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THE POLITICAL-PHILOSOPHIC LETTERS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

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MAO'S LAST HURRAH

Dear Friends,

Teng Hsiao-ping no sooner finished his eulogy of Chou En-lai than he disappeared from public view as totally as the dead Chou, with the exception that, not being physically dead, a new villification of him could start once again. It should have been no surprise for that old war horse Teng, even if Chou En-lai had suffered any illusions that, facing natural death from cancer, his plans too would escape immediate asphyxiation. Mao had, after all, done that to all his co-leaders who helped him found the new China, who had been with him ever since the Long March, and before.

One decade after the victory of the Revolution, Mao had reminded that it took a "whole decade of rectifications," i.e., from the time he first won undisputed power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1935, to 1945 when he laid down the rules for an "original" path to power that would be independent not only of revolutionary experience in Russia (of Lenin even more than of Stalin), but also of Marx's dialectics of proletarian revolution. It is, after all, here, precisely here—rectification plus "originality," strictly nationalistic, strictly Chinese—that they were as one, and having followed him on that most fundamental of class deviations, there was nowhere else for them to go.

But are there any more hurrahs left for the aged and ancient Mao on the foundations he had laid down ever since the Sino-Soviet orbit turned into Sino-Soviet conflict for new world realignment with U.S. imperialism as Stalin had done with Hitler Germany? Now that it has reached the anti-climactic climax of a renewed invitation to the architect of Watergate to become the first major world figure to be the first to meet the product of the new Chinese internal realignment—Acting Premier Hua Kuo-feng—what next? Can Hua really outlive Mao when even Stalin could not assure his succession?

Stranger even than the Boeing 707 flying to California for the sole purpose of bringing Richard Milhous Nixon to Peking was Mao's previous choice of meeting with that West German fascist, Franz Joseph Strauss at the very moment when his alternative was to attend the Fourth National People's Congress then in session, though it was the first time in a decade that it had met, and the one called "to amend" the only Constitution Mao's China ever adopted back in 1954. This would declare nothing short of "Marxist-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought is the basis to guide the thinking of our nation." (1) Obviously, designating "Mao's Thought," rather than the very person of Mao, to be that supreme authority to which everything and everybody was subordinated was insufficient to induce Mao to attend his own Congress, rather than prefer the company

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of Strauss.

Chou had tipped the scales in Mao's favor as far back as 1936 when he was sent by Mao to save Chiang Kai-shek's life from his own troops, and at the very moment when the Chinese revolutionary youth were, instead, calling for the opening of a "second Lenin front" to fight both the Japanese invasion and Chiang Kai-shek. By the time Mao won power and Liu Shao-ch'i became Mao's "comrade in arms," Chou did not vie with him, though in another decade he gave Mao the vote needed to launch the "Cultural Revolution" and the removal of Liu. And when Lin Biao, after initiating the Cultural Revolution and following Mao's orders to put down the "ultra-lefts," also turned against Mao as "the greatest tyrant in the history of China," (2) Chou En-lai once again came to the rescue.

Chou En-lai was not, however, alone to bring Teng Hsiao-ping back from the defamations of the Cultural Revolution. Mao needed him then, in 1973, even as Mao could not do away with all Lin's generals in the Army and had to be satisfied with just shifting about army commanders to cases far from home. That was the significance of the Tenth Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1973 that eliminated Mao's "closest comrade-in-arms"---expelling Lin Biao after his death!

What has fundamentally changed since then? Is it really only Chou's death? And now that Chou is dead, can Mao return to being his own allegedly revolutionary self? Was bringing Hua to Peking from his own home district of Hunan at the very time Teng was reinstated in power, Mao's card up his sleeve?

Lest anyone rush to bet on that, let's not forget either that it was the Congress that Mao did (16) attend that raised Hua to top cop--Minister of Public Security--or the many parallels that abound between the situation now in China, and the Beria Purge in Russia after Stalin died (3). Above all, let's not forget Mao's penchant for extreme right-wing world leaders, out of as well as in power, so long as they see Russia as Enemy No. 1. Judging by the praise showered on Defense Secretary Schlesinger when Ford dismissed him for opposing detente with Russia, Mao would have preferred getting Schlesinger to China. Not only had Mao met with Franz Joseph Strauss while the Fourth National People's Congress was in session, and not only is he once again rolling out the red carpet for Nixon, but he did as much for Heath of England when the British people had rejected him at the polls, not to mention Mobutu of Zaire where there are no election polls, but there is a way of getting money and advisers funnelled for the puppets in Angola, not excluding alliance with apartheid South African mercenaries.

What is true, at the same time, is that it is not foreign policy that dominates over domestic policy. The real enemy is always at home. What is decisive is the actual class struggles between capital and labor, as against those Mao chooses to designate as "capitalist roaders." Once the Congress he didn't attend had to admit that there had been strikes throughout the country, that labor unrest also permeated

the countryside, and that the new Constitution did grant them the right to strike as well as some "small plots of land for personal needs" and some private livestock, Mao kept away from the Congress. Instead, he unleashed a "theoretical" debate on the need to strengthen the "dictatorship of the proletariat." "Economicism" is directed by Mao against the workers who demand better conditions of labor and a raise in their miserly wages.

In its place he demands "revolutionary energy" which would release untold hours of unpaid labor rather than "give in" to "material incentives." Despite the sameness of clothing between the rulers and the ruled, there are many sufficient inequalities, all tipped against the masses (4). It is not that the rest of the leadership, Teng especially, are not as sharply directed for more and more production. It is that Mao thinks he can get it via "rectification" and "politics," "Mao's Thought" in command. So China is once again engaged in still another mini-Cultural Revolution.

Let's take a glance into history, at least at the point when Mao started on his "original" path, not just to power, which he already had, but the 1959 "Great Leap Forward," straight into "Communism" ahead of the Russians, via "rectification" ideology—asking the masses to "make one day equal 20 years." First what we must keep in mind is that he was still with the Russians—and not only with Stalin, but with Khrushchev, whom he praised for projecting Russia's getting to Communism in 15 years.

Mao does claim that what took Russia 35 years to achieve—"socialism"—took China only 9 years, but that is a reference, not to Khrushchev's speech but Stalin's last (1952) work (5). Mao was still operating within the Sino-Soviet orbit as that "indestructible friendship" and not only because he expected Russia to share its atomic secret with China but because he had just helped Khrushchev and world "Communism" to stay in power by crushing the Hungarian Revolution. That is the key, the hurry to "get there" without opposition from the Left, the genuine revolutionaries whom "they"—China as well as Russia—called "revisionist."

That's how the word 'revisionism', that transformation into opposite, arose in our epoch. It is true that Mao thought Russia had made mistakes, but they were "minor," and, anyway, he felt sure he would avoid them. So sure was he of the Chinese love of him that he declared "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend." On the way, he refurbished his 1937 essay, "On Contradiction."

Once Mao had gained undisputed leadership in 1935, and in 1937 developed his contribution philosophically—"On Contradiction"—which to this day remains his main "original" contribution, he insisted that it was not true that the economic contradiction between capital and labor is the decisive break, the motive force of revolu-

tion. That was the "main aspect" of the contradiction, but, Mao maintained, the "secondary" contradiction, politics, can become the decisive factor. And since primary and secondary contradictions can thus change places, politics becomes primary. What was "just" theory in 1937, permitting Mao nevertheless the practical politics of saving Chiang Kai-shek, became, in 1957, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," or how, at one and the same time, to save China from a revolt similar to that of the Hungarian Revolution, and yet: "To increase production, greater, faster, better and more economical must be stressed."

In a word, it was only after these flowers bloomed and contended so vigorously against him that Mao decided they were "rightists" -- "one thousand weeds that must be destroyed." On the way he christened forced labor, what had always been known by Marxists as "primitive accumulation of capital", as "The Great Leap Forward." Recently, the "West's" apologists for Mao have once again discovered just how revolutionary and independent of Stalin is Mao when they found the Wan-sui documents, released in China during the Cultural Revolution, 1967-69, discovered for them by Taipei in 1973, published now by the U.S. government in 1974, and only analyzed with great abandon by "concerned scholars" (6).

Never mind that the criticism came after Stalin's death in 1953, and indeed after Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, February 1956, not to mention the actual revolutionary attack on all of Stalinism-Krushchevism in November, 1956. Never mind that it was a total slander of Lenin, who most assuredly had not "undereestimated" the revolutionary potential of the peasant. To those who play with words and gloss over reality, Mao did understand the peasant, and did make an "original" contribution to "philosophy." Since that is the theme Mao is once again reviving in the latest mini-Cultural Revolution (and it will remain this ideology which will underlie the developments in the next few years, or so long as Mao is alive), let us turn back to that critique of Stalin, 1959.

Here is how Mao begins his critique of Stalin's last work, Economic Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union: "This book has not a word on superstructure from beginning to end" (7). He does not disagree with any of the basic Stalinized economics. Thus he not only accepts Stalin's revision of Marx's analysis of the law of value as the motive force of capitalism, insisting that it does indeed work both in the Soviet Union and in China, though each is a "socialist land," but also insists that commodity production will continue to operate, and insists also that to talk of "the abolition of commodity and commodity production" and the announcement of ownership by all the people would deprive peasants of their production." And like Stalin, Mao denies that labor is exploited: "At present in our system, to say that labor is a commodity and the workers are 'hired' is absolute nonsense. After rectification and the anti-Rightist campaigns, labor is no longer a commodity" (8).

Mao's critique of Stalin's underestimation of the peasantry does not refer to economics, but politics: "All these belong to superstructure, to the ideological. Stalin only talked of economics, not politics...Some attribute the saying ('all for one, one for all') to Marx, but we do not need to spread it even if Marx did" (9). Moreover, continues Mao (not waiting till 1971 when Lin Piao accused him of being today's Emperor Chin), he launched into praise of Chin Shi-huang who has been "wrongly branded as an evil man" (10).

What Mao forgot then (1959), and in 1971, and especially in 1976, is that it is precisely that ancient period of unification of the nation and book burning and most brutal oppression of the peasantry that did indeed produce the first great peasant revolt in recorded world history (11).

Ironically enough, in those 1959 criticisms of Stalin's last "testament," he still gives praise not only to Khrushchev, but to dialectics, and he does not limit it to contradiction but correctly cites its pivotal point to be "negation of negation": "Things will invariably head toward their opposites. The dialectics of Greece, the metaphysics of the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance...It was a negation of negation. China was also like this. The contention of one hundred schools of thought in the period of Warring States was dialectics and the classical learning of feudal times was metaphysics. Now we have returned to talking about dialectics...Lenin's dialectics, Stalin's metaphysics, and present-day dialectics. All this is also a negation of negation" (12).

The very next year, however, there was a 180-degree turn-about, and Mao suddenly decreed that "there is basically no negation of the negation: "Engels spoke about the three categories, but I don't believe two of them...there is basically no negation of negation... There is no such thing as the negation of negation...When we speak about the destruction of mankind, we are saying that something more advanced than mankind will be produced" (13). It was not, however, so much the ending of "continuous revolutions" as directing it all against Russia.

With the end of the "indestructible alliance" with Russia, Mao declared war against their own major philosopher, Yang Hsien-chi, who had espoused the concept of "two into one," to be told that the very opposite is true, "one always divides into two." (14) Gibberish as this may sound, no one doubted the concrete command that Russia, far from being as one with China, was now its enemy. Not yet labelled as the No. 1 Enemy, since the Sino-Soviet conflict burst into the open in 1960 as challenge to Russia's leadership of "the International," but long before the end of that period of direct letters of challenge to Russia's "revisionism," in 1964, it became clear that Mao opted for nothing short of a new world axis, as against either Russia or the U.S.--a third world axis of Peking-Djakarta.

All this came to an abrupt and sharp end in 1965 with the collapse not only of Sukarno, but total victory of one of the bloodiest of all counter-revolutions. In that same year, President Johnson

had decided to rain bombs, not on Peking, but on Hanoi. When Mao's co-leaders and those like North Korea and the Japanese Communist Party and all who sided with China as against Russia in the Sino-Soviet conflict, called for a united front backing of North Vietnam, Mao would not be moved from his position that Russia is "Enemy No. 1," that nothing, nothing whatever, not even an ongoing revolt against U.S. imperialism's genocidal war would move him from his position. On the contrary. He first then launched "the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" against his own Party leadership.

No need now to rehash those three years, 1966-69, which made Mao elevate Lin Piao to "closest comrade-in-arms and successor" to himself, and insert that command directly into the Party Constitution. Rather, the problem now is that since Lin, too, broke with him and met an unnatural death, when Mao had once again to turn to Chou, who had come to his rescue at every critical point in China's development and crisis--can Mao launch still another "revolution" now that Chou has met a natural death and Mao's Thought rules unchallenged? Whom is Mao getting ready to anoint now to assure "succession"?

Mao is too well versed in intra-party leadership squabbles and fights for power and "wearing the Master's mantle," not only in China but in Russia--and there are too many parallels with what happened when Stalin died and this was followed, first by the Beria purge, and then the ouster of Malenkov, and finally Khrushchev's de-Stalinization--to have any illusions on the score of Hua Kuo-feng's ability to withstand the challenges, especially from the masses in the countryside. One Great Delusion, however--"Mao Tse-tung Thought"--remains.

After all, no matter how great, the "economist" type of defeats China suffered--whether the Great Leap Forward, 1959, or the Cultural Revolution, 1966-69, or "Criticize Confucius, Criticize Lin Piao"--Mao always succeeded in keeping the leadership in tow. Why now presently with the campaign against Teng as "capitalist roader" and thereby also the Chou-Teng new Constitution and "Plan" for production targets, first catching up with the industrialized world at the end of the century? Allegedly, once Mao Tse-tung Thought dominates, one day will once again equal 20 years. Presently this is called "revolutionary enthusiasm" and the masses are called upon to exert themselves accordingly.

Production is, however, not a matter of "superstructure," with the primary and secondary "aspects" of the contradictions changing places on command. After all is said and done, what has sent Mao into another spin is not the "subjective" situation, but the very real objective world developments during the period since initiating his own detente with U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism has its own reasons for not giving up detente with Russia, when it is not China, but Russia, that has been scoring "victories."

Thus, after the entry into the UN, with Teng as spokesman (and Mao's Thought dominant), China espoused a new division of the world, designating Western Europe and Japanese capitalism as "Second World," with whom "socialism" could collaborate. NATO seemed to listen--until an actual Portuguese Revolution occurred and threatened totally to undermine NATO. Thereupon NATO found and preferred the Second International helping the Portuguese Socialist Party to keep Portugal in line with "the West."

As for the Communist parties in each country, both the Italian Communist Party and the French, who certainly are departing from the Russian monolith, do so not in order to go with China, but because they themselves, nationalistically, strive for class collaborationism, "sharing power." A state-capitalist world, Balkanized, is in no way ready to move China up to the center of the world.

Thus, in Africa, where Mao's China certainly seemed to make great headway, both with the Tan-Zam railway and concepts of guerrilla warfare, the Angolan revolution was helped so substantially by Russia and Cuba, that Mao cannot hope to recapture the momentum. On the contrary, the attempts to work with one of the puppets, even where that was helped by apartheid South Africa, boomeranged; Mao had (at least openly) claimed to have withdrawn all aid there.

Thus, what good is it for him to show the Chinese leadership that he, Mao, had been right all along, not to go all out for North Vietnam, when now, right on the doorstep of China, the whole of Vietnam is with Russia. Russia is everywhere "surrounding China," in Southeast Asia, in West Europe, on the southern flank of NATO, in Africa. And in the Arab Middle East, where they had always played up that, whereas Russia had recognized Israel, China never had (never mind that Mao's China did not exist then!), China this time had to tell the PLO in the UN Security Council that Russia was "even worse" than Israel!

All these objective events internationally come at the very time when inside the land, the Chou-Teng new Constitution, though constantly "quoting" Mao Tse-tung Thought, had announced the right to strike, the right to small plots of land. And small as they might be, it is certainly "revisionism" to rely on "material incentives" and to sharpen the division between worker and intellectual, as can be evidenced by having that "capitalist roader" Nien Jung-chen heading Science and Technology.

Of course, China has just tested a 5,000-mile range missile, and Mao isn't sure he wants to take issue also with his aged former friend, Chu Teh, from whom he learned most of what he knew in the 1930s on guerrilla warfare. Yet Chu Teh heads the Standing Committee and Hua was not placed on that decisive body. Never mind, he is now above them; he can always win over those "weak-kneed" leaders. The critical point is that the workers must work hard and harder.

Actually, Mao's last hurrah is itself weak-voiced. He is not unfolding a new banner, or "unifying" the classes, and the slogan, "Dig trenches deep," comes to the U.S. via the disgraced has-been Nixon. The crisis is world-wide, not just in Russia, or in China. The whole world is in deep recession with endless nuclear build-up to end civilization. And whom can Mao inspire with Maoisms such as "the end of mankind is something that will produce something more advanced than mankind"?

On the contrary, it is precisely the totality of the crisis of the existing world, state-capitalist calling itself Communist as well as private capitalism calling itself welfare, that has produced not only recessions but revolts. The disgust along with the misery will not be done away with by "the West" or "the East" daring to think the unthinkable as "possible" by adding the little adjective, "limited," to nuclear warfare, as if that did not signify the end of civilization as we have known it!

Mao, too, cannot "negate" the truth--the masses are not just poor, they are rebellious. He cannot forget that calling those rebellious masses "ultra-lefts" and having Lin Piao put them down has not extinguished such manifestoes as "Whither China?" by the Sheng Wu-lien (15). All it did was drive them underground. Beyond the mortality of Mao they will rise and reshape their world on truly revolutionary human foundations.

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- (1) The new Constitution was published widely in English translation, but the only place where this was published alongside the 1954 Constitution, as well as carrying a quarterly documentation for Jan.-Mar. 1975, is The China Quarterly, #62, June 1975, pp.338-406.
- (2) The plan attributed to Lin Piao--"Outline of Project 571"--was first published in Taiwan, but then alluded to often in the official Maoist publications once the Maoists decided how to quote, especially during the subsequent "Criticize Confucius, Criticize Lin Piao" campaign. One knowledgeable analysis of that campaign by an old Chinese Trotskyist appeared in "An Interview with Peng Shu-tse," Intercontinental Press, 1/12/76.
- (3) My 1953 article on the Beria Purge has recently been republished by News and Letters as a separate bulletin.
- (4) For the latest study, see "Inequality and Stratification in China," by Martin King Whyte in The China Quarterly, #64, Dec. 1975, pp.684-711. Besides tracing, as best possible when sources are deliberately so meager, the author also points to just how difficult it is to trace the phenomenon of the new class since "the children of a commune Party secretary

who rose from poor peasants status at the time of land reform can still claim poor peasant origins."

(5) The two articles criticizing Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union appear on pp.129-132, and again on pp.191-200 of the Wan-sui (Long Live Mao Tse-tung Thought!) documents which appeared in China in 1967 and 1969 and were meant only for the cadres. In 1973 Taiwan published them, but since the origin was Taiwan, little attention was paid to them. But finally, in 1974, they appeared in English and the analyses became endless. They were published by the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, Va. 22151, in two volumes under the title Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought, 1949-1968. It is to this work that the references will be made here; since, though in two volumes, pagination is consecutive, I will refer only to the pagination, not to the volume.

(6) The extent to which Mao's "dialectics" has obfuscated thought also in "the West" amidst the Sinologists is nowhere more evident than in the latest work on just these Wan-sui documents by one of the top scholars, Stuart Schram, who sees "Olympian detachment in which no [Mao] looks forward not only to the ultimate supersession of communism itself by a higher social form, but to the extinction of the human race, and to the advent of creatures evolved from horses, cows, sheep or insects. 'When theologians talk about doomsday,' he declared, 'they are pessimistic and terrify people. We say the end of mankind is something that will produce something more advanced than mankind.'" (Chairman Mao Talks to the People, Talks and Letters: 1956-1971, Stuart Schram, ed., pp.26-27.

(7) Wan-sui, p.191

(8) Wan-sui, p.199

(9) Wan-sui, p.130

(10) Wan-sui, p.197

(11) In contrast to present-day apologists is Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy (Yale University Press, 1964), the most profound study, by Etienne Balazs, which will illuminate the present situation, and especially so on Thought and History.

(12) Wan-sui, p.205. This 1959 article, "Examples of Dialectics (Abstracted Compilation)", pp.201-225, should be contrasted to the one that became most popular during the Cultural Revolution, where Mao said quite the opposite, "Talk on Problems of Philosophy," pp.384-396.

(13) Wan-sui, p.393-4. Contrast with Prof. Schram's interpretation, fn. 6.

(14) Wan-sui, p.387, which continues the attack against the major Marxist Chinese philosopher: "The views of the bourgeoisie, Yang Hsien-chen, and the late Hegel have been around a long time, but they are even more nefarious today."

(15) A translation of this document can be read as appendices to Klaus Mehnert's Peking and the New Left (Berkeley, 1969). Great parts of it are included in Ch. 5, "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung," in my work, Philosophy and Revolution (Dell, 1973).

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(16) It's necessary to keep in mind that it was the 10th CCP Congress in 1973 which Mao did attend which rehabilitated Teng and hundreds of others who had been branded "capitalist roaders" because this time Mao needed them both to attack the genuine revolutionary Left as well as Lin Piao's men in the Army that did more than mourn Lin Piao's death, which they were sure was murder. As for the new Acting Premier, Hua Kuo-feng, who so surprised "the West" and all "scholars", just read Sheng Wu-lien's Manifesto and see where they placed the top cop. (Philosophy and Revolution, p. 178 quotes this section.)

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T H E B E R I A P U R G E

by Raya Dunayevskaya

(The relevance for today of this article, written in August 1953 on the situation in Russia after Stalin's death, can be seen in the many parallels to the present world situation, especially in China.)

* * *

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. 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 as 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 "Trotskyist" 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 Communist 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.

* Initials for the name given to the secret police in Stalin's day.

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 in Hitler's Germany--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 Kojé, 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 bit 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.

SUSPICIONS 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 Congress, 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

* 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.

or 25, but "a less unwieldy one" of 10. (3) And they ran, 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. Everev, 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.

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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. Quite 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.

Raya Dunayevskaya

(See also Political Philosophic Letter No. 2, "Mao's Last Hurrah," and the special January-February 1976 issue of News & Letters, "Under the Whip of the Counter-revolution: Will the Revolution in Portugal Advance?").

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