


TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

A New Year Toast And De-Stalinization



A TOAST by Khrushchev at a New Year party has prompted much speculation in the press about an alleged reversion to Stalinism in the USSR. The first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party was quoted as saying:

"The imperialists call us Stalinists. Well, when it comes to fighting imperialism we are all Stalinists."

Perhaps a more interesting comment attributed to Khrushchev at that party referred to the co-responsibility of the present Soviet leaders for the bad as well as the good in the Stalin era.

"I grew up under Stalin," Khrushchev was quoted by diplomats as saying. "Stalin made mistakes but we should share responsibility for those mistakes because we were associated with him."

This was very useful because at the 20th congress Khrushchev had made no such acknowledgment of co-responsibility for the evils he described in his report on Stalin.

Nevertheless, there have been developments in Soviet policy after the 20th congress, which appear to be a retreat from the democratization promised by that historic congress. For example, Soviet leaders exerted their influence to keep Rakosi in the leadership of the Hungarian party. And as late as Oct. 23, when the Hungarian upheaval began, the Soviet leaders used

their position to bring about the re-election of Gero. Both Rakosi and Gero were subsequently denounced by the Soviet leaders.

Other instances like the above can be cited. And there will undoubtedly be more to come. But still this column will go out on a limb and say that despite the retreats and compromises with practices condemned by the 20th congress, there is no road back to the situation that prevailed under Stalin. This reporter agrees with Nehru that "the post-Stalin policy . . . cannot be suppressed, or made to revert to the pre-Stalin — to the previous policy . . ." Nehru correctly saw that the post-Stalin policy "may be obstructed occasionally," and "it may be delayed," but he felt that "the changes toward democratization and liberalization" are "fundamental."

NEHRU'S VIEW in this matter is similar to Isaac Deutscher's, whose biography of Stalin, written some 10 years ago, remains remarkably prophetic and balanced.

Both Nehru and Deutscher stress the basic results of Soviet industrialization, of the wiping out of illiteracy, the effects of widespread education, the development of science and culture — forces unleashed by the socialist revolution in Russia. Stalin himself helped develop these forces. Then ultimately they came into conflict with the

Stalinist system that had been developed, especially since 1934.

In a thought provoking article appearing in *Partisan Review* (Fall, 1956) Deutscher wrote:

"A nation, the urban population of which has grown by as many as 55 to 65 million people in only 30 years, the annual steel output of which has risen from 5 to 50 million tons in the same time, and the industrial apparatus of which has successfully coped with the problems of nuclear technology well ahead of all the old industrial nations of Europe — such a nation can no longer be ruled by a 'rising sun' and a 'Father of the People' and held in awe by the whole set of Stalinist totems and taboos which belonged essentially to a much earlier and lower phase of civilization. With public ownership of the means of production firmly established, with the consolidation and expansion of planned economy, and — last but not least — with the traditions of a socialist revolution alive in the minds of its people, the Soviet Union breaks with Stalinism in order to resume its advance toward equality and socialist democracy."

DEUTSCHER is not surprised by the "force of inertia which keeps alive Stalinist habits of action and thought . . . even after the check it has received since the Twentieth Congress." After all, the men who at the 20th congress carried through the attack on Stalin's one-man rule were themselves, as Deutscher notes,

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"none other than the former guardians of Stalinist orthodoxy."

There were no others to carry out this historically necessary task in the USSR. One must build socialism, Lenin remarked a long time ago, not with imaginary persons, but with the human material at hand.

The former co-workers of Stalin must carry out the de-Stalinization process. It will be carried out with many contradictions. "However, the present phase is one of transition," Deutscher notes. New generations are coming forward who will advance democracy still further and show, I am confident, that the greatest freedom ever known comes with socialism.