

Munich, 30 August 1962 (Non-Target Communist Area Analysis: Soviet Union, cz)

When a ninety year old peasant makes the front page of Pravda by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet honoring him with the Order of the Red Banner of Labor for "...services in introducing progressive practices into agricultural production", the occasion is unique and merits analysis.

It so happens that the recipient of the honor is Denis Nikanorovich Lysenko, the father of the famous and controversial agro-biologist Trofim D. Lysenko, who last April resigned as head of the Lenin Academy of Sciences.

The senior Lysenko is acclaimed as a "progenitor of a scientific dynasty", although he himself had only a few years schooling in a rural parochial school in the Ukraine during the 'eighties of the last century.¹ (Khrushchev received his earliest education in a similar rural-religious institution at Kalinovka.) Lysenko père is still active as a brigadier at the agricultural experiment station, Lenin Hills, near Moscow, which is directed by his son, Academician Trofim D. Lysenko. A grandson, Oleg, is a plant breeder-geneticist at the same station. The whole Lysenko family is "nested-down" at the Lenin Hills.

The honors accorded Grandpère Lysenko are undoubtedly part of a calculated scheme to restore the reputation and esteem of his son, Trofim Lysenko, among agricultural officials and peasants. Twice in six years time Lysenko has resigned as the supreme arbiter and head of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences, under a cloud of criticism. Nonetheless, he earned Khrushchev's confidence by suggesting new methods of improving farm yields with emphasis on practical farming rather than scientific research. He believed the peasantry should be organized to observe and carry out the principles of good husbandry. He promised improvements without undue demands in investments.

Then too there is the symbol of Lysenko, the new type

2 Pravda and Selskaya Zhizn, 26 August 1962.

homo-Sovieticus, the up-from-the-ranks scientist, not afraid to work with his hands, the do-er type Khrushchev constantly extols. This primacy of the practical is clearly mirrored in the careers of both men and is a fount of their anti-intellectual bias. Both are spokesmen of the cult of empiricism. Under the twin pressures of expanding industrial and agricultural output, Khrushchev has banked heavily on practical scientists, men of production. The task of harnessing the creative powers of the intellectuals and keeping those awakened social forces ideologically in line presents a continuing struggle in a totalitarian society. Such peasant-type scientists as Lysenko are effective catalysts in the conflict. As leaders in the drive to boost sharply agricultural production, however, their contributions are dubious. In fact, Lysenko's leadership proved a blight to Soviet agricultural progress from 1938 to 1958, the years he headed the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences. The fulfillment of the ambitious goals in agriculture appears more improbable with the Lysenko "dynasty" securely in power.

ma 1800