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## The Beria Purge

Communism as practiced in Russia is a system of the most sweated labor in the world, but dressed by forced labor camps and a vast complex network of spies and counter-spies. The counter-spies are not "foreign agents"; they are "Party men" who spy on the GPU who spy on the Party men, and both spy on the people. This octopus periodically disgorges itself in blood-baths known as purges.

Nevertheless, there could be no greater mistake made than that of all our Russian "experts" who identify all purges of the same type, and are now busy likening the purges following the arrest of the No. 2 man in the whole Russian empire, Lavrenti P. Beria, to the "Thotskyist" Trials of 1936-1938. The purges of the 1936-38 period announced the consolidation of the monster state. The present period signifies its disintegration.

After a struggle that had been raging in the country since the death of Lenin, the victor, Stalin, felt confident he could undertake a purge of what was left of the 1917 Revolution—not alone of those who had led it but thousands and thousands of rank and file workers who had opposed his regime. Thus by 1936-38 the counter-revolution was firmly in the saddle. The blood bath had helped the ruling intelligentsia, the planners, assert its authority: "I am here to stay. I am the new ruling class, and you all better obey me. Here is the new Stalinist Constitution which not alone legalizes my status but defines my power as absolute."

### Thieves Fall Out

Today the ruling bureaucracy is not the integrated whole it was in 1938. It is split all ways between Zhdanov men, Malenkov men, Beria men, and—not to be forgotten although little known at present—Khrushchev men. Anyone who, like Nikita S. Khrushchev, has been boss over rebellious Ukraine, comes into Moscow as late as 1950, and by 1953 is in a position to have Malenkov "ask to be relieved" of the post of General Secretary of the omnipresent Com-

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# The Beginning of the End of Russian Totalitarianism

## The Beria Purge and the Malenkov Speech

(Continued from page 1)

munist Party, and himself steps into that post, is a man to be watched. These power politicians have by now reached a blind alley, not knowing where to turn, and murdering each other.

They have been doing that ever since 1948 when Malenkov engineered, without "the all-powerful Stalin" knowing about it, the medical assassination of his co-leader and superior, Andrei Zhdanov. It is clear now, as it was not then, that the death of Zhdanov was the beginning of the end also of Stalin.

Ever since the expulsion of Trotsky, Stalin has held undisputed power. Ever since 1938 he was so confident of his might and his politics that he knew he could mobilize for war, although he had executed the entire military staff. Hitler used to rave and rant to his lieutenants his envy and appreciation of the genius of Stalin who had the perspicacity and audacity to get rid of the general staff of the Red Army before launching a world war. He knew whereof he spoke for totalitarian economics has no room for a command divided between political and military needs.

### Power Went to Stalin's Head

But by 1948, after two decades of undisputed power, topped by a military victory, Stalin, to use a phrase of his own on another occasion, was "dizzy with success." I am not using it as a psychological epithet. His exhilaration from success was a sign that he was no longer responsive to the objective needs requisite for a struggle for world power. Stalin failed to grasp the new situation—he had won a war, a mighty one, over Nazi Germany, yes. But he had yet to face the real contender for world power—the United States. Zhdanov was with him in not using the truce between wars for a breathing spell; he was ready to take the whole world on.

Malenkov thought differently and, feeling that he could not win the argument since Stalin was evidently with Zhdanov, had Zhdanov poisoned. For the first time since Stalin came to power something had been done behind the back of the old master intriguer and murderer: no leader can long retain undisputed leadership under such circumstances, no matter what leader cults have been fashioned around his name. The bureaucracy whom Stalin had so long and so fully represented began to find him inadequate to the new situation created by the end of a world war which no one really won but which left each of the two state-capitalist giants so exhausted that a halt had to be called.

How pyrrhic was Stalin's victory could be seen in the unrest in the national republics which constitute Russia. By a ukase of the Supreme Soviet, five autonomous republics were liquidated. Russia had suffered the greatest devastation and was in crying need for a labor force to rebuild the country. It could not hope to have that force enlarged by the return of slave laborers

who—too many—had willingly escaped from the prison which is Stalin's Russia. Anyone who was in Germany at the end of the war knows that long before Koje, the Korean War and the massacre of P.O.W.'s, a veritable civil war was going on in the Russian displaced persons camps, but the Allies forced the Russians to return to their "homeland."

### Restless Masses

The restlessness of the Russian masses knew no bounds. If they were merely to go on in the same old way, keeping their noses to the grindstone, then at least it would not be in the god-forsaken Urals. The totalitarian Russian bureaucracy had all the power and all the force and all the laws it needed to enforce labor discipline, but absolutely nothing could stem the tide of returning Russians.

The tide invalidated all laws. To have a labor force at all the planners were compelled to make an unplanned declaration — an amnesty on all labor offenses committed during the war.

So catastrophic, however, had been the decline of the labor force during the war years (a drop from 31.2 million in 1940 to 27.2 million in 1945 with more than a third of these unskilled new women workers) that even the amnesty was insufficient to create the labor force necessary. Thereupon occurred one of the speediest demobilizations of an army anywhere in the world; no less than 10 million were demobilized between 1945 and 1947. But many of these had been infected with what the Soviet bureaucracy called "bourgeois ideology." Still, considering Russian purges, this "cultural purge" in 1946 was a very mild one. But the power struggle behind the scenes was not so mild. A new low, even for the Stalinist bureaucracy, was reached in ending an argument among themselves by quietly doing away with Zhdanov, and then, of course, giving him a big mass funeral.

### More Decrees

By 1950 the Russian economy had about got back to normal when Stalin had a brainstorm. He brought Khrushchev in from the Ukraine (where he was Premier) and had Khrushchev, in a speech in the Moscow district, announce the most fantastic scheme yet — the creation of agrorods, that is to say, agricultural towns. Just like that—decree them, and they shall arise and the centuries-old distinction between city and country will vanish.

Instead of "abolishing" the distinction between city and country, this idiotic schema brought such chaos to the countryside that even in that land of monolithic planning, the idea had to be shelved in a few short months. The peasant wasn't hurrying to transport, at his own expense and his own time, his little hut in the collective farm to the agro-town which was yet to be created, while the apartment house in which he was to live like a worker had not only not been built, it had not even been planned.

### Suspicious Develop

But if Stalin had to be satisfied with something less than the "abolition" of the difference between city and country, he was going full speed ahead towards a head-on collision with the United States—at least where he could get the Koreans and the Chinese to do the fighting for him. There was no breathing spell, let alone peace. The iron-fisted Stalin was clearly becoming a millstone around the neck of the bureaucracy which yearned for a truce between wars. He had to be gotten rid of. But no one dared. No one except Beria. He had to dare, for it was a question of either his neck or Stalin's and he preferred Stalin's.

Stalin had evidently begun to suspect the "naturalness" of Zhdanov's death. The wily Malenkov had beat Beria to the draw again and managed suddenly to uncover "the plot of the doctors-poisoners" who had indeed poisoned Zhdanov, thus laying the blame for a death he had engineered right at the doorstep of Beria's Ministry. While the "lack of vigilance" campaign was raging in the country, Beria plotted his revenge, or, if you wish, his defense. For if there is anyone who knew Stalin it was his glorifier - biographer - historiographer, Beria.

Six months before the death of Stalin the power struggle reached a climax. Beria knew that his days were numbered and he had to move fast. He did. Despite all the bulletins of the Central Committee and of the chief doctors in the land, we can be sure that if Beria is not accused directly of poisoning Stalin, he will be accused of doing so indirectly, of bringing about his "untimely death" through his "intrigues and treachery".

This doesn't mean either that intrigue or treachery will stop, or that the bureaucracy as a whole didn't breathe a sigh of relief at the death of their "almighty" leader. One has to take but one glance on how quickly his whole program was scuttled: (1) The Korean war was stopped. (2) What the 19th Con-

gress, the last which Stalin directed and the first to meet since 1939, had established in trying to widen somewhat the base of the bureaucracy has been shelved. The Praesidium once again consists not of 50 or 25, but "a less unwieldy one" of 10. (3) And they run, like rats from a sinking ship, from the grandiose fundamental "work of genius," Stalin's "Economic Problems of Socialism of the U.S.S.R."

### Stalin's Last Testament

This, which we may call Stalin's Last Testament, is the most pathetic document that ever a tyrant left his fighting heirs. After a quarter of a century of Plans and what he assured them was the actual transition "from socialism to full communism," Stalin's mighty labors brought forth only the need to merge the peasant's private allotment adjoining the collective farm into the collective itself. Upon this private garden, rightly called in this country "an acre and a cow," evidently depends the building

of "full communism." This, plus "the gradual abolition" of the collective farm market, and substitution of "products exchange" for money exchange, will bring them to "communism in a single country."

That was little enough of a legacy to leave his bureaucratic heirs. But the Russian masses, who know that Stalin doesn't go in for theory unless he plans to apply it, made one grand rush to transform their money into manufactured products (consumers goods) and the peasants at the same time withheld farm products.

It was the closest to panic Russia has been since forced collectivization took its toll in 1932. Zverev, the Minister of Finance, had to come out with a statement against "rumors" that Russia was going to do away with money. Then he had to cut by no less than 50 percent the "voluntary" State Loan. Then the Supreme Soviet had to declare a 50 percent deduction in the agricultural tax. And finally Malenkov steps forward promising them heaven on earth, and to begin with: "Our country is insured of bread."

If Stalin's Last Testament is pathetic, how much lower the sights of Malenkov. In his first major speech he used for morale building everything from "elegant shoes" to hydrogen bombs! But there is nothing really decided in this power struggle as can be seen by the fact that no one has yet come out as the Leader but each man must hide behind the "collective" Central Committee which is about as unified as thieves who fall out.

### Russian Workers No Longer Isolated

There is no getting away from it, the Russian masses are not only ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-housed. They are rebellious.

The biggest problem of Russia remains the low labor productivity. Totalitarian state-capitalism has invented no substitute for that. The Russian workers aren't producing enough, and the Russian peasants are keeping back a lot of what they are producing. And all the pie in the sky, hydrogen bombs included, will not thrust them back into their isolation now that the East German workers have revolted against these rulers and overnight filled the air with the stuff that makes dreams a reality.

We are at the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism. That does not mean the state-capitalist bureaucracy will let go of its iron grip. Quiet the contrary. It will shackle them more as can be seen from Malenkov's blaming of the workers for the poor quality of consumer goods "To the shame of the workers of industry." What it does mean is that from the center of Russian production, from the periphery of the satellite countries oppressed by Russia, and from the insides of the Communist parties, all contradictions are moving to a head and the open struggle will be a merciless fight to the end.

### Note:

\*There is much more than this to that campaign, but it does not affect this story. However, I hope to return to that "doctors-poisoners" trial in a future article.

## GERMAN WORKERS CHANGE FACE OF EUROPE

In one week, in the streets and plants of East Germany, the German workers smashed the myth that the totalitarian state is invincible.

The revolt began in production. On May 18, the Communists announced a new increase in work hours. Immediately, in nationalized plants open strikes, not just absenteeism and slowdowns, began against the speed-up. On May 27, 1,000 workers walked out of the Fimag works at Finsterwalde. On May 28, miners at the Pieck mines at Mansfield staged a one-day sitdown. At Zeitzin, Saxony, workers organized an anti-speed-up rally.

In response to the strikes the Communist government on Wednesday, June 10, issued concessions—on every point except speed-up. Tuesday, June 16, construction workers organized a protest march against speed-up from the Stalin Allee housing project. The government sent in its supporters to join the marchers, apparently hoping thus to appear as sponsor. But as the marchers got closer to the government buildings, joined by demonstrators along the route, the cry had become, "Down with the zones and the sector boundaries," "Down with the government." The government then issued an order revoking the speed-up and admitting it had been wrong.

But by the evening of June 16, the workers had turned the street corners of East Berlin, into political centers at each of which hundreds of people discussed and debated what to do next. The next day, June 17, early in the morning, they acted.

In East Berlin they in fact overthrew the East German government. They destroyed the police power of the government, burning police barracks, throwing policemen out of the windows, and forcing them either to desert to the West or to come over to the side of the workers.

Strikers in columns charged the chief government buildings, where the government officials, and bureaucrats cowered helplessly. Though the city their voices rose in unison and a mile away sounded like the cry of one man. Communist halls, pavilions, schools, stores, were fired and the officials of these were beaten up. While West Berliners and Russian troops looked on, the workers tore up both American and Russian boundary markers. Youth and workers tore down the symbols of Communist power, flags, posters, pictures of Communist leaders. For four hours the only power in East Berlin belonged to the workers.

At 1 p.m. the Russian command marched into Berlin with 10,000 men to take over the power. It decreed martial law and forbade gatherings of more than three people on the streets. But the crowds only laughed at the order. No unions, no parties had led the strike. It was "too disorganized" to be stopped.

### All Over Germany

The workers acted in every city, large and small, and in every major industry, throughout East Germany.

Three thousand steel workers from the big steel works at Henningsdorf marched 15 miles

across the western sector to join the East Berlin workers. Along the route they were joined by workers and other demonstrators from other plants and cities, especially women. Fifteen thousand workers came from Oranienburg.

13,000 workers from the nationalized Thaelman machine tool plant in Magdeburg fought the police in a battle in which seven to twenty-two people were killed.

Strikers from the Zeiss optical factory in Jena stormed the offices of the Communist Party, hurled books and papers into the streets and burned them. They wrecked the headquarters of the Communist Youth and threw typewriters out of the windows.

At the Kodak supplies plant, the workers took over and put strikers in charge.

In the village of Mienszk, near Berlin, three thousand strikers seized a work train, drove it to the county seat in the neighboring town of Belzig and stormed the government headquarters there.

State railway workers walked out, crippling zonal intercommunications and halting shipment of reparations into Russia. Construction workers cut power cables of both elevated and subway lines and blocked the tracks.

### Sabotaged the Russians

The workers destroyed by the dozens those plants which produced arms or heavy goods for the Russians. That is the way they expressed their attitude to Five Year Plans and war economics. About all the bureaucrats can plan on from now on is more trouble from the workers.

25,000 workers at the Leuna chemical plant (formerly I. G. Farben) at Halle set the plant afire. The workers at the Buna synthetic rubber plant burned it down. These plants were the chief suppliers of gas and tires to the occupation army.

The hard coal area at Zwickau was damaged beyond estimate. They set fire to huge coal piles between Halle and Magdeburg.

They destroyed uranium mining facilities.

They opened prisons and concentration camps to free political prisoners. At Gera, an industrial city about the size of Cincinnati, near the Russian operated uranium mines of Saxony, thousands of workers struck and marched on the city prison demanding release of its political prisoners.

Later in the day five thousand uranium miners from nearby Ronneburg joined the Gera workers. The workers threw German police from the windows of their barracks. Russian reinforcements had to be called in, this time with tanks.

The workers did not win the battle but about 500 miners retreated into a forest near Ronneburg with trucks seized from their plants. From their hideout they then continued to make raids on Communist buildings.

At the Gustrow munitions plant, strikers freed slave laborers.

At Merseberg an army of strikers marched on the prison to free the prisoners, pouring boiling tar from nearby road construction on the Russian soldiers, and releasing 100 political prisoners.

The workers concentrated their anger and actions against the German communist officials who acted as agents of the government. At Rathenow they lynched a factory guard when he tried to prevent strikers from entering the plant. At Erfurt they hung two Red policemen on lamp posts.

The general strike continued for days. Exactly how many is impossible to say. By Saturday, June 20, the Russians had sent in 25,000 soldiers to Berlin from their 300,000-man occupation force at Potsdam. In every other major city, Russian power supplanted East German police power. The Minister of Justice, Fechner, was purged. One half of the German police were demobilized as unreliable and sent into the plants to work.

Twenty to thirty thousand strikers were jailed, untold dozens executed, families of convicted strikers were driven out of their homes and sent to concentration camps. But on June 22 the city of Leipzig, show place of East German Communism, was still paralyzed by a general strike.

#### Government Powerless

The week of June 22 Grotewohl, Pieck, Ebert and Co. scurried from factory to factory, trying to explain why the "party of the working class is hated by the working class." That was their job. They were no longer the government; they were more

like actors in a play about to close. The new theory is that because East Germany is a workers state, the rulers are workers while those who work in the plant are capitalists.

The Communists promised all kinds of economic concessions. But a staged rally on June 26 brought out only 3,000 workers, as compared to the hundreds of thousands who had, willingly or unwillingly, two months before attended the May Day demonstrations, and the millions who had acted on their own in the week of June 17.

Since June 17 in factory after factory, the workers strike to obtain the release of their fellow strikers, for regular pay, for abolition of night shift. The Henningsdorf steel workers who had marched through the Western sector to get to East Berlin, forced the Russians to open the sector boundaries between East and West by threatening to strike.

This story gives an indication of how the German workers act since June 17.

Thursday morning, July 9, the plant's trade union executive summoned an oxy-acetylene welder, Rudolph Lindner, to their office. He refused to leave the shop. Five minutes later he was told to go to the factory gate to see a man. Again Lindner refused. The man finally summoned up enough courage to come into the shop and let Lindner know that he was a member of the criminal police come to take him away.

When Lindner and the State Security officer arrived at the plant gate, several hundred workers were blocking the way. Two truckloads of police and two carloads of plainclothesmen were unable to disperse the workers and take Lindner.

The workers demanded from management an explanation for the attempted arrest, a guarantee of protection from the State Security Service, the abolition of night shift and the transmission of a protest letter to the government. When these demands had not been met the next morning at nine, the workers went on strike, and demanded in addition an explanation for the disappearance of another worker 2 years earlier. They insisted also that this particular security officer be dismissed from the State Security Service and be made to serve his time in their plant. By this means they are seeking to abolish the distinction between the police and the workers.

Since June 17 the East German people by the millions have used the American food parcel offer chiefly as a means to defy the occupation government. Crowds wait at the elevated stations for those who go for the parcels and in July when the police tried to take away their food, they beat up the police and forced them to stop confiscation.

In this way they vote with their feet for the abolition of the division between East and West Germany.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN RUSSIA AND WHY

# Malenkov Pledges H-Bomb and Caviar

On October 25, the Pravda published a speech by the Russian Minister of Domestic Trade in which the following self-criticism and program was set forth:

"To buy caviar, cream cheese, honey, jam or marmelade the customer has to provide his own container. . . . Industry must provide these goods ready-packed."

The world press had a hilarious time laughing their heads off. It is indeed comical when one of the two rivals for mastery of the world sinks to the level of cream cheese and pickled caviar as a solution to the crisis that is shaking it to its foundations. It is easy to laugh. But it is not so easy to grasp the totality of the crisis that is sending the Russian rulers to this pathetic policy.

The first turn to a policy of consumers' goods began in Germany after the June revolts. So overwhelming had been the revolt of the workers in production against speed-up that the bureaucracy in East Germany was compelled to do something, anything, and hit upon the "New Look" in consumption, seeking to buy off the workers with clean lavatories, less tasteless clothes for women, and more love interest in films.

After the June Days in East Germany Malenkov embarked on a new domestic policy of consumers' goods—proof sufficient that the rebellion of the Russian workers is no less. That was in August. But the new caviar policy in October is not to appease the Russian workers—who are not even sure of bread—but the Russian bureaucracy.

## REGIME WITHOUT A FUTURE

Unlike its puppets in East Germany, the Russian bureaucracy has real power, economic power and state power. As long as the regime seemed to have a future, the demands of this bureaucracy for its own consumption could be kept within the context of the needs of production. Now, however, that it is filled with uncertainty both in regard to its internal power and its ability to challenge the United States for world power, it is going back to conspicuous consumption.

Grasping for privileges, the sure sign of imminent collapse of a system based on production at all costs, has set in. Malenkov, as the new boss aware of the type of bureaucracy he heads, has now promised them "elegant footwear," the H-bomb and caviar. The H-bomb-caviar-footwear policy is an exact measure of the many conflict-

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ing tendencies within the ruling bureaucracy of post-Stalin Russia, each of which demands some appeasement of its interests

It is not the death of Stalin that produced the new conflicts in Russia. It would be far more correct to say that the new conflicts in Russia produced Stalin's death.

#### POSTWAR RUSSIA

Stalin's real troubles began with the conclusion of World War II. In 1948 Stalin could look back to two decades of power, during one of which he had been the "Sun, and the Strength of the Himalayas." He had wiped out all opposition and created a completely new state-capitalist class in his own totalitarian image, knowing no loyalty and allegiance to anything and anybody except the state, the planned economy and the "Leader" who had led so murderously and single-mindedly to power. Nobody, not one, had any vested interest in any private factories. Nobody, not one, cast an envious glance in the direction of the West. From all appearances Stalin was not only securely entrenched. There were no limits to how far he could expand. They owed him everything.

In behalf of the planned state economy and this new ruling intelligentsia who was to administer it, Stalin had destroyed workers' control of production, substituted conferences of planners for workers' production conferences, created history's most elaborate apparatus of anti-labor legislation (in which a single tardiness of 15 minutes meant a 25 per cent loss of pay for six months). In addition, he had put the youth at the service of the state from their early teens, transformed women into hewers of wood and bearers of babies who thanked Stalin for their daily bread, uprooted whole villages of peasants in an attempt to liquidate the peasants as a class, sent more than 10 million persons into forced labor camps.

He had promoted the job-killers into a technical intelligentsia who had to be respected, depersonalized everybody except them, and finally legalized their status in a new Constitution. He had not only gotten rid of all oppositionists in the purges, but decapitated the Red Army as well. Finally, he had led the country to victory for the mastery of the world.

Nevertheless, after all this, Stalin was faced with an opposition. Not a Trotskyist-Bukharinist Opposition, nor one of any private - interventionist - capitalists. But a smouldering opposition from within his own monolithic bureaucracy. There, within, suddenly emerged people who were not ready to follow him headlong into war for world conquest. Instead, they said: Look at the United States and the capitalist world. They too have weathered the war; they have proved that they can plan. Let's try to live with them. Both Eastern Europe and they are state-capitalist countries and we can co-exist.

#### PARALLEL IN POST-WAR AMERICA

It should not be too hard for Americans to understand this. Because the end of World War II was so clearly just an interval between wars, here, too, in the United States, people began to question whether it was inevitable. In 1948 no less a figure than the former Vice-President, Henry A. Wallace, came to the head of a Communist-led movement, the Progressive Party. But it would be the most stupid mistake imaginable to think that the close to a million votes received by Wallace were Communist votes. The middle classes, the youth, and newly-returning GIs knew how close to a hot war the cold war was, and were therefore looking for a basis of co-existence with Russia. Stalin was no more shocked to have found heretics in his inbred bureaucracy than was the Democratic Party to have bred a Wallace.

#### THE RUSSIAN HERETICS

The Russian masses had no political party through which to express their opposition to Stalin's plans. So they expressed themselves in the only way that they could, with their feet. Instead of continuing to work at break-neck speed in the plants after the war, they wandered all over Russia. Similarly, the Russian GIs and refugees from Russia in the DP camps resisted repatriation to the extent of a desperate civil war.

The Russian theoreticians, on the other hand, took the easy way out. Cosmopolitanism became the new catchword for all the varieties of theoretical tendencies seeking in the chaos of the post-war years for some way to wiggle out inconspicuously

from the vise of Stalin's single-minded drive toward World War III. Varga, with his *Changes in the Political Economy of Capitalism Resulting from the Second World War*, led the economists who said that capitalism had shown during the war that it could plan and overcome the general crisis. The whole Institute of World Economics headed by Varga got itself into that theoretic mess, and was forced to confess.

But it was not only the economists. There were the literary cosmopolites, the "Jewish intellectuals," the army generals who had worked with the West, the diplomats who had lived abroad. These appeasers had no objection to the devaluation of the ruble which had robbed the peasants and the wartime workers of their savings, but they held back from the totality of Stalin's plans for production and war.

#### HERESY BECOMES MURDER

Zhdanov was the only theoretician Stalin had. In 1939 Zhdanov had joined Party and Plan together in the report to the 18th Party Congress, changing the statutes of the Party to erase all distinction as to class origin between factory managers and workers in the application for membership. In 1947 he joined the Party, the Plan, and the War together for Stalin in carrying out the cultural purges of all "cosmopolites" in economics, philosophy, literature, music, art, and so forth.

Then in 1948 Zhdanov was bumped off. Who could have done it? It could have been engineered only by the highest echelons of the bureaucracy. And, in fact, as we showed in the article on the Beria purge, it was Malenkov who engineered it, although the "doctors-poisoners plot" laid it at the door of Beria's Ministry.

#### THE NEW MEN OF POWER

Between the Old Guard of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the new men of power there exists a gulf as deep as that between

the tycoons of American industry who built their industrial empires and the new managers of these industries. Stalin and Malenkov represent two different stages of the bureaucracy: the first, its conquest of power; the second, its disintegration. Zhdanov is the transition between them.

Stalin believed in Production, the Plan and the Party and the terror was a means to achieve these.

Malenkov and Beria had become full members of the Political Bureau only as late as 1946. Whereas Stalin joined together the Party and the Plan and Production and Terror, and Zhdanov joined together the Party and the Plan, Malenkov and Beria represented only the Apparatus of the Party and the Terror. Contrast their methods. Under pressure from the vast bureaucratic machine he had himself created, Stalin worked out a new plan of production. History has its own ironies. This man who in his struggle with the brilliant Trotsky was so anxious to be a theoretician in his own name finally became a theoretician and laboriously and single-handedly worked out his last pronouncement, *The Economic Problems of Socialism of the U.S.S.R.* Pathetic and feeble as it was, it was a continuation of the conception of the abolition of private property as the means to solve economic crises. Malenkov, on the other hand, under pressure, and without the theory of production and more production as the way to solve every crisis, can only try to create a new loyalty to himself among the contending interests in the bureaucracy through the method of bribery.

It is true that in Stalin's lifetime Malenkov was Stalin's right-hand man. But Malenkov was of a new generation entirely, with no roots of any kind in the 1917 Revolution. They are both murderers of the working class. But if Stalin was a petty intellectual, Malenkov is just petty. If Stalin sought an economy in which the means of production so predominated over the means of consumption as to guarantee it an equal status with the United States, Malenkov is so much the pure technocrat that he thinks an announcement of possession of the H-bomb is sufficient to reassure the Russian bureaucracy. If Stalin took seriously the question of exterminating the peasantry as a class, Malenkov at present is counting on Khrushchev to take the agronomists out of the offices and into the field to organize agriculture from above.

Stalin shared power with no one. Malenkov must share power with Khrushchev. He must appease the Stalin men who carry on the tradition of production over consumption. Thus at one and the same time he tries to satisfy all poles of the vast bureaucracy. He thinks that can be done by turning some airplane factories to the production of kitchen utensils, and others to the production of atomic energy. And all of them together hope to keep their wives happy with fashionable clothing and crepe-suzette recipes, and in that way live on despite the cracks in the regime, and particularly so in the satellite countries.

Thus does the Russian regime live from hand to mouth.

**TWO WORLDS:**

JANUARY 9, 1954

**Notes From a Diary**

(Editor's Note: Due to the timeliness of the article below we are interrupting the articles on the split in America Trotskyism.)

**RUSSIAN REGIME CANNOT AFFORD A BERIA SHOW TRIAL**

On December 23rd the Moscow radio announced that after a six-day secret trial, Beria, Number Two man in Russia, had been executed as a "traitor." He had been under arrest since July. On August 10th the Moscow radio reported that his case was under investigation by the Supreme Court. Four months of silence followed. Both the capitalist press and the radical press were anticipating mass show trials and set to compare this new purge to the Great Purge of 1936-1938. We wrote to the contrary:

"There could be no greater mistake made than that of all our Russian 'experts' who identify all purges as the same type, and are now busy likening the purges following the arrest of the No. Two man in the whole Russian empire, Lavrenti P. Beria, to the 'Trotskyist' Trials of 1936-1938. The purges of the 1936-1938 period announced the consolidation of the monster state. The present period signifies its disintegration." (CORRESPONDENCE, Vol. I, No. 1, Oct. 3, 1953)

When the power struggle reached the stage where Stalin's bureaucratic heirs set about murdering each other, the beginning of the end of the totalitarian regime should have been obvious to all. The press thought the thieves were falling out because there was no one with Stalin's authority to take over sole power. We said that no one dared take sole power because the restlessness of the masses was assuming the dimensions of an open rebellion and threatening the whole totalitarian structure.

**THE TOTAL CRISIS AND THE RED ARMY**

From the start CORRESPONDENCE sensed clearly the stage of rebellion of the Russian masses. Ever since the end of the war their seething discontent had reached such proportions that to get a labor force at all the Russian Government had to declare an amnesty on all labor offenses committed during the war. After the death of Stalin in March, 1953 it was revealed that the peasants were producing little, and withholding from the state as much as they could hide. The ruling bureaucracy came up with concessions on the agricultural front as they had done on the labor field. The sudden concentration on consumer goods had a two-fold purpose: (1) to appear before the masses as new rulers with new perspectives and confidence in the future and (2) to appease the lower rungs of the bureaucracy. (CORRESPONDENCE, Vol. 1, No. 4, Nov. 14, 1953)

Nevertheless, the cut-throat struggle for power continues unabated, not because the bureaucratic heirs of Stalin are greater intriguers than Stalin. Not at all. It is due to the fact that the crisis that is shaking the totalitarian structure is total.

Our Russian experts say that it is the Red Army which engineered the downfall of Beria. They fail to explain how it is that the Army which was so brave in quelling the revolt of the unarmed East German workers was not brave enough to stage a public trial, although in the dock was the most detested man in the whole Russian empire. That, and not the fact that an Army Marshal presided over the trial, is what is spectacular about the Beria show-down.

These analysts look at things like planners and are so trained to watch the plotting up above that they easily forget what they witnessed with their own eyes—the revolt of the East German workers. The truth is that it was not the Russian tanks which brought about the downfall of Beria. It was the revolt of the East German workers.

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#### THE REVOLT OF THE EAST GERMAN WORKERS

When on June 17th the German workers struck against the raising of "working norms," it wasn't only against infernal speed-up and miserable pay that they revolted. It was against the whole system of Communist rule and terror. Long before the open rebellion which changed the face of Europe, the workers' discontent was so obvious that even the controlled East German press wrote about "the grumbling" of the workers. The Communist Government was ready for "concessions" while blaming the German farmer for the lack of the most elementary food necessities because they had not fully "collectivized." So sure still was Beria of continued rule for his puppet, police chief Zeisser, that the Government "permitted" a workers' demonstration and sent "supporters" into the ranks of the marchers hoping to divert the demonstration to begging the Government for concessions which it would "magnanimously" grant. That at the start of the strike. But not many hours passed before the East German Government learned that the German workers wanted freedom even more than bread. As the strike gained momentum, not even the revolt against speed-up was as popular as the slogan, "Down With the Government!"

The truth is that the most efficient, the most pervasive, the most secretly organized, terroristic secret police in the world mean nothing when the workers to a man are out on the street ready to take power.

In Russia the MVD (the secret police) has at its disposal not only tens of thousands of spies but also a secret army and forced labor camps. Terror is not just a means of "telling on others," of control. It is the organized state power. As we wrote in the first issue of CORRESPONDENCE, "Communism as practiced in Russia is a system of the most sweated labor in the world, buttressed by forced labor camps and a vast complex network of spies and counter-spies."

In the satellite countries, however, Russia cannot exercise state power directly. It must act through a puppet regime. No matter how pliant the puppet, it does not have the power and hence its terror can be only "a means of control." Beria's agent in East Germany, Zeisser, the police chief, could spot the trouble and dutifully report it to Beria. But Berlin is situated in the heart of Europe, not in the wilds of Siberia with its forced labor camps to which to banish rebellious workers. And to what avail is secret work when two million Germans are out on the streets?

#### THE WORKERS WANT TOTAL CHANGE

It cannot be repeated enough that the totally new factor in the present stage of disintegration of the Russian Empire is the revolt of the East German workers, symbolizing the rebelliousness of the workers in all of the satellites.

Thus within Russia and outside of it the beginning of the end can be seen. While the bureaucrats are out cutting each other's throats, none—not the one-party state, not the secret police with all its instruments of terror, nor even the Russian Army with its tanks—dared bring Beria to public trial and place upon this monstrous personality all their crimes. It is not that they hadn't wanted so convenient a scapegoat. It is that they dared not.

The reason for the failure to bring Beria to public trial is simple, but profound. The workers, both Russian and German, aren't accepting scapegoats no matter how detested the bureaucrats in question are. They are out for total change, central to which is the destruction of the Red Army which crushed the German revolt.