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RESISTANCE TO STALIN'S "REINCARNATION"

Summary: The military circles which, under Khrushchev, were opposed to de-Stalinization can finally celebrate now. The theoretical Party organ Kommunist published recently a hymn of praise to Stalin. Stalin had already been represented in various memoirs as a good, tolerant person, and, more important, as an intelligent and far-sighted military strategist. This development, encouraged by the neo-Stalinist Party leadership, has met with resistance and has caused the formation of more and more aggressive groups who are not ready to accept this manipulated version of Stalin's personality.

In Kommunist's February issue, an article appeared under the title "For Leninist Partiinost in the Explanation of the History of the CPSU," signed by five authors. (1) In this article it is said that the CC of the CPSU was a "collective leader" during the Second World War and that the events during the "great national war" had been represented in a one-sided manner in many publications. A number of military leaders are mentioned who were active under Stalin's leadership and were responsible for the operations on the front.

The memoirs of the former Peoples Commissar and Minister of Finance of the USSR, A.G. Zverev, were published in issue No. 2/1969 of Voprosy istorii. (2) This publication is interesting for a number of reasons. The military circles have already "proved" successfully that Stalin was a far-sighted strategist and that Khrushchev's claim that Stalin led the war from in front of a globe of the world was nothing by an attempt to slander him, or the work of historical manipulators. In Zverev's memoirs,

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- (1) V. Golikov, S. Murashov, I. Chkhikvishvili, N. Shatagin, S. Shaumyan, "Za Leninskuyu partiinost' v osveshchenii istorii KPSS" in Kommunist, No. 3/1969, p. 67ff.
 - (2) A.G. Zverev, "O nekotorykh storonakh istorii Sovetskoi finansovoi sistemy" in Voprosy istorii, No. 2/1969, p. 138 ff.

the attempt is made to rehabilitate Stalin in another area, namely as a great statesman and outstanding organizer of the Soviet Union's financial affairs in the second half of the 1930's. Zverev tells, for example, of how Stalin invited him to visit him in 1937 and suggested making him the Peoples Commissar for Finance in the USSR. This marked the beginning of his career, and in September 1937 he was named Assistant Peoples Commissar, in January 1939 Peoples Commissar for Finance of the USSR. He remained in this post for 22 years.

In his memoirs, Zverev also describes his regular meetings with Stalin, and his impressions:

It would be false to claim that I.V. Stalin was without faults. He also committed errors. Yet I tend to evaluate his direction of financial activity very highly. What was unusual about him? First, his ability to divide secondary matters from the major problems, and to direct his attention to the major problems. Second, the unwavering consistency with which he attempted to reach the goal which seemed right to him. Third, his tendency not only to orient himself by others' opinions but to investigate the problem himself, to recognize its specific points, to test them and to review data coming from other sources. Fourth, the scope of his questions. (3)

In the same breath, Zverev names other personalities he met, not as a result of chance, but as a result of Stalin's favour in the course of his duties. Among them was N.A. Voznesenskii. Zverev does not mention the fact that the "tolerant" and "amiable" Stalin had this well-known economic scientist and planner murdered.

It is unmistakable that Stalin is undergoing a step-by-step resurrection; first as a military leader, now as a financial genius. What will the next virtue be?

If one examines the authors of the most important articles on the theme of "Stalin's rehabilitation" one arrives at a surprising conclusion. It is not difficult to discover the reasons for their love, veneration and glorification of Stalin, none of which necessarily depend on facts. Zverev is a good example. He was invited to see Stalin in the second half of 1937 and was recommended for a government post. What had happened in the first half of that year? Was it not the "Bartholomew's night" of Soviet cadres in all areas? Thousands of posts had become vacant overnight, because Zverev's predecessors had been liquidated. After the shooting of Tukhachevskii and the destruction of the best and most able leaders in the Red Army,

(3) ibid., p. 141.

those officers suddenly embarked upon great careers who are today marshalls of the Soviet Union and who are counted as worthy and famous heroes. The history of one of the Peoples Commissariats is at the same time the story of human tragedy. Zverev would not, of course, report the fact that one of his predecessors, N. N. Krestinskii, was arrested in 1937 and shot, not to be rehabilitated until Khrushchev's time.

Resistance Increases

One can see in many documents which have reached the West that the rehabilitation of Stalin is one of the causes for the activity of those forces (especially writers and students) for whom Stalin is a criminal and a "deviationist" from Marxism-Leninism. This is a leitmotive in all the "open letters" and in the pamphlets and brochures which circulate in the Soviet Union, including the well-known memoirs of Prof. A.D. Saharov.

One must not overlook the fact that at the same time memoirs are appearing in which Stalin's role is passed over in silence. It can be assumed that the negative remarks were removed by a censor. The memoirs of Admiral V.F. Tributs, which appeared in the same issue of Voprosy istorii as Zverev's memoirs, belong to this category. (4) These memoirs provide an important contribution to the understanding of the events after the beginning of the war in the Baltic region. This is not the place to recount the many interesting details, but rather only to remark that Stalin's name is not mentioned at all. In descriptions of the defeats at the front, however, the thought is advanced that, in part, the "highest leadership" of the Soviet Union was responsible for these.

The strongest resistance to neo-Stalinism can be found among the writers. The literary journals groan under the weight of censors. This is especially true in the case of Novy Mir, the December 1968 issue of which did not appear until March 1969. It is not surprising that even Sholokhov was put to much trouble to get Pravda to publish an excerpt from his novel "They Fought for the Father Land." (5) Sholokhov has been working on this novel on the "great national war" since 1943. One can imagine how the Soviet citizen reacts when he reads the conversations of the heroes of the novel talking about Stalin's conduct before the war, about how he "had been blind up until now," and has only now awakened, or how he had seen "the world through Ezhov's eyes" and now "through Beria's eyes." From the publication of these excerpts the reader learns again that there were unjustified arrests of generals and other crimes.

(4) Admiral V.F. Tributs, "Krasnoznamennyi baltiskii flot letom 1941 goda" in Voprosy istorii, No. 3/1969, p. 124 ff.

(5) Pravda, 12 March 1969.

It would be incorrect as yet to speak of a final victory of the neo-Stalinists. The reactionary manipulation of Stalin's past is leading to further resistance among the population. Even Sholokhov, who is neither a prolific writer nor a liberal, has come to conclusions other than most of those authors presently writing memoirs under the influence of Brezhnev and his doctrines.

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