politically unworkable. The Russian system of state-capitalist planning had produced the most aggressive type of modern militarism and therefore became an acute threat to the survival of all other nations and national states. It seemed to be impossible to defeat such a regime except by forming a counterpart to Russian imperial militarism—a huge centralized state-planned militarism which could fight the new totalitarian power with its own means and methods. But such a struggle between two totalitarian giant powers will extinguish the best achievements of Western civilization and the opportunities to use them for new social progress. A third way out of our social world crisis appeared no longer to exist. The only alternative seemed to be appeasement of the Russian totalitarian system of enslavement.

Adherents of such an appeasement

policy became defeatists in the new struggle of liberation from the totalitarian state-capitalism. A third way out could only be considered an abstract idea or as a speculative possibility which seemed to be contrary to the realities of the situation.

The historical meaning of the uprising in East Germany is that it opens up the vista of a third way out. It is a historical warning that a new era of revolutionary liberation movements is possible. It is directed not against an old feudal or semi-feudal regime which has not yet "completed the bourgeois-democratic revolutions." It is a liberation movement against the latest type of state capitalist enslavement which makes use of extreme methods of nationally centralized planning. Therefore it opens up new vistas also for all countries which have been subjugated by totalitarian state-capitalist regimes.

The historical meaning of the events in East Germany may be defined as the first act of a new social and national revolutionary liberation movement. Its historical meaning overshadows the historical rôle of the first Russian revolution (1905) which shook the Czarist empire without leading to its downfall. Lenin and his closest disciples often reminded their comrades in later years that the events of 1905 were a necessary experience without which the revolution of 1917 would not have succeeded. The June, 1953, struggle of the East German proletarians may turn out to be a necessary introduction to a greater revolutionary struggle which will be political and social dynamite for similar societies all over the world.

A comparison with the Russian Revolution may easily lead to false conclusions. Internal and external conditions differ greatly and make a

useful comparison difficult. In both cases it was the proletariat, and among the proletarians mainly the industrial workers, who led the entire movement, with the silent or open approval of the peasants and whatever it may have meant or may mean again—of the urban middle classes.

But the differences are just as important and may give us an even better insight into the nature of the new movement than the similarities:

Eastern Germany has become one of the most proletarianized areas in the world. A tiny totalitarian bureaucratic hierarchy, the obedient tool of a foreign imperialist power, stands on top of a social organism which consists mainly of three social categories: "free" proletarian workers, slave workers similar to the type of slaves of ancient despotic regimes, and the absolute paupers who have sunk to the deepest level of the economic-social struggle for survival.

The percentage of industrial labor is relatively great, and most industrial workers are concentrated in a few areas. Furthermore, the workers still are affected by the old traditions of the Western labor movement. They consist largely of skilled and intelligent workers. Advanced elements of these workers had opportunities to absorb the lessons of the most advanced labor movements of the nineteenth century in the course of the experiences of the great social revolutions at the beginning of this century, of the totalitarian Nazi regime, of the final collapse of society after the second world war, and finally of the new totalitarian colonial regime. It is ironical that the new proletarian revolution started in one of the most proletarianized areas of the world and immediately clashed with a power which was a fruit of the first "successful"

proletarian revolution in modern times.

Without a class of national capitalists as the ruling class, with a state-capitalism under control of a foreign power, the major part of the "national income" must be spent in accordance with the policies of the foreign imperialism.

In addition, the new German bureaucratic hierarchy has to rely on an apparatus which is very costly, which intervenes and interferes with productive efforts to such an extent that an effective control of production becomes impossible. Absolute scarcity of many kinds of goods and materials or man-power coincide with large-scale economic waste. The economic costs of mistakes of the planners must be paid with sweated labor, wage cuts and the hanging of "saboteurs."

We may summarize the social and political conditions which were basic for the emergence of a new type of social revolutionary liberation movement as follows:

(1) High degree of proletarianization of the people.

Most members of the middle classes had either vanished or had become mere proletarians. As proletarians they were not working for a private capitalist but for the state which had become a more fierce and more brutal exploiter than the worst type of private capitalist at the time of early capitalism. A similar experience was undergone by the old type of industrial worker, and also by the white-collar workers.

The entire social class structure tended to become very simple compared with the old one. Instead of a large layer of various types of middle classes and an upper class which had strong traditional and native roots among a vast sector of the popula-

tion, with a working class where some kind of labor aristocracy seemed to emerge among the best-paid sectors of labor, only three social classes now survive. At the bottom of the social ladder there are the slave laborers who work for the state without monetary compensation. Then there is the rest of the population, most of whom belong to the completely proletarianized type of working class, controlled, oppressed and exploited by the state-capitalist bureaucracy. The latter relies on a new social hierarchy—the upper ranks of the party and state bureaucracy and of the armed forces. They are a tiny minority among the people, divorced from the rest of the population, without native or social roots among other sectors of the people, relying directly on the bayonets of their police forces and those of a foreign power.

(2) Thus a real native ruling class has been missing. There were—and there are—new rulers and a new social hierarchy which tends to become a new ruling class. But it lacks basic elements of a ruling class. It is too small in number. It has not been able to create a sufficient stratum of members of the party or of the state-bureaucrats who may be considered as "reliable" for the regime. The social produce which the new rulers have at their disposal does not make it possible for them to extend the rise of a new social hierarchy into a new social class which has real national roots.

(3) The weakness of the social and political structure is greatly increased by the foreign imperialist enslavement. The Russian overlord has not established himself as a victor who intended to take his loot and go home. He may want to retire but only after having secured permanent rule over the new satellite regime.

(4) The methods of centralized state bureaucratic planning under the guidance of a totalitarian bureaucracy, together with the delivery of a large percentage of the industrial produce to the foreign imperialist overlord, have created a higher degree of economic anarchy and waste of the social produce than there ever existed under private capitalism.

(5) The weaknesses of the regime are multiplied by the high degree of centralization of industrial labor and by the fact that the tradition of the German labor movement—a high degree of social consciousness among individual workers, and of social class discipline and solidarity—has not yet been eliminated by the experiences of the Nazi regime nor by the new pseudo-communist dictatorship.

(6) The new regime of totalitarian isolation of the individual could not be organized effectively. Immediately neighboring areas are populated by people of the same nation, living under relative personal freedom. Their area, too, is occupied by a foreign power, and the latter also imposes its own political control system. But it still represents a power where private capitalism is being defended as a system superior to state-capitalism. The absolute power of the state cannot be sustained by one-party totalitarian rule. Furthermore the new international power struggle has made it necessary to promote or at least to encourage opposition movements within the totalitarian Eastern Reich.

(7) Finally, the upper crust of the new ruling hierarchy in the Eastern zones is not a firm unified mass following one specific direction. It consists of "leaders" and underlings who belong to cliques which are in an acute stage of confusion and of personal rivalries. At the center, i.e., in

Moscow itself, since the death of Stalin—and before—leading bureaucrats were purged or were in disfavor. The leaders of the satellite states felt secure in their positions only if their personal ties with the new cliques in the Kremlin were secure and if they were supporting the right man in the Russian party leadership.

THE NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN REGIME and the prospects of liberation movements in the Eastern German areas have been discussed by small intellectual circles, former students and ex-officers, and in particular by former members of the labor movement. But a genuine underground movement able to withstand the pressure of a totalitarian regime could be built up only by the industrial workers. What helped them was the fact that they had daily contact with each other through their work and their working and living conditions. Furthermore, there were many workers experienced in underground work. Finally they were unwilling to become the tool of another power and declined advice and in most cases even contact with circles or parties outside of their own area. Members of foreign intelligence organizations were carefully ignored as far as possible.

The situation was different for members of the old middle classes and members of academic professions. They had lost their old social status and had declined to the bottom level of social stratification. There were no comrades and no social milieu where they felt that they were members of a group or of a circle to which they felt responsible and which may have helped them in an emergency. As desperate, isolated individuals they felt frustrated unless they were given new

hope for a change by a foreign power. It was easy for organizations which had been given money and moral support by foreign occupation powers in Western Germany after the deterioration of East-West relations to establish underground contacts in 1947-50 with former members of the old middle classes or expropriated members of the old upper classes. They were desperate, personally isolated or helpless and looking for a "strong power" to help them. But the net of underground contacts which relied on such social elements was completely smashed by the new regime in 1951-52 when the East-German satellite regime had the task of restoring industrial production and the industrial capacities of East Germany. It therefore had to increase the social and political weight of the industrial workers.

Something should be said about the political rôle of industrial labor in East Germany:

East Germany includes areas with highly concentrated industrial labor, where masses of industrial workers have been concentrated for several generations, with proud traditions of social-revolutionary struggle and socialist-communist organizational influence. We refer in particular to the industrial centers in Saxony, Thuringia, the area of Halle-Merseburg (incl. Leuna). The old political and organizational split between socialist and communist workers seemed to play a minor rôle at the end of the Nazi regime, at the end of the second world war. There was a spontaneous movement to overcome the old division. At first, the new Communist (and S.E.D.) party apparatus tried to exploit this spontaneous drive for unity among the workers. But the new experience under the Russian-controlled regime completed the process of unification

of the workers. "Old Communists" among workers who would support the new regime were almost non-existent. The same applied to former members of the Social-Democratic party. At the beginning some success was recorded by the appeal of the new S.E.D. (Socialist Unity Party or official State Party) among young workers. But this appeal virtually vanished after several years of practical experience with the Ulbricht apparatus.

A new kind of underground has emerged. It is a combination of loosely and also tightly knit organization.

Only a minority of politically experienced workers, mainly former communists who had already been disillusioned by their experiences with the German CP, had realized the nature of the transformation of the Russian revolution when the second world war ended and the Russian armies marched into Germany. Most social-democratic workers and also ex-Communists who had joined the CP only a short time before the rise of Hitler to power sincerely believed, until the end of the war, that Moscow would become some kind of social liberator. But these hopes faded away within the first 24 hours of Russian occupation. Thereafter a personal struggle for survival started. Such conditions were extremely unfavorable to any political thinking and movement.

Some "sincere" Communists still believed that after the initial transitional period from war to peace a new German democracy would emerge and the foreign terror regime would end. But the German party chiefs who had been called from their Moscow headquarters, Walter Ulbricht & Co., in cooperation with a clique of Social-Democratic "leaders" who were easily absorbed by the Ulbricht-clique,

sought to copy the pattern of the Russian state in Germany. The historical rôle of these cliques was necessarily based on a policy of keeping Germany divided and of preventing a unification of Germany except through war, i.e., with the direct aid of the Russian army. For any other kind of unification would have been incompatible with the rôle of Ulbricht & Co. as "leaders" of the new totalitarian state. They had to build up their totalitarian party under the protection of a foreign army. It was not possible for them to follow the pattern of the Russian revolution or even of the Nazi movement. They could not create their totalitarian party in competition with other political parties and conquer the state administration of a parliamentary government "from within" or with the aid of popular mass movements. Therefore the fate of Ulbricht & Co. depended on the foreign policies of Moscow. They were sure that Moscow would need them as long as the Russian government was for a continued division of Germany and opposed to any kind of peaceful unification. For the same reason, it was completely out of the question for Ulbricht & Co. to play the rôle of a Tito. Moscow did not have to fear such a danger in East Germany among the leading members of the East-German Party bureaucracy. But other and even greater dangers emerged.

One of them is the underground organization of the labor opposition. It does not consist of a real mass organization. Experienced underground workers in totalitarian countries will agree that a mass organization or an organization which is part of a mass organization—perhaps organized from abroad—will not survive for any length of time. What is possible in

countries or areas which cannot be shut off air-tight from the rest of the world is the emergence of underground circles of a small number of oppositional workers. They may establish a few personal contacts with men who belong to key sectors of labor and who are a major influence among them. Such groups of workers who, because of their position, are able to act more independently than other workers, will be able to use their particular group of workers as a kind of advance guard which at a critical moment will be followed by other sectors of labor.

The government spy system was not able to penetrate the underground of industrial and skilled workers effectively because the latter were able to detect unreliable elements from working and living experiences, and also because the underground was made up to a great extent of a net of contacts which were not a closely knit organization but which relied on personal experiences with those who were willing to resist the new regime. What helped was the fact that the government has superseded the old private capitalist boss. The government does not appear as a physical person.

Essential and helpful for a real underground center was the fact that it had the coöperation and more or less active support of numerous sympathizers, and active helpers among members of the bureaucracy, within the S.E.D. hierarchy and even among the highest ranks of the S. E. D. hierarchy. Through them, a few contacts also existed with old-time members of foreign Communist Parties in Eastern countries, and also with a few Russian bureaucrats. As a result there was not one single decision of the government which did not become known

to the underground opposition. Warnings of planned arrests of old-time communists or socialists were sometimes given in time. This was done on the highest levels, as well as for rank-and-file members and through contacts with the Administration.

It was known that the position of Ulbricht and his clique was undermined and collapsing immediately after the death of Stalin, and after the apparent eclipse of the position of Malenkov within the ruling "inner circle" in Moscow. Ulbricht was careful to follow a "wait and see" line, at the same time closely watching the personal attitudes of the individual bureaucrats toward his own group and toward Moscow.

Something should be said about the special status of Berlin and the new role of the Berlin movement. This applies to West Berlin as well as to East Berlin. In spite of the Iron Curtain which goes straight through Berlin, there are, of course, many contacts between both sectors of Berlin which do not exist in other East-West border areas. These special ties have been very important for the struggle in Eastern Germany. At the same time, East and West Berlin represent two different worlds.

In West Berlin the Social Democratic Party dominates the political life of the city. The West Berlin Social Democrats are under the leadership of highly experienced members of the old pre-Hitler labor movement. West Berlin is the only part of West-Germany where the local organization of the Social-Democratic Party is under the leadership of a political group which derives from a real fusion of former left-wing young socialists ("Jung-Sozialisten") and anti-Stalinist ex-Communists. Some of them once

played a prominent rôle in the Communist Youth Movement during the Twenties and joined various oppositional Communist groups thereafter.

Leaders of the West Berlin S.P.D. are used to considering their own situation as different from the situation in any other part of Germany and as directly related to foreign big-power politics. Nowhere in the world are foreign policies and world-wide political shifts of so much immediate concern to the local leaders and to the population as in West Berlin.

The labor movement in East Berlin is also unique. East Berlin is the only area in the Behind-the-Iron-Curtain world where an anti-Communist party is officially permitted and actually tolerated. At the beginning of the East Berlin regime, attempts were made to liquidate the Social-Democratic Party in East Berlin, too, and to terrorize individual party members. But the West Berlin Social Democrats answered with effective counter-measures and threats of retaliation. As a result, some kind of unofficial *modus vivendi* developed.

The underground organization in East Berlin relies more or less on former trade unionists, largely ex-Communists (sometimes still official members of the S.E.D.) and former members of the S.P.D. Contacts exist between the S.P.D. organization in West Berlin and the labor underground in East Berlin. But such contacts rely on a few personal ties. A distinctive feature of the underground in East Berlin and East Germany is that it relies on groups of workers who have common traditional ties and who do not acknowledge any center "abroad," not even in Western Germany, including the S.P.D., as their leadership. There is a strong feeling that their problems are not sufficiently consid-

ered and understood by the political leaders of the S.P.D. in Western Germany and that "something new" will have to be created. In the meantime, they have to form their own "independent" leadership.

A small circle of "underground leaders" had been concerned for some time with the desperate mood of the workers and also of the peasants and the urban middle classes. It was also known that the Ulbricht clique tried to create a *fait accompli* for Moscow, in alignment with and in support of Malenkov's position: the creation of a totalitarian satellite state of East Germany. The entire state edifice would crumble if an attempt were made to reform it in such a way that it would be fit for an arrangement with a non-totalitarian West Germany. Therefore an East German Five-Year Plan was revised in such a way that a greater share of the "national income" was to be devoted to the extension of heavy industrial or armaments projects. The remnants of non-Communist "bourgeois" parties were to be liquidated. The state was to become "monolithic." The independent status of the church was to end, thus creating an even wider rift between East and West Germany. It was perfectly clear to the Ulbricht clique that it would be sacrificed if a unified sovereign Germany would emerge, and that the Russian dictators would have to throw the Ulbricht clique overboard if ever Moscow would make a serious effort to support the creation of a unified sovereign German nation.

It was known that influential circles in Moscow were for a Russian withdrawal from Germany and Central Europe under certain conditions: Simultaneous withdrawal of the United States armed forces from Ger-

many, and the formation of a neutralized Germany and, if possible, also of Western Europe.

A mere attempt to test such a policy would require the end of the political rôle for Ulbricht and his clique. The latter tried to liquidate any social or political force which might have made it possible to find a successor to his regime immediately after having received news about Stalin's serious sickness and especially after the death of Stalin. But shortly thereafter, it was felt that Ulbricht was bankrupt in the eyes of the new supreme masters of Moscow. Ulbricht himself knew it and he himself tried to open up a way of retreat, hoping against hope that he could ride out the tempest which was blowing from Moscow.

But personal rivals of Ulbricht within the apparatus suddenly gained influence and power. The Ulbricht clique tried to make a hasty retreat. Promises were made to permit open criticism of the regime.

During the 12 months which preceded the uprising, the living standard of the workers in particular had fallen off, though, officially and according to government statistics, living conditions had improved. Consumer goods had been de-rationed. Practically all consumer goods had to be purchased at "free" prices. The latter had declined but they still were higher than prices for rationed goods had been before. Thus items which could be bought only by the small privileged new aristocracy had become cheaper while bread, margarine, potatoes, etc., had become more expensive.

In the early Spring, practically already in March, near-famine conditions developed in many areas of the Eastern zone. In most towns, even in Berlin, rationed meat, fats, butter, su-

gar and vegetables could not be supplied. Many people waiting in queues wasted their time and had to go home empty-handed and hungry. At the same time, it became known that the government was building up huge stocks of foodstuffs, apparently for political reasons and "on orders from Moscow."

The complete record of the historical events of the uprisings cannot be written now. There are many details which are only locally known. There were no "central leaders" who directed or organized the uprisings in such a way that they were able to anticipate the events and to keep themselves informed about the actual situation at all major industrial or population centers. But an underground center in Berlin does exist. It relies on groups of workers who have unchallenged authority among new colleagues. They followed a wait-and-see policy and resisted the temptation of heroic actions which would not make sense, or which would expose them, their families and "innocent" oppositionists, to the new super-Gestapo.

Then, in early Spring, something happened that stirred all oppositional workers and that was much discussed among the underground circles: Ulbricht and his personal adherents were no longer in favor with Moscow. His protector in Moscow, Malenkov, seemed to be losing his battle as the successor to Stalin. The new man whom Moscow had sent to East Berlin (Karlshorst), Semyonov, apparently was a follower of Beria. The failure of Malenkov's policies in the satellite countries was to be revealed. A new policy was to be introduced. Moscow wanted to shake off the shadow of Ulbricht, the most hated man in East Germany. At the same time, a cam-

paign of criticism of the old party leadership was to prove to the West Germans that a real change is occurring in the East and that the East Germans enjoy a high degree of freedom and independence. Trade-union representatives were told that the workers would have the right to make demands for better working conditions.

When the underground circles were advised about these new directives of Moscow, experienced former Communist Party members were skeptical about the change. Would the new party line only be a short-term, temporary affair? What would happen afterwards, after having revealed the identity of the members of the opposition? Would the party bosses provoke the oppositional or potentially oppositional workers to reveal themselves only in order to purge them thereafter? Experienced former Communist Party members also suggested that an attempt should be made to turn the semi-legal movement for improved work and wage conditions into a political struggle which would spread among all industries and also other social classes in East Germany. There was much reluctance among former active Communist party members and among socialists, to appear openly as leaders of the movement or to take the initiative for the call for strikes and demonstrations. Much thought had to be given to the aftermath, and to the need of survival during the terror period which could be anticipated as a sequel to any attempt at open resistance against the regime.

Everybody, the underground leaders as well as the leading members of the S.E.D. or of the East German government, and in particular the Russian representatives, were surprised at

the scope and intensity of the oppositional movement which soon gained the character of mass uprisings, though there was not one single underground leadership which believed that the situation was "ripe" for a real revolution.

The underground leaders of the opposition had often talked about the risks of open opposition. One of the great difficulties was the inability of the participants of any movement which defies the Party or the Party leaders and therefore also the entire regime, to protect themselves against the terror regime. A small-scale group action for improved living conditions exposed the participants to almost the same risks as an open political action against the regime. The workers themselves were fearful of isolated small-scale actions of resistance. "If all workers of all industries would rebel. . . ." This "if" was repeatedly talked about by the workers, as an excuse for not being able to act themselves, but also as a ray of hope.

It was easy for the building workers and the workers of the Hennigsdorf Steelworkers to convince themselves that their resentment over the higher work norms and lower wage schedules would be useless and even dangerous if they merely launched a small-scale group struggle for better economic conditions for themselves. They had to get out the workers of other factories, the women and men of the working class districts, in one big mass movement against the government, against the entire regime. What was secretly discussed and expected as the only chance, had to become true. The professional pride of the building and steel workers turned into a political pride to be at the helm of a movement which was acclaimed by practically the entire population,

except the Party élite and the new aristocracy.

Working and foodstuff conditions became so desperate that many acts of spontaneous resistance occurred in many industrial towns. But the Party leadership somehow welcomed the justification for intensified terror. It also may have believed that the Malenkov clique in Moscow would use the signs of hostility of the East German masses in order to justify the very policies which would widen the gulf between East and West and which would increase the need of Moscow to use Ulbricht as its tool.

It seemed that Malenkov could not assert himself in Moscow. Instructions were sent to East Germany through the new Russian Commissars that the methods of Ulbricht must be changed and that Moscow must retain a higher degree of maneuverability toward West Germany than would be possible with the crude terror methods of Ulbricht. The latter seemed to feel that the magic power which radiated from Moscow was slipping away from him.

But the old anti-labor instructions and orders for 10 per cent more work without more pay were not cancelled. They could not be rescinded also because of the shaky economic foundation of the state economy, and because of Moscow's unwillingness to give up the claims for large tribute or preferential supplies from the exhausted economy.

Yet, a softness in dealing with rebellious workers became apparent. The drive against the independent peasants and for collectivization was suddenly called off. The entire Five-Year Plan policy was omitted from public appeals and admonishments of the leaders of the regime. In addition, real famine conditions spread in some

areas. Living conditions sharply declined. Many rationed goods were not distributed at all, or they were replaced with inferior goods which were offered at greatly increased prices.

Under such conditions the workers felt encouraged to discuss their grievances openly. It was obvious that the top-leaders of the regime were unable or unwilling to act ruthlessly and with totalitarian terror methods against the critics of the regime.

Then the leading members of the underground had to deal with the issue: "What to do next?" There were contacts with some leading members of the Social-Democratic Party in West Germany, but the latter was not directing or controlling the movement in East Germany. Contacts were minimized as much as possible, for personal safety reasons, also for political reasons. But it was known that Dr. Adenauer's position would greatly depend on his ability to prove to the people in Western Germany that Eastern Germany must be written off for all practical purposes for a long time.

So, the decision to call the workers out for strikes and open demonstrations against the regime was made in view of the following factors:

(1) The people were hungry and desperate but the regime had imposed new additional burdens, including new increased work norms without extra pay.

(2) The peasants were desperate and would support any action against the government in the towns.

(3) The terror apparatus of the regime was not fully effective, for the government was dependent on a foreign overlord who was dissatisfied with the government. Its members were confused about the further course of action.

(4) Important international behind-the-scene negotiations were being held in Eastern and Western capitals where the fate of Germany was to be decided. These negotiations could be favorably effected by an open act of defiance of the regime.

(5) The political parties and the government in Western Germany were to be aroused about the urgency of the problem of unity and liberation of East Germany from the Eastern totalitarian state and the unbearable conditions imposed by it on the people.

On June 7, the building workers of the Stalin-Allee project in East Berlin for the first time received their weekly wage on the basis of the newly-introduced work norms, i.e., at greatly reduced rates. The bureaucrats of the trade unions and of other official agencies refused to listen to the complaints of the workers and threatened police action against "sabotage" and "resistance" against the state authorities. Then, on June 9 and 10, the official decrees about a change of the party line were made known. Now there seemed to be confirmation of what had been said in the whisper-campaigns: The Ulbricht-apparatus will find it difficult to use methods of physical terror in order to suppress open mass resistance. The workers will have a chance if they express their dissatisfaction with the bureaucrats. Moscow will hesitate to appear in the rôle of the mass liquidator of the industrial workers of East Germany. On June 15 and 16, the building workers of the Stalin-Allee project openly demanded withdrawal of the new work-norms and wage cuts. Ulbricht's apparatus still refused to give in. Then the workers stopped working, left their jobs and marched into other workers' quarters, especially to

other plants, in order to spread the movement. Many thousands of workers marched to the East German government and Party headquarters. This action was still relatively peaceful. Two members of the government, Rau and Selbmann, who had the reputation of not being especially close to Ulbricht, personally tried to pacify the masses. They were frequently interrupted when they talked to the workers but they were not personally attacked. Then, on June 17, the order for new work norms and wage cuts was withdrawn. It was too late. In the evening, the slogan spread among the workers in all East Berlin districts: The next morning, all workers of East Berlin would go on strike and march against the government. The next morning, the workers of the municipal utilities (gas, water and electrical power plants) joined the strike and marched against the government headquarters, too. In a matter of minutes Russian tanks intervened and saved the S.E.D. and government headquarters from destruction by the infuriated workers. Without the last-minute intervention of the Russian tank division, the workers would have seized party and government headquarters with little chance of escape for the S.E.D. leaders.

The workers did not run away when the guns of the Russian tanks were turning against them. They faced them with desperate courage and iron discipline. Politically conscious workers advised their colleagues not to engage in an open and unequal fight with the Russian forces. One step further, and the tanks would have been used against the unarmed workers. It was too early to attempt a revolutionary coup against the government and against the Russian armed forces.

The action had started under the leadership of workers who were especially reliable and courageous in their defiance of the regime. They were skilled workers traditionally known for their personal willingness to take risks in the struggle against oppressive authorities. The building workers of Berlin and the steel workers of Hennigsdorf were known for their support of revolutionary actions during the pre-Nazi era 1918-1933. They were strongholds of the Communist movement in Berlin during that period. Under the Nazis they defied the regime wherever possible. They certainly did not become adherents of Nazism. These workers were called out for an open act of defiance of the regime, but under slogans which at first concerned their own economic interests: against the new work norms and for better living conditions. The economic demands were fulfilled by the regime almost within a few hours after the start of the strike. But an immediate "transition of the economic into a political struggle" took place in the best tradition of the old tactical experiences of revolutionary action. The advance guard of the Berlin working class had called out the other workers and the entire working class population to defy the regime and to march to the centers of the administration with the demand: immediate resignation of the government.

Spontaneously, in towns and villages where the underground did not have direct contacts but where local underground leaders existed, too, or where such leaders arose during the action itself, workers went on strike and local populations, often openly supported by peasants, marched to the prison buildings where political prisoners were kept or where the

hated administration was located. Overnight the net of underground organizations was multiplied and a new revolutionary organization was born.

There was a serious danger that local hot-heads would go too far and that the government would provoke a revolutionary uprising or an all-out struggle under conditions which spelled defeat for the movement. An underground leadership which existed in nucleus-form intervened. The spontaneous demand for a general strike was declined. For such an extension of the action would have been an attempt to seize political power and would have involved the movement into an open premature struggle against the foreign occupational power. There was no chance to win against the Russian tanks and machine guns, while open support from the West was not available. The local leaders of the movement were warned to avoid any clash with the representatives of the Russian occupational powers. When Russian tanks and guns controlled the streets and further mass action would have resulted in an open clash with the Russian forces the action as such was called off.

But in many towns and industrial centers open mass resistance still continued. The leaders of the underground discovered that they had unknown sympathizers and active supporters. The basic weakness of the police machine of the regime became apparent: it was acting on behalf of a foreign power and it relied on "security forces" recruited largely from young workers who did not want to act against their own people. Many acts were seen of heroism and evidence of disintegration of the regime.

The only elements who were really reliable from the viewpoint of the Ulbricht clique and of the Russian commander were the former S. S. members or Nazis who had joined the S.E.D. and the new Security Forces of the regime. But the old Communist party members who had joined the new administration were in most cases "unreliable" and except for a few top leaders bore withing themselves the germs of disintegration.

In one town, the mayor, an old-time Communist, personally knocked down with his fists the policeman, a former Nazi, who was shooting at the anti-government people. The Communist mayor was later arrested and condemned to death.

There was one great disappointment: The response in West Germany, especially in Bonn. The Adenauer government protested but it did not do as much in support of the uprising as it might have done. The order of the commandant of the occupational forces in West Berlin not to hold an open mass rally against the terror in the East and against the East German Administration was registered as a sign that the Western powers were afraid of the consequences of further struggle. It was considered as a gesture by the West German administration to Moscow for negotiations and an agreement which would perpetuate the division of Germany and its dependence on foreign powers.

The uprising improved the bargaining position of the Western powers. But the desperate masses would have to pay the price. Would it mean the physical liquidation of anyone who had turned out to be an opponent of the regime or who was potentially an enemy of the regime?

THE LIQUIDATION of entire social classes and of large sectors of the population in order to solidify a totalitarian state regime has become common. Any underground leader and active member of the resistance movement had to be aware of the possibility that the regime would take vengeance on him if it could ever gain absolute power. For all practical purposes, the Ulbricht clique would want to physically liquidate them and organize a purge on the scale of the Russian liquidation of the peasant class or of the purges against the "old Bolsheviks" during the Thirties in order to solidify their power. But does Moscow want to return the Ulbricht clique to absolute power and will the Russian regime support such purges? This is a foreign policy issue for Moscow. It presents itself as a dilemma either to rule the satellite countries with the iron fist of the ruthless dictator, or to make concessions in the hope of winning support at least among some sectors of the population and therefore foreign political maneuverability.

The Russian leaders are experienced in administrative rule and oppression of oppositional movements. But they are not too experienced with such movements in satellite countries especially in areas forming the border line between East and West, and especially not in highly industrialized countries with proletarian leaders who are trained in the tradition of the old labor movements and with workers who also have a tradition of defiance against their exploiters and oppressors.

Oppression of these social elements tends to create political dynamite. A drastic solution would be the liquidation of such elements in the style of the action against the "kulaks" or the

peasants. Moscow did not intervene when the Ulbricht clique acted in this way against the middle classes and the peasants. East Germany is only part of the German nation, and purge actions against the East German workers are apt to create such hatreds in West Germany that Moscow's hope of neutralizing Germany and Western Europe would never be realized. Furthermore Beria did not want Malenkov's adherent, Ulbricht, the Russian Pro-Consul and his German underlings who wanted to repeat the purge actions in the old Stalinist style, to remain in control of the S.E.D. and of the German satellite regime.

The Russian masters are now following two opposite courses. They are taking vengeance against the revolutionary opponents. Large-scale punitive actions are planned in order to liquidate the opposition. They also seek to pacify the aroused masses and to pave the ground for a new appeal in Europe in order to "neutralize" Germany and Western Europe.

Moscow may follow either course, or it may seek to combine the two courses. The freedom of action of the Russian overlord will depend mainly on his relations with the Western powers. Will he get enticing offers of agreements which if accepted would seal the fate of the national and social liberation movements in Europe and in Asia? Or will the pressure of such movements be used in order to proclaim the task of the restoration of free and independent nations which will work together in order to solve the social and economic problems of their time?

A violent suppression of the anti-totalitarian national and social liberation movement in East Germany and

other Russian satellite countries, with the silent or indirect consent of the Western powers, would liquidate the only force which makes it possible to avoid a third world war. For the Russian overlord will see to it that the suppression of such movements will be used in order to propagate the idea of betrayal of any progressive movements by the Western powers and in order to build up a stronger police and military machine than ever existed before. It would be used in order to wage war against the Western powers at a later stage, under conditions where the Western powers would be unable to use the means of

political warfare effectively in Europe.

This is the international background to the events in East Germany. They are either the beginning of a new era of revolutionary national and social liberation movements, or they will seal the fate of any social liberation movement in our time. The Western powers are in greater danger of being defeated in Germany if they refuse to support such movements because the final consequences of such a struggle are much more far-reaching than it may appear to the casual observer. H. F. STILLE
Germany, June, 1953.

Stalin's Place in History

Assessing the Social Role of the Great Assassin

Stalin is "the greatest man of all times, of all epochs and peoples."
—Sergei Kirov

"Stalin proves himself a 'great man' in the grand style . . . Style is Lenin's heir. Stalinism is Communism."
—James Burnham

When Lenin lay gravely ill, he gave much thought to the future of the Revolution and the party which he, above all, helped to create. Fully aware of the dangers which surrounded the young, new state, uncertain of its future as an isolated and backward nation, he concerned himself with the internal situation in the party which now ruled the country alone. In his famous "testament" he turned directly to the problem of relations within the leadership which he described in the following unequivocal manner:

By the stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke before, I mean

measures to prevent a split, so far as such measures can be taken. . . . Our party rests upon two classes, and for that reason its instability is possible, and if there cannot exist an agreement between such classes its fall is inevitable. . . . I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability—from this point of view—are such members of the Central Committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split. . . .

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. On the other hand, Comrade Trotsky, as was proved by his struggle against the Central in connection with the question of the People's Commissariat of Ways and Communications, is distinguished not only by his exceptional ability—personally, he is, to be sure, the most able man in the present Central Committee—but also by his too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs.

These two qualities of the two most

able leaders of the present Central Committee might, quite innocently, lead to a split, and if our party does not take measures to prevent it, a split in consequence, might arise unexpectedly. . . .

Lenin proposed that the Central Committee of the party be so enlarged in order to neutralize the relations of Trotsky and Stalin in the leading committee and, as he hoped, to serve as a unifying force in the summits of the party.

One year later, however, on January 4, 1923, he added a postscript to the "testament" saying:

"Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us communists, becomes unsupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may seem an insignificant trifle, but I think that from the point of view of the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance.

Shortly afterward, and immediately prior to a turn in an illness that left him incapacitated until his death, Lenin, in a letter to Stalin, broke off all personal and comradely relations with him. A chain of events leading to this final act, was followed with a proposal by Lenin to Trotsky for a political bloc against Stalin. The immediate cause for this was the sharp disagreement that broke out between Lenin and Stalin over the national question, particularly in Georgia, where the latter sought to Russify the country and had assumed bureaucratic control over the party.

The seriousness of that dispute is further revealed by Stalin's attack on Lenin's "national liberalism" for ad-

vocating the structure of the new state on a basis of "federated republics." One of the "peppery dishes" this Georgian cook prepared in his triumph as an expert on the national question, was the subordination of all the minority nations to the supremacy of the Great Russians, in no fundamental sense different from the way great Tsars had ruled.

Our reference to the "testament" is for the purpose of recalling Lenin's extreme sensitivity to the problem of the encircling and strangulating bureaucracy in the state and party, his forecast of a split as a result of a peculiar constellation of forces in the leadership, and his appraisal of the two principal figures in the subsequent struggle, one of whom was world famous, the other, an unknown and obscure figure.

The "testament" made clear that while Stalin was unknown to the world and perhaps to the Russian people and the party at large, inside the broad leadership of the organization he was a prominent and dominant figure. Consequently, while it is true that he rose from obscurity, it was as a member of the leading cadre of the revolutionary party.

Lenin's "testament" became known only after his death. The persistent demands of the Trotskyist Opposition and its surreptitious circulation throughout the party forced an official admission of its existence. We shall refer to these episodes shortly. First, however, it is necessary to deal with the significance of Lenin's reference to the "obscure" Stalin who was the second "most able" man in the Central Committee. Upon the publication of the letter many said: See, we may not have known this man. But evidently he was one of the giants of the Bolshevik party. Even Lenin

couples him with Trotsky as the two most able men of the Central Committee. And that accounts for his place in the leadership and his rise to power. Trotsky was always wrong in calling Stalin a "mediocrity." This misjudgment of Stalin, moreover, obviously led to an underestimation of his ability and the defeat of Trotsky and every other prominent associate of Lenin.

On the face of it, looked upon purely as a struggle between personalities, this view appears credible. For example, more than twenty years after the beginning of the struggle between Stalin and his opponents, James Burnham discovered that greatness really fits Stalin—greatness being equated with success.

Several things require an immediate discussion of this evaluation of Stalin. What exactly did Lenin mean, and could he have meant, in coupling the names of Trotsky and Stalin? Did Trotsky really underestimate Stalin's ability and therefore err in his struggle to the point where he guaranteed Stalin's victory? What place in history does Stalin have as a figure for progress or retrogression, for the advancement of humanity or its retardation?

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THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, from the time of Marx and Engels, has had two basic levels of existence: the level of theory, principle and program; and the level of action, organization and administration. In the best parties and individuals, a synthesis is established between these levels in a natural, synchronized manner, with all the unevenness, differences of quality, strength, weakness and capriciousness that attach to all movements and men. Under the most favorable social conditions, these movements and men progressed and produced results of

high quality. At unfavorable historical conjunctures they exhibited their weaker sides as theoretical, political and organizational-administrative crises arose.

Peculiarly enough, Tsarist society in the pre-Revolution days provided a favorable arena for the development of revolutionary movements of a high order; many of them having men of considerable quality in their various leaderships. All the parties had their thinkers, writers, orators, organizers and practical men as distinguished from organizers. The Bolshevik Party, as history has affirmed, contained them in greater abundance than any other party. For all the grave differences which separated these parties at varying times in their common development, the other parties had respect for the leading men of Lenin's Party. Throughout the bitter struggles between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, perhaps the most bitter factional struggle experienced by any party, many of the leaders on both sides had respect and even admiration for the abilities of their opponents.

The outstanding men of Lenin's party were many-sided. They were theoreticians of socialism, great writers, orators, agitators, and leaders of men. A mere mention of their names will recall their deeds: Bukharin, Preobrazhensky, Bogdanov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Riazanov, Sverdlov, Rykov, Tomskey, Sokolnikov, and Krassin. There was, of course, Trotsky, already a famous figure beginning with his youthful leadership in the 1905 revolution—an exceptional thinker, writer, and orator—who joined the Bolsheviks in 1917; Rakovsky, from the Balkans, Chicherin, Lunacharsky, Piatakov, Serebriakov, and others, each of them making invaluable contributions to the movement.

When Lenin said that the two most able men in the Central Committee were Trotsky and Stalin, he caused no little concern to those whose opposition to the latter was accompanied by a complete rejection of the man as having no qualities whatever. Trotsky, as we shall show, was not guilty of such an underestimation of the man; neither were some other opponents of Stalin. The basic reason for their defeat is to be sought in politics rather than psychology, important as the latter may be in trying to understand the personalities in the struggle. Thus, the "testament" directed attention to the fact that Lenin, who was extremely perspicacious in his understanding and estimation of men, regarded Stalin as next to Trotsky, the most able man of the Central Committee.

Stalin was an obscure figure of the party and the revolution, as history, despite its falsification in Russia, has firmly established. Prior to the revolution, through it as well, he wrote little or nothing. He initiated no great ideas or struggles and contributed nothing whatever to the ideological life of the party, the most intense and active of any party we know. He was, and remained to his death, a speaker of poor quality in content and technique. While the party press contained the names of all leading men of the organization, Stalin's rarely if ever appeared. At party congresses he was usually a silent observer.

What attributes, then, did he have that recommended him to the leading staff of the party in the pre-revolutionary days, and caused Lenin to describe him as he did in 1922-23? The Bolshevik Party, as an illegal party under Tsarism, had forced upon it methods of work, a character of life,

and a system of organization which was in many respects peculiarly Russian, and, except in its centralism and forms of discipline, not unlike all the other illegal parties, including the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. With its leading staff living in exile, the Bolshevik Party had to develop an illegal organization in Russia, the same as the other parties. The party could not survive and develop unless it progressed on various levels, theoretical, political and programmatic (for the most part designed by the emigre leadership), and organizational, administrative, and in the field of action inside of Russia. It required for the latter, men of exceptional courage, skill, tenacity, men prepared to give their lives in the struggle to free Russia from Tsarist oppression. There were many such men in the party; Stalin was among the best of that type, inadequately described as the "practicals."

The post-revolutionary period brought with it a new selection of men demanded by the new conditions of revolutionary reconstruction. Many were found wanting; others displayed an expanding ability and capacity under the new state. In the case of Stalin, who was originally a co-opted member of the Central Committee, the post-revolutionary period of the expansion of state power and administration, gave him an opportunity he did not and could not have had before. The sudden death of Sverdlov which robbed the party of its greatest organizer elevated Stalin from a figure of second rank to one of first. He became, upon the recommendation or proposal of Zinoviev, secretary of the party. Yet prior to that time, Lenin too had pushed Stalin, we believe with Trotsky, because he valued his "firmness, grit, stubbornness, and to a

certain extent his slyness as attributes necessary in the struggle," which the weak state was experiencing. It is certain that Lenin did not require or expect from Stalin "independent ideas, political initiative or creative imagination."

In all ideological matters, other men made the necessary contributions which gave the party and the new state the rhythm required for consolidation of growth. A review of the various congresses, conferences and other gatherings show these men of ideas to be Lenin in the first place, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Piatakov, Preobrazhensky, Sokolnikov, etc. They made the main political and policy reports. It would be wrong to believe, however, that the contributions of these men were ideological only. They were, all of them, men of great practical skill, too, heading the most important divisions of the state and the party as "practical" men.

Yet, in the many-sided character of party life, a party which dominated the new state, the practical direction of its affairs required a man of no average skill in such matters. In the selection of Stalin for the post of party secretary, there is no doubt that the Central Committee felt it had that kind of person, strong-willed, experienced and devoted to the party, one who could keep the organization functioning at its highest capacities in the tests that seem to confront the organization daily.

If this be doubted, one has only to ask: In what other sense could Lenin have termed Stalin one of the two most able men of the Central Committee? All of the biographers of Stalin and the Russian Revolution agree on this: That Stalin was in no sense, at any time, one of the ideological

leaders of the Bolshevik Party, neither prior to the Revolution, nor after. There are no lasting theoretical contributions made by him. His writings are indeed exceedingly scarce in the years before he became the chief of the Russian state and party. What he did write was anything but outstanding or even worth remembering. Not even the Stalinist school of falsification has been able to resurrect any body of writings prior to 1924 to make a respectable volume of his collected works. Where other leaders of the Revolution were widely known for their public activities as writers, speakers, and organizers Stalin was correctly described as an "obscure" figure, strong only in the ranks of the leading cadres of the party, and not greatly loved among them.

Stalin was general secretary of the party for only one year when Lenin wrote his "testament" to warn about the dangers of a split. In another few months, he proposed the removal of Stalin as secretary. Thereafter, he broke off all comradely and personal relations with him. These are the incontestable facts. They show that, if Lenin erred in his sponsorship of Stalin, it did not take him long to see the mistake and to attempt to remove him. He did not propose to remove Trotsky, or Bukharin, or even Zinoviev and Kamenev, to save the unity of the party and to fight every burgeoning bureaucracy. No, among the leading staff, he proposed to remove Stalin, and only Stalin. But, as history has shown, it was already too late! Too late? Yes, too late, for already the bureaucracy inside the party and the state had grown too powerful and resistive to heed a proposal from the leader of the party and the state. This in itself is a forceful reply to the critics of the Revolution that Lenin was

a dictator of the party and new state. It is an unusual dictator, indeed, who could not affect the removal of a subordinate official before he had fully consolidated his post. And yet, this, too, is the historical fact: Lenin's request that Stalin be removed from his post as general secretary was unheeded not only by the rising new bureaucracy in the party, but by what has been called "Lenin's general staff." Twice Stalin offered his resignation, once in anger, another time with indifference. On both occasions, he knew the results beforehand. A packed committee and a packed congress cried out: "No, No!" That ended all proffers of resignation.

Behind this refusal to carry out Lenin's proposal lies the whole story of the subsequent degeneration of the revolution and the leadership which made it. It is a story of inner party intrigue, of political deals among differing groups, the achievement of momentary periods of internal peace, the outbreak of new inner crises resulting finally in Stalin's complete victory as the undisputed, single leader, the dictator of party and state. It ended in the defeat, dispersal and physical annihilation of all other leaders of the party, his inferiors as well as superiors, personal friends as well as enemies.

Lenin was fully aware of the forces of degeneration which were operating in the nation during the years following the Civil War. He was deeply concerned with at least two of the most powerful expressions of this degeneration: the rise of bureaucratism in the state and party, and the growth of "Great Russian chauvinism" in the national question. When he said, "We have bureaucratism not only in the Soviet institutions but also in the

party," he had in mind Stalin and his new administration.

Lenin was outraged at the Georgian affair, as we indicated before. He wrote to Trotsky: "I beg of you to look after the Georgian affair at the Party Congress. The 'persecutions' carried out by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky must be considered, and I do not trust their impartiality. On the contrary. If you agree to undertake the defense, my mind will be at rest."

To Mdivani and Makharadze, victims of Stalin's machinations, he wrote: "I am following your business with all my heart. Disgusted with Ordjonikidze's brutality and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, I am preparing notes and a speech on your behalf."

Simultaneously, Lenin advised: "It is, of course, necessary to hold Stalin and Dzerzhinsky responsible for this out-and-out Great Russian nationalistic campaign."

He prepared material for Trotsky to use as his "bomb" since he was too ill to be present at the 12th Congress. When Trotsky wanted to inform Kamenev, once involved in Georgian matters, Lenin said "Under no circumstances. Kamenev will immediately show everything to Stalin and Stalin will make a rotten compromise and then deceive us."

The Georgian Affair was the final straw for Lenin. It brought about the end of any comradely and personal relations between Stalin and Lenin, and while it in no way determined what happened in the post-Lenin history of Russia, in the Stalin era, it did establish what were Lenin's true relations to Stalin. History shows Stalin to be anything but Lenin's disciple.

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TROTSKY ONCE WROTE: "Those theoreticians who attempt to prove that

the present totalitarian regime of USSR is due not so much to historical conditions, but to the very nature of Bolshevism itself, forget that the Civil War did not proceed from the nature of Bolshevism but rather from the efforts of the Russian and the international bourgeoisie to overthrow the Soviet regime."

The chaos visited upon the new regime resulted from the long years of Civil War, the stress, poverty and disintegration which it provoked. The decline of the revolutionary curve in Europe resulted in enforcing the isolation of the revolution, an isolation fortified by the technical and cultural backwardness of the country. The cultural backwardness of the country made reconstruction more difficult, many of the tasks posed to the new state appearing insurmountable. Lenin once remarked that "their culture (the old classes) is at a miserably low and insignificant level. Nevertheless it is higher than ours. Miserable and low as it is, it is still higher than that of our responsible Communist administrators."

The factor of cultural backwardness piled on to the isolation of the country, the decline of the revolutionary curve, the growth of weariness throughout the land, the change in the composition of the party through the influx of tens of thousands of new members, and the loss of the revolutionary cadre, made it easier for the new bureaucracy and the new leadership under Stalin to progress and consolidate its rule. These are the objective social factors which acted as favorable forces in Stalin's rise to power.

The story of Stalin's victory in his long drawn-out struggle for power has already been set down in history. It is marked by endless duplicity, re-

treats, advances, ideological dishonesty, directionless, except as to the goal of complete power, unprincipled blocs and counter-blocs. It would seem that his victory was the product of pure individual superiority in all spheres of human activity in which all opponents are defeated precisely because of their corresponding inferiority. If history was solely the story of individual endeavors and conflict, the story of Stalin's rise would be simple indeed. But it is anything but simple. His victory came after long struggle characterized by momentary victories and defeats, fears, hesitations and new advances, followed by stalemates, new blocs, new battles won and new exultations over the prostrate body of a new opponent, or personal-friend-turned-enemy-over-night.

Trotsky was willing to grant that he made mistakes in the fight against Stalin. We believe he made grave ones. But in re-evaluating that struggle in the light of the objective social situation in the country, it is impossible to gainsay Trotsky's thesis that the world situation more than any other factor made Stalin's reactionary victory certain.

"My illness," he wrote in *Stalin*, "and my subsequent non-participation in the struggle was, I grant, a factor of some consequence; however, its importance should not be exaggerated. In the final reckoning, it was a mere episode."

Stalin's bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev was made at a time when they, not he, were prominent and favored public personalities. Together they began the filthy campaign against "Trotskyism" in an effort to destroy Trotsky and prevent his replacement of Lenin at the helm of the party and the state. The campaign succeeded in Russia and in the world

Communist movement. The shameless aim of Zinoviev and Kamenev succeeded too well; it prepared their own downfall. For the defeat of Trotsky did not result in the rise of Zinoviev and Kamenev to new heights but rather thrust Stalin forward as a new national and international figure and hero.

The party machine was already Stalin's. From 1922 on he had been building carefully, expanding the apparatus with his hand-picked functionaries and old cronies, all of them distinguished by similar traits, practicals without great learning, anti-intellectual, untrained in the great world socialist school, provincials, more at home in day-to-day political affairs on a lower plane. They were old party members, it is true, but a wide gulf separated them from the great figures of the party.

Though the first struggles saw Stalin's bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev dissolved and a new struggle arise between a bloc now of Stalin-Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky against the Trotskyist left opposition, joined by Zinoviev and Kamenev—the new blocs being dissolved as soon as this battle was won by Stalin—the great figures were already undermined in the party.

If the 12th Congress in 1923 was a packed congress, the subsequent congresses, 13th, 14th, and above all, the important 15th Congress in 1927, were Stalinist congresses in the true sense of the term. The 15th Congress, the most vulgar in the history of the party, expelled the Left Opposition and resulted in Trotsky's exile to Alma Ata in 1928. Thus, ten years after the revolution, the organizer of the Red Army found himself once more in Siberia.

Stalin had emerged as Trotsky said "with increasing prominence as the

organizer, the assigner of tasks, the dispenser of jobs, the trainer and master of the bureaucracy." No sooner was the Left Opposition disposed of, than he began the task of destroying the "Right Wing," the Bukharin group. In another year, they too would go. It would all end in the Moscow trials as his crowning achievement. For in the full glory of his "greatness," in his unchallenged and unprecedented power, Stalin had to destroy physically every old leader of the party and the State including his own original group of political and personal friends.

Political factors alone cannot explain everything about Stalin's career. They provide the general setting in which he functioned, but he contributed to these his specific personality which has been so difficult to penetrate. The enigma of Stalin is in part due to the fact that he "seems to have no pre-history."

"The process of his rise," wrote Trotsky, "took place somewhere behind an impenetrable political curtain. At a certain moment his figure, in the full panoply of power, suddenly stepped away from the Kremlin wall, and for the first time the world became aware of Stalin as a ready-made dictator. All the keener is the interest with which thinking humanity examines the nature of Stalin, personally as well as politically. In the peculiarities of his personality it seeks the key to his political fate."

Trotsky proceeds to provide a key to this personality:

It is impossible to understand Stalin and his latter-day success without understanding the mainspring of his personality: love of power, ambition, envy-active-never-slumbering envy of all who are more powerful, rank higher than he. With that characteristic braggadocio which is the essence of Mussolini, he told one of his friends: "I have never

met my equal." Stalin could never have uttered this phrase, even to his most intimate friends, because it would have sounded to crude, too absurd, too ridiculous. There were any number of men on the Bolshevik staff alone who excelled Stalin in all respects but one—his concentrated ambition. Lenin highly valued power as a tool of action. But pure love of power was utterly alien to him. Not so with Stalin. Psychologically, power to him was always something apart from the purpose which it was supposed to serve. The desire to exert his will as the athlete exerts his muscles, to lord it over others—that was the mainspring of his personality. His will thus acquired an ever-increasing concentration of force, swelling in aggressiveness, activity, range of expression, stopping at nothing. The more often Stalin had occasion to convince himself that he was lacking in very many attributes for the acquisition of power, the more intensely did he compensate for each deficiency of character, the more subtly did he transform each lack into an advantage under certain conditions.

THE MOST DIFFICULT thing to comprehend in Stalin's rise to power is his triumph over all the great leaders of the party and the Revolution. One shakes his head at the incredibility of the results—one after another, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Tomsky—all of them superior men—are defeated. The empirical observer shies away from the necessary and difficult task of explaining an event or a series of them in an all-sided manner, in their relation to objective social factors, as events in motion, at a given time and place. He short-circuits these requirements for a judgment based on the simple criterion: success or non-success. Where Stalin was concerned, the views of his victory and his role has been as variable as the political views of the observers.

No explanation of Stalin's victories makes any sense to them except that Stalin, the unknown, was obviously superior in all vital respects to his op-

ponents. The proof? He won in all the internal struggles in the post-Lenin era and rose to be the supreme leader of Russia, achieving a status that even Lenin never enjoyed. In a country where theory and generalized evaluations have small currency, but where success is the measure of achievement and truth, this view of Stalin's rise to power is highly prized.

Whatever ones private opinions may be about the personal characteristics of the men engaged in the great internal struggles of post-revolutionary Russia, the fact is that Stalin's rise to power did come with a decline of the revolutionary curve, in a period of mass reaction not only against the policies of the old revolutionary leadership, but against the instability, insecurity and conflict of society itself. The continued chaos of Europe, not a revolutionary chaos, but the conservative chaos of capitalist stabilization, enhanced the conservative tendencies within the Russian society. The Stalinist faction rose with this conservatism, this desire for peace and work. To say this is not to imply that the leaders of the revolution sought to continue the policies of 1917. An examination of the discussions in the Russian party and the Communist International shows that main orientation was toward an accommodation to what was called the "stabilization" of capitalism, with all its contradictory rhythms. But it is obvious to the student of the Revolution and the internal struggle, that the masses, generally, and the "new" party, did not, as it were, trust the old revolutionary leadership. They put their faith in the rising Stalinist faction which never ceased to attack its opponents as international "adventurers" who threatened the very existence of Russia. The nature of this kind of an attack

against the Opposition coincided both with the nationalistic bias of the Stalinist faction and the strong nationalism of the masses against the "foreigners" (the exiles in the leadership).

Next in importance to the change in the objective conditions of the revolution, is the change in the party itself. Stalin's victory in the old Bolshevik Party, we have a right to believe, would have been impossible. Stalin's faction, an immense layer of the new bureaucracy, ignorant of theory and caring less, without a strong tradition, impatient with genuine politics, could win only in another kind of party.

Five years after the revolution, the party's composition had completely altered. The revolutionary generation which gave the party its absolutely unique character, had all but disappeared. Where it remained, it was overwhelmed by the new layers of the post-revolutionary generation, drawn to the party because it had been victorious. These new party masses had chosen a winner. Like the Stalinist faction, they were impatient with theoretical and political discussion, indifferent to the traditions of the party, and unconcerned with its long and varied history. In Lenin's party, *Pravda* could never have said as it did in 1926, that "The Party does not want arguments." For in Lenin's party, the revolutionary party, there were nothing but arguments, i.e., there never was a period in that party in which great theoretical and political disputes were not current, political factions did not exist, function and carry out struggles for their views.

Ten years after the revolution there remained in the party less than 1 per cent of the membership of the pre-revolutionary days. Stalin's reactionary struggle rested upon 90 per cent

of the new membership, the representatives of the new bureaucracy, which thrust him forward as their outstanding representative and leader. It was to this new movement to which he lent his character.

Stalin's early victories brought with them a complete transformation of the Russian and international movements. The first victim of his rule was not the old leadership. The first victim was the idealism of the movement, its socialistic mores. The whole great goal of man's liberation from oppression and exploitation gradually disappeared in favor of an exaltation of "practical" successes, until the goal was lost completely. The revision of theory and program which accompanied the change was so complete in its scope that the great democratic and liberating traditions of Marxism disappeared entirely from this movement. The concept of socialism took on an entirely new meaning under Stalin.

Immediate aims, industrial indices, ingot production, increasing state power, nationalization and collectivization of property became an end in themselves and forced upon the new bureaucracy new goals and theories that no longer had anything to do with socialism. Under socialism, industrial advance is inconceivable without the simultaneous rise in the standards, economic, political, social and cultural, of all the classes. For socialism, all-sided progress means the gradual decline of the forces of coercion, the state and its armed forces. For socialism, social advance means the gradual rise of an "administration of things" an increasing democracy, and a gradual disappearance of the old classes and the class society. The reality and the tendency of Stalinist society are not merely different from

socialism, but more in another direction.

Under Stalin, the revolutionary party disappeared and with it went all the forms of the independent intervention of the working class in the social process. The soviets as soviets disappeared. The trade unions became transformed from the independent economic organizations of the working class into state organizations for the purpose of chaining more securely the masses to the needs of the bureaucratic state. In the factories, the managers, making up an enormous section of the bureaucracy, ruled unmolested and workers' control disappeared even before it had an opportunity of fully expressing its economic role.

Party life was completely transformed. The old free party, already suffering malformations because of the long drawn-out civil war and economic distress, had lost all of its old traditions and characteristics. There were no longer any free discussions, no factions except that of the new leadership, no elections of importance and few if any congresses of delegated bodies. The point was finally reached where congresses began to be held five years apart, and then ten, and even more. Leadership of the bureaucracy, if not the individuals, became permanent without any possibility of intervention by the party ranks. Yet this condition suited the new membership of the new party.

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THE CRITICS OF BOLSHEVISM seem not to understand the above transformation. In referring to it, the whole nature of the objective situation which had contributed so much also to the destruction and degeneration of the social democratic movement, and of what remains of capitalism is rejected

in favor of a simpler thesis: Stalinism grew out of Bolshevism and was its natural heir. Even more intelligent historians who readily assert that Stalinism and Bolshevism are antagonistic, antipodean, destroy their own valuable contributions by a psychological inability to draw the inevitable conclusions to their own material. Thus, at the end of their excellent studies, protrudes the simplistic idea that Stalinism is not so much a new phenomenon as it is the natural, evolutionary product of Leninism. Why? Because Lenin's conception of a centralized party when carried out in life, had to produce Stalinism. These historians, too, leave the field objective analysis, for in arriving at this conclusion, they express not the results of their studies, but their own political bias as it has developed over the years and, whether they understand it or not, conform to a particular world political situation of which they are an active part.

There is no doubt that a highly centralized party such as Lenin created to meet the conditions of struggle against Tsarist absolutism also created tendencies toward bureaucratization, no more nor less, however, than the other parties which functioned in the same milieu, (the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries): If the party of Bolshevism contained the seeds of bureaucratic degeneration, so did all the parties in Russia, and so do all parties or organizations, *per se*. The degeneration of the Bolshevik party, however, did not come as a result of an inner-logic of a specific organizational concept or practice, but as a result of historical factors. The test of that truth is that the victory of Stalinism came only after years of the most intense internal struggle and in the form of a counter-revolution in-

side the party and the society. Or, to put it more accurately, the social counter-revolution in the party which is supposed to have produced the phenomenon, logically and inevitably. What is more, these same critics are forced to admit, in contrasting the two epochs of the movement, that Lenin was a democrat and that the party was free despite the conditions of illegality and the sea of backwardness in which it had functioned. It was obviously not the discipline of the party, nor the system of cooptations which paved the way for Stalinism, but for the more important factors already cited.*

The advocates of the aforementioned theory are left somewhat helpless to explain why, under the conditions of bourgeois democracy, especially in the United States, practically all organizations, political and economic, are either totally or partially bureaucratized. They run the gamut from AFL craft unions to the bourgeois political parties which are run exclusively from above, or by factions of the big bourgeoisie. Not even the smaller political parties are exempt from this process.

To say, as some do, that organization (any organization) means bureaucracy is again a simplification that confounds rather than explains. Bureaucracy is a social phenomenon

*If other parties had existed at the time of the struggle in the Bolshevik Party, unquestionably that struggle would have taken on some other forms. The Civil War which Stalin led inside the Party, may well have burst out in the country as a whole, and a different constellation of force would most certainly have appeared. But it would have resembled the contending groups. Given the existence of a single party, that party reflected, in a distorted way, the tendencies within the country as a whole. Whether it would have brought results other than what did occur is impossible to say, given the general state of affairs. In any case, it is possible to say, after the experience of the revolution, that it would have been much, much better had there existed not one party, but many parties.

which can only be explained most satisfactorily on the basis of objective historical factors. Yet it is a phenomenon which is so filled with the personal element, the involvement of people, that it is not enough to pass it off by the above generalized statement. The factor of culture, a low or backward culture, contributes much to our understanding of the phenomenon. So long as society is not free, so long as factors of exploitation and oppression remain, i.e., so long as human society remains backward in relation to the attainment of total democracy, culture will remain backward and bureaucracy will be an ever-present phenomenon.

The bureaucratization of Russian society, then, can be best understood, not as a chemically-pure product of a certain type of party, but the expression of a counter-revolution, in a backward country, whose culture has lagged historically behind even the Western world. Stalin is no more the heir of Lenin, than a Hoover or an Eisenhower is the heir of Lincoln, no more than Morris Hillquit was and Norman Thomas is the heir of Eugene V. Debs, On the other hand, John L. Lewis, William Green and David Beck are the heirs of Samuel Gompers. And Joe Ryan is a kind of heir of American craft unionism. They reflect the long bureaucratic tradition of the AFL. In saying this, however, we are describing only the surface aspects of the phenomenon and do not touch the heart of the bureaucratic problem which demands a study all its own.

Lest anyone protest at these analogies to point out that there is a substantial difference between the examples cited we may add that the difference is primarily quantitative rather than qualitative. That which the

Stalinist, bourgeois, union and political bureaucracies have in common is their indifference to the desires and needs of the masses and their right to decide their own fates. Stalinist bureaucracy, coincident with state power in a one-party nation, gave way to a totalitarianism which, if not more extensive than others we have known, is certainly a more extensive system of rule than those of the fascists. What makes it so, is the character of the social order which governs in Russia, the system of bureaucratic collectivism as an anti-capitalist, anti-socialist society. It is not the Russian climate or the organization of Lenin's party which made it so.

This Russian society did not emerge at once with Stalin's victory. Trotsky once wrote that if Stalin knew where he was leading, he might have hesitated in his drive for power. This is of course, purely speculative. But it is certain that Stalin had no idea in the Twenties where his rule would end. Stalin was above all a political improviser, whose policies developed from day to day, without long range perspective. If he is to be credited with the revisionist and nationalist theory of "socialism in one country", a reading over of the disputes on this question show that neither he nor any of his followers knew exactly the significance of the theory or its practical possibilities for transforming the whole character of the revolution.

Once in power, Stalin, driven on by the logic of his dictatorial rule, had to wipe out every trace of the old party. As Deutscher vividly described it:

He knew that the old generation of revolutionaries, though weary and humiliated, would, with very few exceptions, never be wholeheartedly converted to Miracle, Mystery and Authority [Stalinist leadership—A. G.]; and that it would always look upon him as a falsi-

fier of first principles and usurper. He disbanded the Society of Old Bolsheviks, the Society of Former Political Prisoners, and the Communist Academy, the institutions which the spirit of Bolshevism had as its last refuge. These moves indicated the stretch of the road he had travelled since he had begun his struggle against the 'ex-Menshevik' Trotsky in the name of the Old Bolshevik Guard. He now appealed to the young generation, not, of course, to its restive spirit, but to its more timid and yet very important mass, which, though eager to learn and advance socially, knew little or nothing about the pristine ideas of Bolshevism, and was unwilling to be bothered about them. This younger generation, as far back as it could remember, had always seen the leaders of the various opposition in the roles of either whipping boys or of flagellants. It had been accustomed from childhood to look up to Stalin wrapped in Mystery and Authority.

To enforce his rule Stalin introduced the police regime into the life of the nation and the party. Discussion ceased as the method of resolving differences. There was no need for it since differences were ruled out by decree. Only the Boss had the right to changing views, and only he had a right to change what was once adopted. Hooliganism and rudeness replaced the old inner life of the party. Souvarine points out that "The annals of Bolshevism contain plenty of bitter fights, barbed polemics and noisy and passionate episodes. But in this party, where Lenin practically never used the familiar 'thou' to anyone, *the strictest courtesy was always the rule*, even in the midst of the Civil War, and exceptions strike a jarring note. The era of Stalin inaugurated new usages."

The snide critics of Lenin, who take political revenge on Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution, by likening the leadership of Lenin to Stalin, overlook this simple truth: While Lenin was the authentic leader of the

Bolshevik Party, there was no end of differences, violent disputes and even at times, splits. Lenin was more than once a minority in his party. This happened not only prior to 1917, but after 1917, and most prominently during the discussions of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Nothing like that can be said about the era of Stalin's dictatorship, for the simple reason that no differences were permissible and no discussions possible. In the Stalinist era, not even agreement and abject fealty to the Boss was a guarantee of one's activity or life. In Souvarine's words:

It would be difficult to distinguish in Stalin's professions of socialist faith at that time, the varying proportions of hypocrisy and ignorance. But as one watches the sacrifice of the individual workers to the parasitic state, and that of the revolutionary generations to the myth of the too-fascinating Plan, one cannot doubt one primary fact: five years after Lenin's death, Leninist notions of socialism had no longer anything whatever in common with the doctrines put forward under the same label. . . . Russian history throws a better light on the Soviet regime devoid of soviets, than the arbitrary references to Marxism, of which Stalin actually represents the antithesis.

THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY ordered by Stalin had as its aim the elevation of Stalin to greatness, nay, to the rank of genius. The whole history of the party and the revolution was rewritten not once but many times. Since each new year required a new myth, since each new history could not match the imperative psychological yearnings of a Stalin in absolute power, the rewriting of history became a permanent profession while the lives of successive historians were quite temporary. Where ordinary mortals develop from childhood to manhood in accordance with objective circumstances and opportunities, to which they lend their real and poten-

tial talents, Stalin had to be transformed into a semi-God, a genius from childhood, the first disciple of Lenin, and not merely the first disciple, but Lenin's lifelong friend and counselor. No truly great man would, of course, require or permit the transparent hypocrisy of the fawning adulation expressed for Stalin in the twenty-five years of his rule. There was absolutely no precedent for it in the whole history of socialism. It was a part of Stalin's vulgarity, and the length to which it went was obscene. Beatram D. Wolfe wrote:

. . . if we try to represent him "the best disciple of Comrade Lenin" and to present all other leading "disciples" as weaklings and foul and unfaithful traitors; if further we wish to portray him as "Lenin's closed collaborator throughout the history of our party . . . from the very inception of Bolshevism, Lenin's co-worker in the building of the party" (Molotov); if, despite the ten years of difference in their ages,, we would picture Stalin as advising Lenin from the start and "having no little influence on Lenin" (Kalinin); if, moreover, he is indeed "the greatest of our contemporaries" (Barbusse, Mikoyan, Beria, and others); "the most profound theoretician of contemporary times" (Beria); "no one so able to penetrate into the most secret recesses of the human heart" (Shvernink); "the God-appointed leader of our military and cultural forces" (Patriarch Sergius); "the father of us all" (Yaroslavsky); "the greatest man of all times, of all epochs and peoples" (Kirov)—then the need to establish the precocity of his genius and the vast sweep of his early rebelliousness becomes more understandable.

In ordering the rewriting of his entire life, Stalin was fully aware that he had to rewrite, too, if it were at all possible, the history of all the other leaders. And this he tried by portraying everyone of them as spies, saboteurs, enemies of the people, and foreign agents in the pay of bourgeois and fascist governments not merely in

their latter-day lives, but practically from the first days of their participation in the socialist movement. Such a reckless indifference to truth and to life itself, cannot be reconciled to the ideals of socialism, and attest in another way, and that there was not and is not now the slightest aspect of socialism to be found in the totalitarian regime of Stalinism.

In all history there has never been such obeisance paid a head of state—not even to Hitler or Mussolini. It would seem that even to a totalitarian leader, an ever-rising crescendo of hushes to his political genius and leadership would suffice. But envy was not least of Stalin's characteristics. He was envious of contemporaries who excelled over him in intellectual attainments. To be paid tribute for his leadership over an entire nation was not enough. Yet he needed just such expressions of servility. He not only tolerated but instigated the many expressions of praise to his genius. His hypocrisy was nowhere better expressed than in his display of modesty, perhaps the last in Tiflis in 1926. Replying to the eulogies of his friends, he said:

I must, in all conscience, tell you, comrades, that I have not deserved half the eulogy that various delegates have here given me. It appears from them that I am one of the October heroes, the director of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the head of the Communist International, a peerless knight and all sorts of other things. This is mere fantasy, comrades, and a perfectly useless exaggeration. This is the way one speaks at the grave of a revolutionary. But I am not preparing to die.

But if Stalin protested against the "useless exaggeration" in 1926, and described it as "mere fantasy", which it was, he made no effort to stop the exaggerations which had become quite useful for his purposes.

He was all of these things: shock-brigader, legendary figure, a beloved commander, genial thinker, adored Stalin, the steel colossus, great engineer, great pilot, great master, great architect, the greatest disciple of the great master, the greatest of theorists, and the greatest of the great.

The highest peak in Europe, Pamir, was renamed Stalin. Cities renamed after him were: Stalingrad, Stalino, Stalin, Stalinabad, Stalinsk, Stalin-Aol, Stalinissi, Stalinir and Stalino-gorsk.

Even this was not enough. He had to be great in all fields. So *Revolution and Culture* ranks him amongst the "profound connoisseurs and critics of Hegel." Another journal calls him one of the "most authoritative specialists in contemporary philosophical problems." *Cultural Front* writes that "In reality, certain pronouncements of Aristotle have only been fully deciphered and expressed by Stalin." An instructor at the Communist Academy once said: "The full significance of Kantian theories can be fully embodied in contemporary science only in the light of Comrade Stalin's last letter,"—a letter attacking "putrid liberalism" and "Trotskyist contra-band".

He became overnight a great literary man. *At the Literary Post* wrote that Stalin "has always been distinguished by his profound understanding of literature." Another periodical, *Literary Gazette*, advised that "It is up to linguistics and criticism to study Stalin's style."

We are not done by any means. The writer, Demian Biedny, counsels literary men: "Learn to write as Stalin writes."

"Ask me who best understands the Russian language," said Kalinin, "and I reply—Stalin."

Poems extol "the great face, the great eyes, the great and incomparable brow of Stalin" whose appearance has the effect of a "ray of sunshine."

These accolades are summarized in the panegyric of Henri Barbusse who described Stalin as "The man with the head of a scientist, the face of a worker and the dress of a plain soldier."

The scale of this lavish and disproportionate praise is in inverse ratio to Stalin's real accomplishments. Whatever Stalin may have been he was never a philosopher or student of philosophy; he was never a literary man nor had he ever displayed any unusual interest either in literature or art; he had never until the very last years of his life shown any interest or accomplishment in the field of linguistics or philology, or science. But the lavish praise reached a plane that defies criticism, indignation or irony.

The man knew little or nothing about science and philosophy, of literature and philology, and his command of the Russian language was notoriously poor. Yet the need for greatness was so overwhelming that he sought to make up for a real failure of intellectual accomplishment by the bureaucratic device of making of himself a genius by decree. And this was in keeping with his politics. He resolved all problems by police measures; he made himself great in the same way. For woe unto those who failed Stalin here.

Before the great campaign to extol his many and universal virtues, Stalin made demands of his own personal friends and political allies that they too recognize his non-existent qualities and talents. In a state of exasperation, his old crony Yenukidze once

burst out to a comrade: "What more does he want. I am doing everything he has asked me to do, but it is not enough for him. He wants me to admit that he is a genius."

Krassin, who knew him well, called Stalin an Asiatic, not as a racial characteristic, but for the "blending of grit, shrewdness, craftiness and cruelty." Bukharin merely called him a "Ghengis Khan." The foregoing examples of the long campaign to make Stalin a great man, a campaign initiated by Stalin, emphasizes the accuracy of Trotsky's analysis of his characteristics which we have quoted.

The campaign to make Stalin a genius could only have occurred after the annihilation of the old party and its leading staff. It was possible only on the basis of the universal ignorance of the new generations that had grown up under the dictatorial regime of Stalin, on a falsification of history that never ended, on revised histories become old before they were fully circulated, on the destruction of revisionist historians who had already destroyed truth, and fell into limbo because they could not keep up with the insatiable and vindictive appetite of the *Velikiy Stalin* (Stalin the Great) for fame.

The result of the great falsification and the campaign to make Stalin a genius was a total intellectual stagnation of the country. Stalin's mediocrity determined the standards in science, art and literature as the Boss intervened in all these fields.

"Literature and art of the Stalinist epoch," wrote Trotsky, "were to go down in history as examples of the most absurd and abject Byzantinism." Sourvarine listed numerous examples of the utterly reactionary campaign in literature and art, a campaign comparable to the architect of

that other great totalitarian state of our time, Hitler. In more recent times we are familiar with the Great Russian chauvinist campaign against "cosmopolitanism" and the rise of Russian Slavic historiography which has discovered that the real beginnings of civilization are Russian in origin, as are all advances made by man in science and invention.

As a result of all this, the great revolutionary beginnings in literature, art and science, produced by October were halted in their tracks. Under the Stalinist dictatorship these fields of culture and individual attainment were subordinated to the needs of the political regime and therefore stagnated completely. No great works of literature, of painting, or the cinema were possible as long as the quixotic moods of the Kremlin determined what should be written, painted or produced cinematically. Music has had a similar fate and the leading Russian composers have been declared enemies of the people for not composing symphonies that could be whistled.

Stalin's excursions into the fields of culture were not dictated by any immediate or direct needs of his regime. Whether a Shostakovich symphony could be whistled or not, whether he wrote a quartet, sonata, or an opera, could in no way effect the state of the nation, although an anti-Stalinist opera might conceivably be written. It certainly never would have been produced and it would have been the last known work of its author. Modern abstract surrealist, or non-objective art certainly could not and did not threaten the regime, yet Stalin personally forced Russian painting back more than a century. Stalin's intervention in these fields, as in philology, literature and science were the

result not of any compelling political need as it was an inner hungry drive in a cold, calculating, narrow and revengeful man who wanted history to record his life as one of universal greatness, as an individual who attained the highest pinnacles in all fields of human endeavor, as a super-human person. He believed he could do it by decree, at the point of a Luger, as he ordered all things done in his police state.

"It is hardly necessary to prove," wrote Trotsky, "that a man who uttered not a single word on any subject at any time and was automatically raised to the top by his bureaucracy after he had long passed the age of forty cannot be regarded as a genius." To believe otherwise, is to assume that in Stalin we have a case of arrested development, the man beginning his rise to knowledge and greatness after the age of fifty.

Perhaps it is too early to make any definitive evaluation of Stalin's place in history. But it is certainly possible and necessary to make at least some provisional comments on the subject, since everything that we can possibly know about the life of the man is known. There remains then the matter of giving judgment to his deeds and accomplishments, not as achievements independent of their time and place, but in relation to several important historical factors.

Stalin did not live and function in some abstract society, i.e., a socialist society in a single country, walled off from the rest of the world, as Bukharin once argued in behalf of that revisionist theory. He rose to the head of a state, a one-time workers' state, in a capitalist world in crisis. The collapse of capitalism and its weakness as a universal social order coincided with a tremendous crisis of the social-

ist movement and these contributed as much to Stalin's rise to power as did his victory in the protracted factional struggles inside the Russian party and state.

His rise to power as the dictator of the country was accompanied by an increasing bureaucratization of the land and its eventual totalitarianization. Russia became the most complete totalitarian police state the world has ever seen. In this it was distinguished from the Italian and German examples because while they remained bourgeois states, expressing the same class relations that existed in the democratic capitalist nations, the state showed a greater mobility of the bourgeoisie and a certain independence of movement and action in the ruling groups which seeped down through the lower layers of the fascist structure. Stalinist society, in contrast, became completely sealed off and its masses were thoroughly atomized.

The objective reason for this important difference in the two types of totalitarianism lay in the fundamentally different social orders which prevailed in these countries. Stalinist society, which we have described as a bureaucratic collectivist state, arose on the foundations of a revolution which abolished the bases of capitalism and created the groundwork for a classless socialist society. In the abolition of private property in the means of production, i.e., in its nationalization of industry, the Revolution merely set the direction for future progress.

The new state was not yet a socialist state; far from it, in fact. The socialist leaders of the new state understood full well that socialism could not arise on the basis of a working class victory in a single country, espe-

cially one backward industrially and technologically, and above all, culturally. In the absence of a similar development elsewhere, they hoped they could strengthen the basis of the new state by adopting socialistic measures that would begin the long and difficult development toward a new and free society. The degeneration of the revolution is the story of Stalin's victory as a counter-revolution.

Stalin's counter-revolution was directed not merely against the old leadership. This is the falsification of history by Stalin, a falsification which has influenced all the critics of the Revolution, as well as some of its friends. The victory of Stalin is still regarded as a "palace revolution" in which Stalin won out against his rivals; this being the process of all revolutions which have the habit of devouring their children. Among these critics, Stalin represents Marxism, socialism and Bolshevism.

Every achievement of the Stalinist regime is a living symbol of its anti-socialism and anti-Marxism. It is not merely a question of Stalin erring in this or that direction, on this or that specific question. No, the anti-socialism of Stalinism is fundamental—in its basic conceptions, its practices and its results.

Socialism means the elevation of every man and woman to great social and cultural heights which are attainable only under complete democracy, economic and political freedom. Lenin's opposition to bourgeois democracy was not that it was democratic, but that it was not democratic enough; it was a class democracy and therefore incomplete.

"Whoever wants to approach socialism," he wrote, "by any other path than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at the most absurd

and reactionary conclusions both economic and political."

The living proof of this is the Stalinist dictatorship. There is no question that the Revolution had made mistakes and grave ones. These have been pointed out more than once in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. They were the mistakes of a revolution in a backward country which inherited all the retrogressive features of Tsarist absolutism. This alone might not have produced a one-party regime, were it not for the counter-revolution of Tsarism, the intervention of the United States, Great Britain, France, and their World War I enemies on behalf of the rotten old regime, and finally, the attempt to overthrow the regime by the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, which were not outlawed after October. The subsequent degeneration, however, was not historically determined simply by the conditions produced by the revolution and the counter-revolution. It is more accurate to say that the degeneration of the revolution through Stalin's rise to power, i.e., the counter-revolution, never gave the new state an opportunity for peaceful reconstruction over an extended period of time.

In erasing the achievements of the revolution, the Stalinist regime, did not return to capitalism, as some contend, nor did it extend socialism economically—unconsciously, or historically—as others contend, but evolved an entirely new system. It retained nationalized property, collectivized agricultural, destroyed whatever remnants of a private economy remained, encompassed within the purview of the state all matters economic and political, and therefore, social. In a word, the collective state became the collective owner of collective prop-

erty. It became a bureaucratic collectivist state, characterized by the most inhuman exploitation of the Russian people, and by the introduction of slave labor as a highly important adjunct to the economy, an indispensable part of the new system.

Such a regime could not evolve as any but a police regime to keep the classes enslaved and to safeguard the all-powerful and omniscient state. The vagaries of its conduct, its brutality, its inhumanity are the product of the system which beholds man not as the most important factor in life and society, but as an instrument of exploitation for the progress of machine production. If the regime exhibits cruelty beyond even the needs of this kind of state, it is only the added fillip—the State expressing the personalities which dominate it.

This writer holds, that while Stalin was attracted to Marxian socialism in his youth, remained a devoted revolutionary against Tsarism and a faithful party man all his life, he never emerged from the mold of backwardness of the 18th Century nation where he was born. A careful examination of his life and work show that in Stalin, revolutionary socialism was wedded to a powerfully ingrained nationalism. He sincerely desired the destruction of Tsarism and saw the liberation of Russia from absolutism as a socialist act. His hatred of the emigre leaders and the boast of his cronies that they had never left Russian soil contributed to this nationalist bias. The Stalinists were the true provincials of the Russian movement and this provincialism forced itself into all their works, their theories, politics and practices.

Stalin was both the creation and the personification of the new bureaucracy. The bureaucracy had grown

out of the conditions of backwardness in Russia. In the system of bureaucratic collectivism, its superior position in society, gave it the form and content of a new ruling class, a ruling class more ruthless than any we have known. This class not only owned the state as its collective property but reorganized Russian society to guarantee and perpetuate its collective rule as a class. In doing so it also introduced political and social mores hitherto unknown either in bourgeois society or the broad and general socialist movement which arose as an anti-bourgeois movement.

ANALOGIES ARE OFTEN MADE between the Russian Revolution and its leaders and the French. The analogies are all faulty, helpful as some of them may be in understanding certain of the Russian events. But the essential differences between the Russian and French revolutions are decisive when analogies are made between the Thermidor and the Stalinist counter-revolution. The Russian Revolution was a product of modern capitalism, a machine society of modern classes. The French Revolution came as a rebellion against feudalism and the absolutist regime. There is no strong and instructive analogy between the groupings in the French Revolution and the single party in Russia. As a consequence, while it is possible to draw some likeness between Lenin and Trotsky and some of the great French rebels, there is no one to draw from to help in understanding Stalin.

Stalin is a unique personality. It is not alone his personal cruelty, his sadism and his envy which is unique. Other men have had those traits. But his hurts, resentments, bitterness and attachments which "he transferred from the small scale of the province

to the grand scale of the entire country," are destructive. Actually the French Revolution, enormous as it was in influencing the rest of the world, occurred within a limited geographical area and encompassed small numbers of people. No great international movement embracing millions was associated with it. No figure in the French Revolution exercised power approaching Stalin's. And finally, no other figure in history, was able by his malevolence to alter and determine the course of a world movement and a state embracing tens of millions of people, to upset a system of ideas a century old, and to destroy such powerful traditions as were associated with socialism. And he did all of this in the name of socialism. When he said that socialism required a strengthening of the state, not its withering away, his followers nodded, amen. When he asserted that socialism means inequality (only complete communism would create equality) great hosannas were sung in his name. When he proclaimed that Russia had achieved full and complete socialism, amid backwardness, poverty and exploitation, hallelujahs were sung around the world.

The man who was wrong in his estimates and tactics on almost every important world question, was declared the most practical of men. He helped destroy the German socialist movement by his betrayal of the revolution, paving the way to Hitler's victory. He made a bloc with Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 that destroyed that revolution and the old Chinese Communist Party. He promulgated the theory of social fascism, and the third period, which isolated the whole Communist International from the world working class. He failed in his policy of "collective security" and

took out his spite against Great Britain, the United States and France by signing a pact with Hitler. The pact with Hitler almost proved his undoing by starting World War II which led to the invasion of his domain. Were it not for American intervention in the war and its assistance to Stalin, he could not have saved his regime.

The extension of World War II to global proportions served to perpetuate his regime and to help it flourish and expand, not so much because of its own inner strength, but because the war, in destroying Germany, Italy and Germany, almost destroyed the whole capitalist world and gave Stalin a new lease on life. Thus a series of fortuitous world circumstances, the disintegration of capitalism and the weakness of the socialist movement, allowed for an extension of Stalinism. In permitting that extension, it likewise introduced new and powerful forces for the disintegration of that system, primarily in the national and social rebelliousness of the new states now ruled by the Stalinist empire. Stalinism can no more solve the problem of national independence than could Hitlerism and the Stalinist multi-national state is as much a fiction as a Hitlerized Europe would be. The break with Tito, the dissatisfactions in the countries behind the Iron Curtain, the rebellions in Czechoslovakia and the uprising in East Germany are all the unmistakable signs of the grave weaknesses of Stalinism.

Stalin has left the legacy of a new exploitive society, the most reactionary and bureaucratic social order we have ever known. He headed that society completely without once loosening his authority over that state and the movement associated with his name. No more apt description of

that role has been given than by Trotsky when he wrote:

L'Etat, c'est moi! is almost a liberal formula by comparison with the actualities of Stalin's totalitarian regime. Louis XIV identified himself only with the State. The Popes of Rome identified themselves with both the State and the Church—but only during the epoch of temporal power. The totalitarian state goes beyond Caesero-Papism, for it has encompassed the entire economy of the country as well. Stalin can justly say, unlike the Sun King, 'La Societe, c'est moi!

IN REPLY TO I. N. SMIRNOV that Stalin is "a mediocrity, a colorless nonentity," Trotsky replied:

Mediocrity, yes; nonentity, no. The dialectics of history have already hooked him and will raise him up. He is needed by all of them—by the tired radicals, by the bureaucrats, by the *nepmen*, the *kulaks*, the upstarts, the sneaks, by all the worms that are crawling out of the upturned soil of the manured revolution. He knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to lead them. He has deserved the reputation of an old revolutionist, which makes him invaluable to them as a blinder on the eyes of the country. He has will and daring. He will not hesitate to utilize them and to move them against the Party. He has already started doing this. Right now he is organizing around himself the sneaks of the Party, the artful dodgers. Of course, great developments in Europe, in Asia and in our country may intervene and upset all the speculations. But if everything continues to go automatically as it is going now, then Stalin will just as automatically become dictator.

This was said not in 1935 or 1930, but in 1924. It was said not in malice, but quite objectively, on the basis of a keen grasp of the currents which had developed in a party in control of the state, the only party in the land.

Trotsky measured greatness not by

the yardstick of success, or achievement and accomplishment *per se*. The greatness of a man ought to be measured as a total contribution to progress of mankind, the elevation of society, the improvement of the economic, political, social and cultural advance of man collectively and individually. Great men are largely men of genius or near genius in many fields. They were the initiators of great ideas and great social progress and they lived in all ages.

If success alone is the measure of greatness, then greatness would indeed have been commonplace and there would be no men of distinction. The yardstick by which a Burnham could measure the greatness of Stalin could apply to a Hitler or a Mussolini, or to any man in any field who merely succeeded in achieving a goal.

Burnham writes of Stalin! "Long ago . . . he succeeds." Impressive! What test of action? Success at the murder of all opponents! "The Moscow Trials have stood the test of action." Indeed! "Stalin's political techniques show a freedom from conventional restrictions that is incompatible with mediocrity. The mediocre man is custom bound." Why does it follow? The same can be said of Hitler and Mussolini—all terrorists "show a freedom from conventional restrictions."

But his greatness, continues Burnham, lies in Stalin's theory of "multi-national Bolshevism." "As a creative political idea," he writes, "not merely or so much as a general theoretical conception of the nature of politics but as an idea fitted to implement politics in action, multi-national Bolshevism (Stalin's contribution) ranks with Marx's theory of the state, Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, or Lenin's analysis of capitalism

in the stage of finance-imperialism." And this isn't all. ". . . Stalin has translated into a realistic political perspective the dream of theoretical geopolitics: domination of Eurasia." Like all of Burnham's theories, these cannot stand the test of time or any other measure. And they are not necessarily new discoveries. Stalin's theory of "multi-national Bolshevism" is neither Bolshevik nor multi-national. It is merely Great Russian Chauvinism expressing itself in its most blatant form; it is the triumph of those very ideas against which Lenin sought to organize the party through a bloc with Trotsky. Moreover, it is this very theory, and the practice which takes place under it, that is the Achilles heel of Stalinism, for it keeps the national minorities under Stalinist rule in a permanent state of opposition, ferment and struggle. Stalin's "multi-national Bolshevism" is a state of war of the Great Russians against all other nations in the Stalinist orbit. The measure of Burnham's contribution is that he likens a modernized version of Tsarist policy on foreign affairs and on the national question to the great theoretical contributions of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Worst of all this kind of contribution helps to muddy the already polluted waters in the struggle against Stalinism, for it pictures a power in that movement that is not there. Or to put it more accurately, it is precisely in that area of struggle that a movement against Stalinism is most ripe and contains the best possibilities of success. Real politik! The scientific method!

In appraising the methods of Stalin, Burnham quotes approvingly from Hitler that politics was not conducted to satisfy "a few scholars or aesthetic sickly apes" and which confounds intellectuals and writers who live in a

"verbalized atmosphere." For Burnham even Stalin's style, his rhetoric, was "in its own genre distinguished." But Burnham overlooks this important fact: All of Stalin's opponents were not just intellectuals and writers, observing events "coldly" and "objectively" from behind a typewriter. They were the men who organized and led the revolution. They were men of action as well as ideas. They stood out in the open, proclaimed their views and their goals and went out and did their deeds. It was against men of this caliber that Stalin organized the bureaucracy.

When a Burnham rejects Trotsky's description of Stalin as a mediocrity by asserting that the war established his greatness he neglects to see that in so describing Stalin, Trotsky is comparing him with the truly great men of socialism, Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Mehring, Lenin, Luxemburg and even with himself. He wrote, "In attempting to find a historical parallel for Stalin, we have to reject not only Cromwell, Robespierre, Napoleon and Lenin, but even Mussolini and Hitler. We come close to an understanding of Stalin when we think in terms of Mustapha Kemal Pasha or perhaps Porfirio Diaz."

One need not subscribe to every word in the above to see the direction of Trotsky's comparison and how much more accurate it is than Burnham's reevaluation.

Philip Rahv in his rejoinder to Burnham's article in *Partisan Review* wrote pertinently on this question:

Stalin's ruthlessness, his indifference to human suffering, and the unprecedented scale of his autocratic sway certainly link him, as Burnham remarks, to "the tradition of the most spectacular of the Tsars, of the great Kings of the Medes and Persians," etc. But to conclude on

that account that he is a great man is to judge him along purely aesthetic lines, that is, in the sense of the distinction drawn between the aesthetic approach and the ethical one. The aesthetic attitude is essentially that of the uncommitted person, of the detached onlooker gratified by spectacles. It is an attitude exhausted by the categories of "interesting" on the one hand and the "boring" on the other—categories as modern as they are inauthentic. . . . But in politics, as in morals, the criteria of aestheticism are the least meaningful. In the historical struggle to which we are committed Stalinism deploys enormous forces, and the one thing we cannot afford to do is to abandon our interests and values in order to covert, through an aesthetic sleight of hand, the tragic struggle into a show of "pure politics," a show in which Stalin inevitably appears as the star-performer. Pure politics, like pure art, is a delusion. The committed man, that is the man who has accepted the hazards of his political existence, can no more attend such a show than he can attend his own funeral.

We think that is good enough for the time being. Time will permit a fuller portrait of the hangman of the Russian Revolution. It will assess his true role and fully, too. But we can see the outlines of that role now. Stalin will be seen as the architect of a new society of reaction, a society that was the expression of the social barbarism of our times. It will record that in the Twentieth Century of man's development he introduced a new industrial slave society under a totalitarian police regime. He did so in the name of freedom and socialism, by the physical annihilation of a party which gave him fame and of men who made possible his political career. He was helped to success by methods which have their origins in earlier and backward societies, using cruelty with modern weapons and the employment of psychology to turn against man out of a burning inferiority which drove him to triumph

with unparalleled force, cunning and duplicity. He has enriched the history of man's malevolence as he has filled its pages with the blood of countless thousands.

If this is greatness "in the grand style" it is the greatness of barbarism, the greatness of social decline, of dis-

integration, of chaos. Compared to the struggle of mankind to rise above its present peaks of achievement to loftier ones, freedom and progress, Stalin's contributions to history are those of retrogression, as a mockery of man's highest aspirations.

Albert GATES

BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Myth of America's Social Revolution

SHARES OF UPPER INCOME GROUPS IN INCOME AND SAVINGS. By *Simon Kuznets*, assisted by *Elizabeth Jenks*. National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc. 1953, 725 pp., \$9.00.

The political economy of the United States of America is indeed strange, as has frequently been remarked by analysts with varying points of view in the political spectrum. Moreover, in no other country has public relations and the art of sweeping exaggeration been carried to such refined lengths. This social environment helps to explain why a crude statistical work achieves front-page publicity in the *New York Times*.

When the preliminary findings of the Kuznets study were released early in 1952, the *New York Times* gave them substantial coverage in its issue of March 5, 1952, starting with a front-page headline: "Shift in Income Distribution is Reducing Poverty in U. S." The lead paragraph by economic reporter Will Lissner stated: "The United States has undergone a social revolution in the last four dec-

ades, and particularly since the late Thirties." To be sure, the same newspaper, in an article by the same reporter one month later—to be precise on April 3, 1952—carried an article with the headline: "Living Standards Off 4 per cent Since Korea." This is the conclusion of a study by Dr. Julius Hirsh on the impact of price rises and tax increases on the moderate income city worker's four person family—"the type of family . . . that occurs most frequently in the varied structure of the American urban family."

The "social" revolution apparently was not too profound, or at any rate it proved to be rather short-lived. Perhaps history was rather unkind to the advocates of the American "social" revolution by launching the Korean war before the findings of the Kuznets study were made public, and before the advertising agencies could use these findings to launch a campaign for reduction of taxes on the upper income groups.

What are the Kuznets' findings? Lissner summarizes them with reasonable accuracy in the above-mentioned article, as follows:

As a result of little-appreciated changes in the distribution of a rapidly growing national income, the United States has gone about half the way toward eliminating inequities in incomes. But it has done this, not by leveling

down, but by leveling up. These are some of the changes:

The very poor have become fewer by two-thirds of their 1939 number.

The poor have become better off. Where three out of four families had incomes of less than \$2,000 a year in 1939, only one out of three fell into that class ten years later.

The well-to-do and the rich have become more numerous. In the late Thirties one family in about fifty was in the \$5,000 and over income class, and one out of 100 was in the \$10,000 and over class. In the late Forties, one family out of six was in the \$5,000 and over class, and one out of twenty in the \$10,000 and over class.

Over the years, the very rich have become poorer because the rise in labor incomes has been accompanied by a decline in property incomes. The share of the upper 1 per cent of income receivers in total income has declined in thirty-five years from 16 per cent to 9 per cent.

The Kuznets study, of course, is concerned primarily with what has happened to the upper income groups—the top one, five or seven per cent of the population. In his article in the May 4, 1953 issue of the *New York Times*, based on release of the entire study, Lissner provides a more up-to-date summary of the major findings of Kuznets' statistical analysis and identifies the source of interpretation of these income changes as a "social" revolution.

The decline in upper group shares of total individual income was sharpest for the top 1 per cent of income receivers in the total population. This group had per capita incomes of \$5,500 and up in 1948 and thereafter, and typical family incomes of \$22,000 and up. Its share, before Federal income taxes, dropped from 12 per cent in 1939-40 to 8½ per cent in 1947-48. After taxes, the drop was from 11 to 6 per cent. . . .

From 1913 to 1948 the per capita income of the top 1 per cent little more than doubled. The Consumers Price Index rose two-and-a-half times its 1913 level; the upper group failed even to maintain its real income. The per capita income of the mass of the population, the

lower 99 per cent group, rose to four times its 1913 level, making a vast improvement in its real income.

This was much more than a mere consequence of the shifts in income distribution which have been reducing poverty in the United States, reported in detail in the *New York Times* of March 5, 1952. These shifts, called "a social revolution" by Dr. Arthur F. Burns, Economic Adviser to the President and research director, on leave, of the National Bureau, would have produced only a moderate proportional decline.

Inasmuch as there have been more profound statistical studies than this, including several by Kuznets—none of which has received notice outside of the professional journals—one is forced to the conclusion that it is the label "social revolution" that is largely or exclusively responsible for the widespread dissemination of the findings of the present study. And it is not without interest that Burns, who also carries the title of Professor of Economics at Columbia University, is now chief economic adviser to the President.

WHETHER BURNS IS AWARE of the meaning of the phrase, "social revolution," we do not know. Certainly Kuznets is not in any way responsible for this remarkable label. He merely presents his findings in a technical manner, hardly intended for the lay reader, surrounds them with the usual caveats and tables of derivation and substantiation almost without end. The suspicion must remain, however, that Burns was well aware of the fact that referring to the changes in income distribution as a "social revolution" would result in extraordinary publicity and presumably in support for redistributing the tax burden—a goal that Burns apparently favors. Consider, for example, the following paragraph from the first Lissner story:

Dr. Arthur F. Burns, who directed an important part of these investigations, concludes that we have about reached the limit of the usefulness of the income tax as a device for redistributing income. To raise the large revenues required for security at home and abroad, the tax must lie heavily on the brackets where income is concentrated—moderate-sized incomes.

The "social" revolution thus fades into something far short of the expropriation, or even the impoverishment, of the bourgeoisie. It would seem to center around the high individual income tax rates and the reduction in the proportion of national income going to dividends and interest—developments flowing from the development of the Permanent War Economy. The most important development of the Permanent War Economy, in so far as Kuznets' findings are concerned, is clearly the sharp reduction in unemployment.

States Kuznets (p. xxxvii of his Introduction and Summary):

This recent decline in upper group shares, which for its magnitude and persistence is unmatched in the record, obviously has various causes. The most prominent are the reduction of unemployment and the marked increase in total income flowing to lower income groups (particularly farmers and wage earners); shifts in the saving and investment habits of upper income groups which may have curtailed their chances of getting large receipts from successful venture capital and equity investments; lower interest rates; and steeper income taxes. But *conjectures alone are possible*, and the discussion in the report is limited to a statement of facts." (Italics mine—T. N. V.)

It is more than a coincidence that the basic economic program of the Eisenhower Administration is to reverse this so-called "social" revolution by reducing taxes on the upper income groups, raising the rate of interest, stimulating venture capital and thereby encouraging higher dividends, and stimulating a slight case of unemployment so that labor will not be so demanding and wages can be reduced.

Only the exigencies of the class struggle can account for the absolutely unpardonable use of the term "social revolution" in connection with the relatively insignificant changes that have taken place in income distribution since the development of the Welfare State and, more recently, the Permanent War Economy. Nevertheless, it is still of considerable interest to examine the changes that have taken place in the distribution of income.

Of more interest than the findings of Kuznets are the reports of the Census Bureau. These are based on Census surveys and may be considered to be much more reliable than data based on income tax returns, as is true of Kuznets. The Census data are before taxes and limited to wage or salary recipients. Dividing the latter into five groups, we get the following picture in percentages for selected years from 1939 to 1951:

Wage or Salary							
Recipients	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1945	1939
Lowest fifth	3.0	2.3	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.4
Second fifth	10.6	9.7	10.1	10.2	10.3	10.1	8.4
Middle fifth	18.9	18.3	18.7	18.6	17.8	17.4	15.0
Fourth fifth	25.9	25.7	26.2	25.5	24.7	25.7	23.9
Highest fifth	41.6	44.0	42.4	42.8	44.3	43.9	49.3

In other words, so far as wages and salaries are concerned, accounting for about 70 per cent of total income payments to individuals, the middle income groups have gained—not only at the expense of the upper income group, but also at the expense of the lower income group. At any rate, regardless of what interpretation one cares to make of the above figures, there is clearly nothing that can justify the use of the term “social” revolution.

Kuznets, of course, is concerned primarily with the upper income groups. His figures show a higher decline for the top 1 per cent than for the top 5 per cent—and it is clear that no definition of the upper income groups can properly extend as far as the top 20 per cent. But the major decline has taken place since 1940-41, and this is precisely the period in which individual income tax rates have been raised enormously. The question of the reliability of the estimates is an inevitable one, and Kuznets is greatly bothered by it, spending an entire chapter of 75 pages, including appendix tables, in justifying his methodology. The chapter starts, however, by stating (p. 435):

We cannot measure the probable errors in our estimates directly because our basic data are either by-products of tax administration or products of censuses, subject to all the imperfections of social records. Some defects are obvious and the adjustments discussed in preceding chapters were designed to correct for them as far as possible. But after all these adjustments, errors inevitably remain, and we are faced with the difficult task of appraising them. *This discussion of the reliability of our estimates must necessarily be incomplete and inconclusive.* (Italics mine—T. N. V.)

If it is inconclusive as to whether the estimates are reliable, it may be wondered why the study was made.

Kuznets indicates that the choice was between using income tax returns or abandoning the study, and he obviously feels that the basic trends revealed by his study are correct. If by this were meant the small relative improvement in the position of the middle income groups, as shown by the Census data, empirical evidence would clearly confirm such findings. For the average number of income earners has increased sharply among factory and white collar workers' families, as unemployment has decreased and the percentage of women employed has risen to an all-time high. In other words, on a *family* basis there can be little doubt that there has been an increase in the average standard of living since 1939. This is also true on a per capita basis, but it is not so pronounced.

When, however, the claim is made that the upper income groups (one per cent or five per cent) have experienced both an *absolute* and relative decline in their income shares, and therefore presumably in their standards of living, one should look with a rather skeptical and jaundiced eye on an analysis that depends completely on the reliability of income tax data. After many comparisons and reliability tests, Kuznets refers to a sample audit study of 1948 income tax returns (which show a minimum of 70 out of 100 returns in the \$25,000 and over bracket as containing errors) and concludes (p. 466):

The audit study, *as far as the recent results go*, warrants an inference that such underestimation is within a 5 per cent margin for incomes at the top 1 per cent level, and within a 10 per cent margin for incomes in the 2nd through 5th percentage bands. (Italics mine—T. N. V.)

The difficulty is that the results do not go very far. They cannot do jus-

tice to the extensive legal tax avoidance practiced by the upper income groups, as analyzed in some detail in Part VI of *The Permanent War Economy*, “Tavation and the Class Struggle,” (cf. November-December, 1951, issue of *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL*).

Our own private sample study of millionaires (the only reliable method of estimating what has happened to the incomes of the bourgeoisie) indicates that they are managing to survive, although the fees to tax accountants and lawyers have increased rather sharply. Mansions costing in excess of \$100,000 are still being built—in fact, in larger numbers than in any period during the last 25 years. Of course, vacations are frequently transformed into business trips—or is it vice-versa? Profits are frequently allowed to remain in corporations, in the expectation that the Eisenhower Administration will ultimately reduce the surtax rates in the upper income brackets, so that it will “pay” to receive the dividends that are waiting to be declared. Some of these factors Kuznets tries to take into account, but the majority (and they are cumulatively decisive) are beyond statistical analysis.

WE CAN ONLY conclude that in a period of high tax rates any analysis of upper income groups based on tax returns is not only necessarily inconclusive, but tends to be unreliable. Kuznets, moreover, bases his analysis on a per capita approach. Aside from certain statistical difficulties in converting income tax returns to a per capita basis, the procedure as a measure of what has happened to upper income groups is exceedingly questionable. While the size of families in upper income brackets is smaller than in lower income groups, an upper income group with a large family

might well be excluded from Kuznets' array of the data on a per capita basis. If the purpose of the study is to discover something about standards of living, and not just to collect a lot of figures, then the facts of economic life have to be considered. Using the Kuznets approach, a single individual with an income of \$25,000 annually would be part of the upper one per cent in 1948, but a family of five with the one income earner admitting to an income of \$100,000 for the year might be excluded since the per capita is only \$20,000. Such an analysis overlooks the fact that one mansion is usually sufficient for a family of this type; in any case, five mansions are rarely used. An analysis of *shares* of upper income groups necessarily involves a ratio of two quantities. The numerator, of course, consists of the amount of income going to the upper income groups, however income is defined. And it makes quite a difference as to what is or is not included in income. The Kuznets data necessarily contain a downward bias (probably on the order of twenty to thirty per cent) in the amount of income currently (since 1943) going to the upper income groups. The numerator of the income ratio is thus understated. But the ratio also depends on the size of the denominator. Here Kuznets uses what amounts to his own estimates of national income. This tends to overstate because of its inclusion of income in kind, imputed rent and other such concepts that are clearly not part of any analysis of the performance of a *capitalist* economy. If the numerator is noticeably smaller than it should be, and denominator somewhat larger than is proper for analysis, the resulting ratio is necessarily considerably smaller than it ought to be.

Unfortunately, we do not have available the statistical resources of the National Bureau of Economic Research or the Department of Commerce, but the decline in the shares of upper income groups since 1939 is not nearly as large as reported. Such decline as has occurred, moreover, is principally confined to the period upper income groups since 1929 is not manent War Economy. The bourgeoisie have not been destroyed or impoverished. They have succeeded, so far, in preserving their basic wealth, income and property. Nor has there been any diminution in the political power of the American bourgeoisie. What has happened, as we pointed out in the November-December 1951 issue of *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL* (p. 338), is that: "*The state however, whose function is more and more to protect the rule and the*

wealth of the bourgeoisie, is being financed in steadily increasing measure by the workers and lower middle classes. Therein lies the secret of the role of taxation under the Permanent War Economy, while equality of incomes remains just as much a mirage on the horizon as it ever was." (Italics in original.)

Kuznets has contributed data that may be useful to income analysts. As the real pioneer in national income data, and as one who justifiably claims to be a scientist in his field, he should blush at the "social" revolution that Burns has produced from his highly qualified data. Above all, Kuznets ought to investigate why his data are being used as part of the drive, spearheaded by the N.A.M. to reduce the tax burden of the upper income groups.

T. N. VANCE

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