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KHRUSHCHEV'S NEO-STALINISM

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## Introduction

Almost simultaneously with his departure for a prolonged vacation in the Crimea N. S. Khrushchev released for publication his most important ideological pronouncement since the two reports to the XX Party Congress. (Kommunist, No. 12, 1957; see Background Information, 10 September 1957.) Directed primarily to the problem of Partiinost in literature, this document has become the cultural guidance for the entire Soviet orbit—with the possible exception of Poland. In Pankow the question of the right of a "politician," Khrushchev, "to mix into the internal affairs of literary creation" has been answered in the affirmative with appropriate enthusiasm (Sonntag, 20 October 1957); in Peking Chou Yang, Vice Minister of Culture and deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the CC CCP has, with somewhat more restraint, simply stated that "Khrushchev's speech to Soviet writers had correctly defined the road to develop socialist literature and art and was helpful not only to Soviet but to all progressive writers in the world." (NCNA, 9 November 1957.) The recognition for similar authority in the more complex area of Marxist theory has, thus far, not been bestowed upon the person who now controls the levers of political power in the Soviet Union. Since the practise of the last thirty years, however, has conclusively demonstrated that the unlimited right to interpret Marxist-Leninist dogma derives directly from the possession of unchallenged personal power, the successor to Stalin's monopolistic position as the oracle of Communist orthodoxy is practically assured. To document Chinese acquiescence in the obvious choice, one need hardly do more than complete the "couplet" recited by Mao Tse-tung to the 3,000 Chinese students at the Moscow State University the day after the meeting of the twelve countries of the socialist camp had ended:

"...in the socialist camp there must be a head, and that head is the Soviet Union.

"Among the communist and Workers' Parties of all countries there must be a head, and that head is the CPSU." (Pravda, 22 November 1957.)

It is certainly more difficult to conceive of the present First Secretary as an ideologist than as ruler of the Party machine. His rapidly growing "collected works" reveal far greater affinity to the simplifications of the Short Course than to the complexities of the "classics" of Marx and Lenin. Nevertheless the "kukuruznik" stands in a far different position with respect to his 1957 Central Committee and its Presidium of neo-Stalinists than Koba occupied relative to the Old Bolsheviks shortly after the death of Lenin. His "bread and butter" version of Marxism reflecting the practical policies of the program of "overtaking the most advanced capitalist country" (Radio Prague, 13 July 1957) must be pressed, no less than Stalin's "building socialism in one country," into the mold of standard Marxist-Leninist doctrine. At the very beginning of his career as General Secretary, Stalin had to defend his ideas against his ideological superiors; with the acquisition of political power he later physically liquidated his ideological opponents, transforming in the process the Leninist Party dictatorship into its Stalinist variant. By insisting upon the reaffirmation of the all-inclusive Leninist principles of Party rule in every sphere of Soviet society from art and the Army to social science and the State, Khrushchev invokes the same Vozhd as his predecessor against the challengers for political power. In the mid-twenties the famous Marxist scholar Ryazanov could interrupt Stalin in the course of a theoretical argument with the "condescending irony of the educated Marxist:"



"Stop it, Koba, don't make a fool of yourself. Everybody knows that theory is not exactly your field." (Quoted by I. Deutscher: "Stalin," London, 1949, p. 290.)

Today, those like Fedoseyev, Kammari, Stepanyan and the other ideologists who survived the purges and faithfully parroted Stalin's teachings for decades, are again in the process of following the new leader's example. This time they are applying similar correctives to their overzealous re-evaluation of Stalin's errors and achievements. Since they did not take the extreme form of the secret speech, their revisions are not so sensational in content, but like the public statements of the First Secretary they are essential components of the reestablishment of the ideological pattern of neo-Stalinism, now labelled Leninism.

One example will suffice as an illustration of Khrushchev's infiltration into the Stalinist domain. Chiding James Reston of the New York Times for "being poorly versed in Marxism," Khrushchev expressed his incisive thoughts on the thorniest of all problems plaguing the epigones of Marx and Engels—"the withering away of the State:"

"According to Marxist-Leninist teachings, with the development of socialist society and its institutions, with the development of man in that society, the rise of his cultural standards and the education of new moral qualities in people, there will cease to be a need for a number of state bodies that are needed now to suppress the attempts of the enemies of socialism, to deprive the working people of their great gains or to introduce various abnormalities into the life of our country.

"When our society reaches the stage of communism, only those institutions will remain which are needed to organize the normal life of society, for example the further development of industry, agriculture, cultural and living standards etc. We have no exploiting classes now, but then there will be no classes at all, there will be no class distinctions. Under communism there will be genuine freedom, fraternity, and equality of all people in society." (Pravda, 11 October 1957.)

This unassuming contribution to the theory of the State seemed, at first, to have passed without notice. Six weeks later, however, Henry Shapiro (United Press) asked for a more definite exposition of the implications of the vague remarks to Reston. Khrushchev's response, it may now be anticipated, will become the standard reference for the continued existence of the State during the construction of Communism:

"We are guided by the Marxist-Leninist teaching of the state by the wonderful propositions of Lenin's classic work "The State and Revolution." We have said and we are saying today that the state organs of compulsion will gradually wither away and will ultimately die out altogether as also the state itself. This will not, naturally, happen suddenly, but gradually at some stage of the development of a communist society. It would be a gross mistake, a leftist excess to weaken our state administration bodies today, to abolish organs of compulsion which are today, as I have already said, mainly organs of defence against the intrigues of our enemies from without...

"We are fighting against survivals of capitalism in the minds of the people, but these survivals will apparently linger for a considerable time yet among a certain part of the population because the process of overcoming them is a fairly long and complex one.

"Moreover, the process of the withering away of the state depends to a great extent on the international situation. If international developments proceed at an increasing pace in the direction of progress, the danger of an attack from the outside will increasingly diminish. This means that the armed forces of the Soviet Union will shrink and that the other organs of our state will shrink and change too.

"This is what might be said, briefly on the subject." (Pravda, 19 November 1957.)

Under conditions of capitalist encirclement Stalin could and easily did dismiss Bukharin's arguments for the withering away of the State as anarchistic; ten years later in his Report to the XVIII Party Congress, March 1939, he categorically forecast the continued existence of the state as follows:

"Will the state be preserved...during the period of Communism as well? The answer is yes; it will be preserved unless capitalist encirclement shall have been liquidated and the danger of military attacks from without have been eliminated..."

To the neo-Stalinist, Khrushchev, any weakening of the State administration bodies today "would be a gross mistake, a leftist excess," although the Soviet Union, as a Yugoslav theoretician was unpolitic enough to state earlier this month, is

"no longer...besieged by a ring of capitalist countries [but] around it we have a series of other countries whose working people are building socialism..." (B. Zihelr, Izraz, Sarajevo, November 1957, quoted from S.S., General Desk, Background Report, 26 November 1957.)

On the basis of the special geopolitical isolation of the Soviet State, Stalin twisted a basic tenet of pristine Marxist ideology into an essential component of Stalinist dogma; to maintain this theory—and the State—Khrushchev, under changed circumstances, may be forced to apply similar practises of persuasion—and coercion.

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## PROSPECTS OF IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE

### Survey

November-December 1957

### **NOT TO BE MICROFICED**

An early visitor to revolutionary Moscow came back in 1919 with the sensational news that he had seen the future and that it worked. Lincoln Steffens was neither a profound nor a consistent political thinker; subsequently he believed he had seen the future in Mussolini's Italy, and it worked there too, at least for a time. But he was more correct in his appraisal than many contemporary critics of Bolshevism who doubted whether it was at all practical or could remain in power. In 1927, people were still talking about the Communist 'experiment,' but ten years later it had become fairly obvious that a political regime and a social system of a new type had come into being. After another ten years Orwell, writing his last book, had not the slightest doubt that 1984 would actually work. Forty years have passed this November since the Winter Palace in Petrograd was taken. It is an obvious occasion for stocktaking and for some speculation about the future development of the Soviet Union...

...Some things in the Soviet Union have remained unchanged (for instance the nationalization of the means of production and the political monopoly of the Communist Party) while other original features of Soviet society have changed out of recognition: even some of the keywords of the regime have assumed quite different meanings from those they originally possessed. It is enough to re-read Lenin's State and Revolution, written almost exactly forty years ago, to realize that the new Soviet society differs, and has been differing for most of the time, in many important respects from the image projected by the early Bolsheviks. The 'withering away of the State' has been postponed ad calendas graecas, the participation of female cooks in affairs of state has not been more pronounced there than in other known societies, and the dictatorship of the proletariat has become, at best, the rule of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat - sometimes by one man, sometimes by a couple of individuals. On the credit side there has been great economic development, and Leninism still retains in 1957 much prestige in Asia as the theory of rapid industrialization for backward areas. The Leninist theory of imperialism has become, as one writer has put it, the link between Communism and Asian resentments - hence its great appeal in Asia and its progress in that part of the world during the last decade. But this again indicates a tremendous change in the function of Communism, originally scheduled to be the pattern of social organization for the most advanced countries, not for the under-developed.

...Soviet ideology...has been for some considerable time now the Cinderella of the Communist movement. The majority of Western students have not thought Soviet ideology worthy of serious study and discussion, while in the East, too, the ideologists have on the whole been held in scant respect; to be an intellectual is once more to be held slightly suspect; it is a synonym for one who wavers, who hesitates in times of crisis, who is too willing to embrace all kinds of 'foreign,' 'alien' influences. Western observers may be correct in their assumption that after a thorough study of the social sciences, and on the basis of an examination of developments both in West and East during the last forty years, few people would be likely to adopt the basic tenets of Soviet ideology. They tend to forget, however, that few people in the West have the inclination or the leisure to make such thorough studies and that the political decisions.

of the great majority are taken on a less sophisticated level and on the basis of less knowledge. Few people in the East find outward conditions propitious for such dispassionate study. Inside the Soviet Union a major, though perhaps logical, change has taken place; for Lenin's generation ideological capacity was the main criterion for the appraisal of a political leader. Today, and for a good time past, ideology has been relegated to a secondary position; the party ideologists are called upon to find justifications for a course of action already taken by the leaders. Nobody expects them to outline the future course of action. The leaders of today, people like Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan, may have many qualities, but an interest in the theory of Leninism or in any political theory at all is not conspicuous among them. As a result, some Western observers have reached the conclusion that one may safely disregard Soviet ideology which is no longer very important. But this is a gross misconception. Though the importance of ideology has undoubtedly greatly decreased and will apparently continue to decline, it still fulfils an important function. It may no longer satisfy the more advanced parts of the intelligentsia, but it is still a vital need in the training of cadres, and especially of party functionaries. It is still the cement that holds together Soviet society.

While Soviet ideology continues to offer plausible explanations at the popular level and for mass purposes, it is undoubtedly true that closer research in philosophy and psychology, economics and history, tends to generate serious doubts. It is this which explains why it has been unable to produce anything of importance for almost three decades. The engineers and builders can point to spectacular achievements; the social scientists, writers and painters have nothing comparable to offer. The constant complaints of Soviet leaders about the slackness, the 'lagging behind' of the historians, economists, philosophers, writers and artists are however, misplaced. Their freedom of speech and action being so limited, they have really done the best they could in impossible circumstances. One of their main tools is historical materialism; and yet they have not been permitted to use it on the most obvious and nearest subject, Russian history after the revolution. It could be argued perhaps that the laws of historical materialism do not apply to the Soviet Union. Was not the 1917 revolution the famous leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom? And if so, has not man become at last master of his own destiny? It may be difficult in view of what has in fact happened in Russia to take this line, but on the theoretical level such an extremely voluntarist and indeterminist line might offer a possible way out of an otherwise impossible dilemma, and, in fact, Soviet ideologists are frequently forced into using such arguments. If one man, Stalin, is made responsible for the 'cult of personality' and all its terrible consequences, and if there is a total refusal even to examine the possibility that what happened was not the fault of one man, but the natural outgrowth of the specific political features of the totalitarian state, with its extreme concentration of power, this represents the approach to history which only the 'idealist' (in the Soviet sense of the word) philosopher can accept. But in fact, of course, such a major revision of doctrine has never been officially sanctioned. Atomic scientists may be permitted to disregard Engels' and Lenin's dicta whenever the old axioms impede their progress. But economists, historians and philosophers are engaged in less dramatic research, and in any case they are not expected to provide a clear lead or guidance.



They are not there to make fresh discoveries - for all discoveries in their respective fields have already been made - but to solve the concrete problems put to them. Hence the impasse.

Ideology was regarded by Marx and Engels as the superstructure based on and changing with the relations of production. In the Soviet Union it has largely become the superstructure of political power. This makes it immensely hazardous to engage in any speculation as to its possible future development. Some of its present elements are undoubtedly highly fortuitous; there is, for instance, no certainty that Soviet ideology will continue to put so much stress on Pavlov, or neo-Pavlovism, in the natural sciences. Pavlov, after all, was not a Leninist - he was not even a materialist, and the link between Pavlov and dialectical materialism which seemed highly convenient at one time may become something of a burden in future. Soviet ideology has been deeply committed in this as in other fields and as Soviet prestige is involved a retreat may be difficult. But more complicated operations have been executed; to preclude such a development would mean to underrate the malleability and flexibility of Soviet ideology.

In a short-range view no important changes in Communist ideology should be expected. On the contrary, the general trend over the last year or two has been away from 'liberalism' and back to the old rigid system of beliefs. It has been realized that once a little freedom is granted (to the writers, for instance) things can get out of control, and the whole ideological edifice may start crumbling. The cardinal strength of this closed system lies after all in its monolithic character; once major revisions are permitted, once some doubts are allowed to creep in, a serious breakdown may follow. The present state of affairs is perhaps best illustrated by the new edition of a textbook of Soviet history, published as these lines are being written (*Istoriya SSSR*, Part III, for the 10th forms of secondary schools, edited by the late M. Pankratova, Moscow, 1957). This book gives of course far less space to Stalin than the previous editions of the same volume, or than any other Soviet history written before the 20th Party Congress. It appraises favorably Stalin's role in the 'twenties, including his struggle against 'deviationists', but hardly ever mentions him after 1932, by which time his power had become total. The big purges of 1936-38 are not mentioned at all. The chapter dealing with the development of the Soviet Union after 1945 is a summary of the main features of the fourth and fifth five-year plans, with three and a half lines devoted to the resolution against the 'cult of personality'. There is not the slightest admission of any mistake ever committed by anybody,<sup>1</sup> a feat achieved by omitting to mention some of the most important trends and events in recent Soviet history. Such an approach may be satisfactory in so far as the pupils of the upper forms of secondary schools are concerned. For university students this new line will probably not be good enough. Clearly, the present attitude can only be regarded as a transitory phenomenon; sooner or later more explicit explanations

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<sup>1</sup>Soviet foreign policy is invariably justified. The pact with Hitler in 1939 is approved (p. 277) and about the Finnish War of 1939-40 it is stated, with lapidary brevity: 'In November, 1939, Finland entered into war against the Soviet Union' (p. 229)

will have to be given. One possibility, of course, is that historians will have to revert to the old approach, with perhaps some minor and inessential revisions. There is however another possibility, namely a growing divergence between the exegesis for and by the initiated, and the popular version. Soviet historians (and philosophers and economists) may be given a freer hand in their specialized studies on condition that this will not lead to a wholesale revision in the popular presentations, and that no topical political conclusions will be drawn. But this way, too, is highly unsatisfactory, and moreover it is applicable only in the more specialized fields. One cannot, for instance, envisage a grant of freedom to Soviet writers that would not at once have direct political repercussions. In some of the less enlightened Right-wing dictatorships, past and present, subversive books and periodicals (of socialist and Communist origin, for instance) have been permitted to enter in French and English versions, though not in the local language, the tacit assumption being that the intellectuals likely to read them are 'infected' anyway and politically without influence.

From the point of view of a dictatorship the situation tends to become dangerous only if there are links between the intelligentsia and the 'masses'; at times it has not been too difficult to contain the intellectuals and their subversive ideas. On the other hand it is doubtful whether such an arrangement would really work for any length of time in a country with a different and much more streamlined dictatorship, which has lasted for many years and in which considerable sections of the population have been taught to take political ideas and ideologies seriously - in contrast frequently to the West. A last possibility, though perhaps at present the least likely, is a genuine revision of official Soviet ideology in the light of recent history, and recent developments in the social and natural sciences. Such a re-examination would presumably proceed from such basic social and economic features of life in the Soviet Union as the nationalization of the means of production and central economic planning and also from the explicit recognition that the Soviet Union is one of the two big powers in today's world. Short of a cataclysm, any re-fashioned Soviet ideology would have to be based on these facts. As to the rest, a critical re-examination would lead to the conclusion that Leninism had outlived its usefulness because it could offer no help in the solution of problems that neither Lenin nor any other early Communist leader could have envisaged. It would have to take into account the changes that have occurred in the world outside Russia during the last forty years, to analyze anew problems such as nationalism and imperialism (that were believed to have been solved a generation ago) and to investigate new phenomena such as the 'revolution from above' and the management of economic and political affairs in an industrial society, which is a far more complex problem than the early Communists ever realized. It would have to review those fields where Communist organization has not been an outstanding success, such as agriculture, and it would have to give some thought to the relations between Communist countries. From an 'idealist' point of view. Stalin and Beria could of course be saddled with the blame for the crisis in relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia (and the 'popular democracies' in general). But for a historical 'materialist' this explanation could not be satisfactory.

Lenin believed he had discovered an historical law according to which the unequal development of leading capitalist nations inevitably led to conflicts between them, and eventually to world war. But there



has also been an unequal development within the 'socialist camp' and conflicts have followed from this indisputable historic fact. Were these conflicts really all 'non-antagonistic'? At this point the ideologists would be moving from dangerous ground onto a mine-field. For an examination of Soviet development over the last 30 or 40 years would undoubtedly entail a critique of 'Soviet democracy', an investigation into the nature of the new elite that has emerged, the political and social results of a one-party dictatorship, and the control of that party by one man, or a handful of men. But since all this would menace large vested interests, undermine them, and reach conclusions detrimental to their power, it is difficult to imagine such a revolution in Soviet thinking unless it were preceded by a revolutionary change in political power. This brings us to the more general question of the probability of radical change in the Soviet Union. Whether Tukhachevski is rehabilitated by the historians and Isaac Babel by the litterateurs is, of course, a matter of considerable interest. But the rehabilitation of those who are no more among the living does not necessarily have any great impact on current events. Non-Leninist and anti-Stalinist ideas have so far not been rehabilitated. There have been some reforms but no revolutionary change. But is there much difference between a great reform and a small revolution? Is not a reform a small revolution?

These were the questions which the late H.G. Wells asked the late Josef Stalin in a conversation on July 23, 1934. And Stalin replied, quite correctly, that rulers may sometimes concede partial reforms while remaining on the basis of the existing system. In acting this way, they calculate that these concessions are necessary to preserve their rule; this is the essence of reform. Revolution, however, means the transference of power, and that is why it was impossible (according to Stalin) to describe any reform as revolution. There is much truth in this observation: A revolutionary change in Soviet ideology would seem to be feasible only with and after the disappearance of the party monopoly of official truth and the political leadership as the supreme ideological judge. Or can a change from within the party in the direction of freedom and democracy be envisaged? This would involve a voluntary decision to abstain from exercising absolute power, an event without historical precedent.

In the same year that Lincoln Steffens returned from Moscow, another Westerner who had been there, Bertrand Russell, in a short book asked whether it is not almost inevitable that those who hold the monopoly of power will be loath to relinquish it, and will find reasons for remaining in power until some new revolution ousts them. Russell went on to ask what motive they would have for doing otherwise. The same question remains now, almost forty years later. A gradual change from within is perhaps not impossible, since there are no impossibilities in history. But at this juncture it requires a powerful imagination even to picture the conditions in which this could conceivably happen, so remote does it appear.

W.Z.L.

DOCTRINAL CHANGESurvey

November-December 1957

by Leopold Labedz

Lenin once expressed the desire to see 'a society of friends of the Hegelian dialectic,' composed of philosophical materialists. Dialectic was for him 'the soul of revolutionary theory,' and dialectical development implied that nothing could retain its essence but was eventually due for 'necessary destruction' - a formula used by Marx in Capital. Engels' ontology was a further source for Lenin's belief that 'contradictions are of the essence of things' (Philosophical Notebooks).

The left Hegelian who stood his master on his head criticized him for representing the Prussian state as the terminus ad quem of history. This seemed to Marx inconsistent with the dialectical conception of history. He himself could escape the dilemma of teleological history versus the Heracleitan conception of it only by projecting the two postulates into the future and by not being too specific about them.

The left Marxist who turned his teacher inside out by a voluntaristic interpretation of his theory brought the dilemma back to earth. By seizing power Lenin reversed the traditional Marxist relationship between base and super-structure, and also put on the agenda the problem of the dialectic of the Soviet state.

Already in Switzerland, in a discussion with Bukharin, Lenin had touched on the question of the place of dialectics in socialist society. Marx and Engels had provided little guidance for his thinking on this subject. Vague generalities about the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom which was to end the period of human 'pre-history' could hardly be applied to specific political and historical circumstances. Nor could the postulated end of the class struggle after the period of transition to socialism throw much light on the medium through which the dialectic would operate in the new society. Lenin tried to bridge the gap by distinguishing between antagonisms and contradictions, an idea which has been elaborated over the past forty years by a long succession of Soviet philosophers and Communist ideologues in general (including Mao Tse-tung).

But the concept of antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions was destined to make a career only later, when the ideological implications of the proclamation of the achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union had to be tackled, i.e., after 1934. The immediate problem on which attention was centred after 1917 was of course, the role of the new state.

The idea of the withering away of the state was still taken seriously at that time. Both Marx, in his little-known comments on Bakunin, and Lenin, in his State and Revolution, contemplated quite seriously a notion which, from today's perspective, looks like an infantile fantasy. After 1917 various ramifications of the general proposition took root, subordinate theories predicting the withering away of this and the withering away of that with the advent of socialism. In the 'twenties Soviet lawyers prophesied the disappearance



of law, Soviet educationists the disappearance of schools, and Soviet artists (Meyerhold!) the disappearance of art. Only the priests had no chance to preach the withering away of their raison d'etre, since the disappearance of religion under victorious socialism was taken for granted.

But when socialism was in fact proclaimed all these expectations were confounded. The state in particular, that supreme reflection of class antagonisms and the supreme test of their dialectical resolution, showed no signs of surrendering any of its functions. On the contrary, it was becoming evermore embracing. Soviet ideologists were once more facing the old dilemma in an actue form: As they could no longer envisage the death of the state they had to adjust themselves to what M. Chambre calls the death of the dialectic.

Trotskyists and other heretics could point to the continued existence of the state in the Soviet Union as immaculate proof that socialism had not been achieved there. The syllogism demonstrating the incompatibility of the state and socialist society in unanswerable on Marxist premises. But in practice there was no alternative. The real question was not the existence but the character of the state. Nevertheless the disappointed theoreticians of the permanent revolution from below continued on this score to accuse its practitioners from above of treachery. The latter, in their turn, continued to justify terror in ideological terms while retaining residual notions of the theory of the withering away of the state. Stalin, justifying its continued existence, told the sixteenth Party congress that 'any dialectical thinker must understand that, in order eventually to wither away, the state must first grow stronger.' Later he developed the idea that it was necessary to strengthen the state before it could disappear in a letter to one Ivanov, which thereupon became the main ideological text on the question. Thus Engels' second dialectical law, the interpenetration of opposites, could with a little manipulation be used to explain the evolution of the Soviet state. But in effect the question of its transformation was relegated to limbo. The withering away of the state, like the second advent, ceased to be an earthly consideration arousing real expectations.

After the war the evolution of Soviet ideology on this subject went even further: the state, previously regarded as a transitional phenomenon, became an object of positive praise and was presented as a necessary institution under socialism and also under communism. In the words of P.F. Yudin, 'The Soviet state is the main force, the main instrument for the construction of socialism and the building of Communist society.'<sup>1</sup>

The next step in revising the Marxist theory of the state was taken by Stalin in his Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics. In this treatment of an esoteric topic a place was found in the doctrinal sphere, for the first time since 1917, to admit the changed role of the 'superstructure', a change previously acknowledged in practice but not in theory. Naturally the admission was not explicit, but the theoretical implications of Stalin's announcement of the independent role of language were only too obvious. Once an admission of this

<sup>1</sup> On Soviet Socialist Society, Moscow, 1948, p. 22.

kind was made, other elements of the 'superstructure' could also be interpreted in a similar way.

In the post-Stalin period M. Kammari, the editor of Voprosy Filosofii, dealt with the subject in a programmatic article 'On some problems of the theory of base and superstructure' (Kommunist, 1956, 10). He criticized some 'imprecise formulations' in Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics, but carefully preserved Stalin's most fundamental revisionist proposition, making only some insignificant modifications of certain 'incorrect statements.' Kommunist explains that in the discussion which followed the publication of the article 'some comrades had accused Stalin of revisionism.' This, however, was an unfounded charge, and Alexandrov, who made it, 'himself interprets dogmatically and uncritically one of Marx's theses.' Stalin's work played 'an important part in elucidating the specific characteristics of language as a social phenomena, there are, together with their general characteristics and functions, also their own characteristic specific traits, their own functions and internal laws of development, is applicable to all spheres of spiritual (dukhovny) culture, to all elements of the superstructure of society.' Kommunist concludes this esoteric discussion by stating categorically that 'there is nothing incorrect in Stalin's theses' if only it is not 'interpreted one-sidedly and dogmatically,' but is 'understood dialectically and not metaphysically.'<sup>2</sup>

The last word in the Soviet dialectical treatment of the Marxist theory of the state is given by V.V. Nikolaev in an article 'On the stages of development of the Soviet socialist state.'<sup>3</sup> The division of Soviet history into two basic periods, made by Stalin in a speech at the eighteenth CPSU Congress, is in essentials accepted. 'The forty years of experience of the Soviet Union shows that his theses on the basic stages and fundamental tasks and functions of the Soviet state need only some corrections and additions reflecting the objective, concrete historical process of development of our state.' Pointing to one such correction, Nikolaev writes that 'Stalin regards the administrative-organization and cultural-educational work of the state organs as one function of the Soviet state.' That is incorrect. 'The sphere of spiritual culture represents an autonomous sphere of state activity.'

On the general course of development Nikolaev is in full agreement with Stalin. The basic phases of the development of the Soviet state are:

1. (a) The period of the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, and (b) the period of the completion of the construction of socialism and the gradual transition to Communism... As Stalin correctly noted, in the first phase, connected with the task of suppressing the overthrown classes, the exploiting classes are liquidated. Thereafter the function of suppressing the overthrown classes no longer exists. In the conditions of the struggle between the socialist and capitalist systems, the function of defence from external attack

<sup>2</sup>Kommunist, 1957, 4, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Voprosy Filosofii, 1957, 4, p. 10,



is preserved and developed, the Soviet army and navy are strengthened, as well as the repressive and intelligence agencies of the Soviet state required for the struggle against spies, wreckers, and diversionists sent into our country by foreign intelligence services.'

The writer also deals with the future of the Soviet state:

'What are the prospects of further development of the Soviet state? Is the second basic phase of development of the Soviet state the last one, or is the future transition of the state to a new, third phase possible?

'With the completion of the building of Communism in the USSR, all the internal tasks of the Soviet state will be accomplished. But with the continuing existence of the capitalist camp, the task of the defense of the country still remains. Furthermore, the task of coordinating the economic and cultural development of countries in the socialist camp, and of strengthening and developing economic and cultural ties with other countries will play an evermore important role. The transition of the Soviet state into the third stage of its development will be determined by further fundamental changes in the economic basis, in the class structure of Soviet society, as it passes from a socialist into a Communist economy. The achievement of Communism will bring about fundamental qualitative changes in all the elements of the socialist basis. A single form of property in the means of production will be established, the public property of the Communist society. In connection with the liquidation of the essential difference between town and village, and between mental and manual labor, fundamental changes in the social structure will occur: the class division of Soviet society will be liquidated. The workers, peasants, and intelligentsia will all become labourers of the Communist society. At the same time, on the basis of the vigorous development of production forces, the Communist principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," will be established.'

Among all these desirable goals to be achieved under Communism the disappearance of the state is not even mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Khrushchev, using the familiar Marxist metaphor, consigned to the museum of antiquities, after the successful launching of the Soviet satellite, the bomber and not the state.

However, Kommunist still maintains that 'the movement of society towards Communist forms of life is an objective process determined by the development of production and by economic laws which operate independently of the will and consciousness of man.'<sup>5</sup> The Party, in the theses published for the 40th Anniversary of the revolution, claims that 'the establishment of a Communist society in our country is already not a remote but an immediate practical target.'<sup>6</sup>

In the history of Soviet thought the transition to Communism is

<sup>4</sup>The text book of Political Economy (Moscow, 1954, p. 558) still mentions Stalin's report to the 18th Congress of the Party in which he asserted that the state will wither away in the USSR but only 'if the capitalist encirclement is replaced by a socialist one.'

<sup>5</sup>Kommunist, 1957, 6, pp. 8-9.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., 1957, 13, p. 23.

intrinsically connected with the concept of the law of value, a fundamental law of Marxist political economy.

Engels in Anti-Duehring categorically rejected the idea that socialist economy is compatible with commodity production, i.e., with money and exchange. For a time Lenin believed that War Communism could provide a short-cut to the direct management of production and distribution, but in 1921 he accepted a provisional retreat in the form of N.E.P. Soviet economists in the 'twenties argued that the law of value will not operate under socialism, i.e., that the price-mechanism will have no place in a planned economy. Preobrazhenski maintained that with the victory of socialism 'the law of value will wither away.'<sup>7</sup> Lapidus and Ostrovitianov, in their well-known text-book of political economy, also expressed the idea that the law of value in the Soviet economy 'is in the process of withering away.'<sup>8</sup> At the 17th Congress of the Party Stalin stated that 'trade and money will remain in existence until the complete victory of Communism.' But generally in the 'thirties, which witnessed the official establishment of socialism, there was a discreet silence on the subject.

The first variant of the new official Manual of Economics was presented to Stalin in January, 1941 and was criticized for an orthodox presentation of the problem. The thesis was then formulated, for the first time, that the law of value does operate under socialism, but in a 'changed form'.<sup>9</sup> This doctrine of socialist economic transubstantiation was advanced until 1952. In 1943 the theoretical organ of the Party, Under the Banner of Marxism, dealt with the question openly. In a programmatic article<sup>10</sup> it attacked the teaching of a political economy which 'denied the operation of the law of value in a socialist society.' In 1952 Stalin took the next step by publishing Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR. He asserted categorically that laws cannot be 'transformed', they can only be 'mastered'. The law of value has not been transformed: 'It does exist and operate under the socialist system' within the limited bounds of commodity production. With the disappearance of commodity production 'value and its forms and the law of value also disappear. In the second phase of Communist society, the amount of labor expended on the production of goods will be measured not in a roundabout way, not in terms of value and its forms, as is the case under commodity production, but directly and immediately, by the amount of time, the number of hours, expended on the production of goods.' Nor will the distribution of labor among the different branches of production be regulated by the law of value, 'which will have ceased to function by that time.'

The subsequent elaboration of the problem continued to reflect the

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<sup>7</sup> The New Economics, Moscow, 1926, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Political Economy and the Theory of Soviet Economy, Moscow, 1928 p. 132.

<sup>9</sup> W. Brus, in Economists Debate the Law of Value, Warsaw, 1956, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Under the Banner of Marxism, 1943, no. 7-8.



tension between considerations of economic rationality and their doctrinal implications. During the entire Soviet period the economists could not deal comprehensively with the former, nor the ideological functionaries concentrate exclusively on the latter. Discussion reflected both the practical preoccupations of the leadership and the doctrinal limitations within which it was bound.

...The 'philosophical' aspects of the question of transition to Communism, now a practical target for the immediate future, have been elaborated in Voprosy Filosofii, which recently dedicated to it its department of 'discussion and debate'.

In 1955 Ts. A. Stepanian published in Voprosy Filosofii, (no. 2) an article on 'Contradictions in the Development of Socialist society and ways of overcoming them,' developing Stalin's thesis from the Economic problems of socialism in the USSR. The essential contradiction of socialism, he wrote, is the one 'between the ever-growing needs of the population and the level of the production of material and cultural goods at any given time'. This thesis was attacked by the economist Ya. A. Kronrod in an article 'On the problem of economic contradictions under socialism' (Voprosy Filosofii, 1956, No. 2), in which he argued that all economic relations under socialism are contradictory and disputed the pragmatic validity of Stepanian's (and Stalin's) proposition.

The same line of reasoning is pursued by I.I. Konnik, who criticizes Stalin for the assertion that 'in the USSR the growth of consumption (purchasing power) of the masses consistently runs ahead of the growth of production.' Konnik points out that 'the growth of consumption cannot all the time outstrip the growth of production. If by consumption we understand purchasing power (and they are far from being the same), this would in effect mean that inherent in the socialist economy is a chronic deficit of goods, i.e., the unresolved contradiction between the growing purchasing power of the population and the constant relative lagging behind in the development of production. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether this contradiction has a positive effect in stimulating production, as it is known that a famine in goods generates all sorts of abuses by the industrial enterprises, in regard to production, quality, etc. If on the other hand we understand by consumption the growing needs of the masses (and they are far from being the same), then, as Marx has shown, this contradiction is inherent in general in the dialectical unity of production and consumption and cannot be regarded as a specific contradiction inherent in the socialist economy only.'<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in Marxist terminology, Konnik poses the problem of the role of inflationary pressure in the Soviet economy. But he has to explain it in dialectical terms: 'The unity of the system of the economic laws of socialism does not exclude but presupposes the possibility of the appearance under certain conditions of contradictions between different economic laws...This applies particularly to the law of value, to the economic law of distribution according to labor, and to a certain degree also to the essential economic law of socialism and the law of planned, harmonious development of the national economy...These contradictions, resulting from the very nature of economic laws, have a more or less enduring character,

<sup>11</sup> Voprosy Filosofii, 1957, 1, p. 176.

that is, emerging in a determined concrete form, they are overcome, but then reappear in a new form. The overcoming of these contradictions, reflecting the real contradictions of economic reality, is the essence of the movement forward, of the development of the socialist economy.' The subtle dialectical point whether it is the existence of contradictions or their resolution which is the 'source of development' from socialist into Communist society became a subject of contention between Stepanian and other participants in the discussion and reflects different political attitudes. Stepanian asserted that it is not only the resolution of the contradiction but the existence of the contradiction itself which is a source of development. This is disputed by E.T. Lukina in an article 'Not contradictions but their resolution sets the movement forward' (Voprosy Filosofii, 1957, 3, p. 132). Another participant in the debate, F.T. Krivoruchko, criticized Kronrod for 'expressing the opinion held by some of our economists and philosophers, that a given contradiction does not represent a particular manifestation of the essential contradiction under socialism, as it is common, ultimately, to all social production and therefore cannot express the deepest essence of socialist production.' Krivoruchko admits that 'the contradiction between production and all the needs of society is common to all social production,' but he declares nevertheless that it 'expresses the deepest essence of socialist production.' He differentiates between the essential and basic contradiction of the period of transition from socialist to communism: 'The contradiction which expresses the specific character of this period is the contradiction between the state and kolkhoz-cooperative forms of property.' He goes on to say: 'The mistake made by some of our philosophers and economists was not that they regarded as the main task of the contemporary period the transformation of kolkhoz-cooperative property into state property. Their error consisted in regarding this task as the next on the list, and not a long-term one, to be resolved gradually in the course of the entire period of transition from socialism to communism, as the contradiction between these two forms of socialist property is gradually resolved. They made this mistake because they overlooked or underestimated the gradualness of the solution of the non-antagonistic contradictions... Their second source of error was to think of the contradiction between the public and kolkhoz cooperative forms of property as an obstacle to development, ignoring the most important thing: the forces determining development. For this reason they argued that it was necessary to overcome the contradiction between the two forms of property which hinders and slows down the movement forward to Communism. We cannot agree with this view. The contradiction between the two forms of property is not an obstacle to their development. On the contrary, it acts as a moving force determining the gradual transformation of these two forms of property into a single public form of property. This, of course, does not mean that at a certain stage the contradiction between the two forms of property cannot become an obstacle... But it follows from this that the contradiction between the two forms of property manifests itself as an obstacle to development not always but only at a certain stage...' 12

Thus the position of the peasant is still regarded as the most important question on the Soviet road to Communism. 'At a certain stage' the kolkhozniki may come to be regarded as 'an obstacle to further development'. On the other hand, the pressure from below, decollectivization in 'other socialist countries' and the economic

<sup>12</sup>Voprosy Filosofii, 1957, 4, p. 173.



revisionism there which advocates 'admitting the law of value into the socialist economy,' i.e., a wider use of the price-mechanism - all these factors pull the Soviet leadership in the opposite direction. The history of Soviet thought can be regarded either as a struggle of doctrine with reality, or as a process of its adjustment to reality. Both these factors play an important role in determining the outcome of political questions.

From the withering away of the state to the spiritual autonomy of the state, from the withering away of the law of value to its euphemistic readmission - these are only the more outstanding examples of the transformations of the dialectical road to Communism.

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### The Silence in Russian Culture

By I. Berlin  
Foreign Affairs  
 October 1957  
 pp. 11-18

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

The ideological policy of Stalin's regime is a fascinating topic, deserving separate study to itself, which no one has yet attempted seriously, and towards which I should like only to make one or two suggestions.

Once it had become clear to Stalin and his henchmen that an early world revolution was not to be expected, and that the doubtless inevitable fulfillment of Marxist prophecies in the capitalist world might take place at a time and in ways very different from those which the earlier, more optimistic founding fathers had prophesied, he concentrated upon three interconnected purposes. Firstly, the perpetuation of the Bolshevik regime, and in particular of those of its leaders who were prepared to accept his own authority. Secondly, the maintenance and increase of Soviet power, political, economic and military, in a hostile world, by every possible means short of those entailing a radical change in the Soviet system itself. And thirdly, the elimination of all factors, whether at home or abroad, likely to jeopardize either of these two central purposes, whether or not such elimination was consistent with Marxism, Socialism or any other ideological attitude.

Stalin has at times been compared to Napoleon. It is, on the whole, a fanciful and misleading comparison. Stalin did not suppress or pervert the Bolshevik Revolution as Napoleon "liquidated" the Jacobins. There never was a Thermidor (still less a Brumaire) in the Russian Revolution: neither in the mid-twenties (where Trotsky naturally placed it), nor after the assassination of Kirov, nor after the death of Stalin. But there is something also in this analogy that is illuminating. To ask whether Stalin was a faithful Marxist or even a faithful Leninist is like asking whether Napoleon believed in the ideals or ideas of the French Revolution. Napoleon was sufficiently a child of the Revolution to be instinctively opposed to everything connected with the pre-revolutionary regime, and to wish to come to terms with some of its survivals solely for limited periods and for reasons of expediency. Just as Napoleon took it for granted that the relics of feudalism in Europe were doomed beyond recall, that the dynastic principle was not worth respecting, that nationalism was a force that must be used, that centralization and uniformity were policies favorable to his rule and the

like, so it may be assumed that Stalin was Marxist and Leninist enough to believe that capitalism was inescapably doomed to be destroyed by its own "internal contradictions," although it might here and there engage in a desperate struggle for survival, whether it realized this or not and however useless such a struggle might be. Similarly Stalin probably accepted the tactical corollary that wherever such "contradictions" reached an acute stage, those who wished to survive and inherit the earth must seek to exacerbate these critical situations and not to palliate them; whereas in situations where these contradictions had not yet reached a critical point the path or prudence on the part of the members of the new society, i.e. the Communists, was not to promote premature risings but to bore from within and concentrate on Popular Fronts and Trojan horses of various kinds. It is clear that he genuinely believed that the future of human society was inevitably collectivist and not individualist; that the power of religion and the churches was collapsing; that control of economic power was more important (i.e. capable of effecting greater changes or stopping them) than, say, nationalist sentiment or political power; and in all these respects he was, of course, a true, if exceedingly crude follower of Marx. But if it be asked whether he was a Marxist in the sense in which Lenin undoubtedly was one--i.e. of believing that as the result of the dreadful birth pangs a new world would be born in which men would in some sense be freer than before, capable of developing their faculties on a vastly more productive scale, living in a world without wars, starvation and oppression, it seems doubtful whether he troubled himself with such questions any more than the Emperor Napoleon reflected about the ultimate validity of any of the ideals of the French Revolution. And, to his intellectual credit be it said, Stalin paid little enough regard--even by way of lip service--to the many utopian elements in Lenin's outlook.

It is, perhaps, a second point of similarity with Napoleon that Stalin firmly grasped a truth which perhaps Napoleon was the first among secular rulers fully to realize and act upon, namely that discussion of ideas--disputes about issues apparently remote from politics, such as metaphysics or logic or aesthetics--was, by promoting the critical spirit, in principle more dangerous to despotic regimes engaged in a struggle for power than belief in any form of authoritarianism. Napoleon's open hostility to the Ideologues--the empiricists and positivists of his day--is well known. He openly preferred the implacable legitimist and ultramontane Bonald, who abused him and would have no truck with him, to the politically mind and conformist liberal, Destutt de Tracy. Similarly Stalin, when he felt himself securely in power, decided to put an end to all ideological controversy as such in the Soviet Union. He did this by proclaiming one school to be victorious over all others (it does not historically matter which). The new directive was that the business of the intelligentsia--writers, artists, academics and so forth--was not to interpret, argue about, analyze, still less develop or apply in new spheres, the principles of Marxism, but to simplify them, adopt an agreed interpretation of their meaning and then repeat and ingeminate and hammer home in every available medium and on all possible occasions the selfsame set of approved truths. The new Stalinist values were similar to those proclaimed by Mussolini: loyalty, energy, obedience, discipline. Too much time had been wasted in controversy, time which could have been spent in promoting enforced industrialization or educating the new Soviet man. The very notion that there was an area of permissible disagreement about the interpretation of even unquestioned dogma created the possibility of insubordination; this, beginning indeed in spheres remote from the centers of power--say musical criticism or linguistics--might spread to more politically sensitive areas and so weaken the drive for economic and military power for which no sacrifice was too great or too immoral. The celebrated Marxist formula--the unity of theory and practice--was simplified to mean a set of quotations to justify officially enunciated policies. The methods taken to suppress the least symptom of independence on the part of even the most faithful Stalinist intellectuals (let alone so-called



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deviationists or unreconstructed relics of older dispensations)—and, let it be added, the success of these methods—are a phenomenon without parallel in the recorded history of human oppression.

The result has been a long blank page in the history of Russian culture. Between 1932 and, say, 1945 or indeed 1955, it would not be too much to say that—outside natural science—scarcely any idea of piece of critical writing of high intrinsic value was published in Russia, and hardly any work of art—scarcely anything genuinely interesting or important in itself and not merely as a symptom of the regime or of the methods practised by it, that is to say, as a piece of historical evidence.

This policy was, perhaps, chiefly due to Stalin's personal character. He was a half-literate member of an oppressed minority, filled with resentment against superior persons and intellectuals of all kinds, but particularly against those articulate and argumentative socialists who dialectical skill in the realm of theory must have humiliated him often both before the Revolution and after it, and of whom Trotsky was only the most arrogant and brilliant representative. Stalin's attitude towards ideas, intellectuals and intellectual freedom was a mixture of fear, cynical contempt and sadistic humor that took the form (a touch of Caligula) of discovering to what grotesque and degrading postures he could reduce both the Soviet and foreign members of his cowering congregation. After his death this policy has on occasion been defended by his heirs on the ground that when an old world is being destroyed and a new world brought into being, the makers and breakers cannot be expected to have time for the arts and letters, or even ideas, which must, at any rate for the moment, suffer what befalls them without protest.

It is interesting to ask how such absolute subservience, and for so long a period, could have been secured on the part of an intelligentsia which had after all not merely contributed the very term to the languages of Europe, but had itself played so prominent and decisive role in bringing about victory of the Revolution. Here was a body of persons the blood of whose martyrs had been the seed of the entire revolutionary movement, a body to which Lenin, far more than Marx, had assigned a leading role in the task of subverting the old order and of keeping the new one going; and yet, when it was crushed, not a mouse stirred: a few indignant voices abroad, but inside the Soviet Union silence and total submission. Mere intimidation, torture and murder should not have proved sufficient in a country which, we are always told, was not unused to just such methods and had nevertheless preserved a revolutionary underground alive for the better part of a century. It is here that one must acknowledge that Stalin achieved this by his own original contributions to the art of government—inventions that deserve the attention of every student of the history and practice of government.

The first invention has been called by Mr. Utis "the artificial dialectic."<sup>1</sup> It is well known that according to the systems of Hegel and of Marx events do not proceed in direct causal sequence but by means of a conflict of forces—of thesis and antithesis—ending in a collision between them, and a Pyrrhic victory in the course of which they eliminate each other and history takes "a leap" to a new level, where the process, called dialectical, begins once again. Whatever may be the validity of this theory in any other sphere, it has a very specific applicability to revolutionary situations.

<sup>1</sup>See "Stalin and the Art of Government," by O. Utis, Foreign Affairs, January 1952.

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As every student of the subject must know, the principal practical problem before those who have successfully brought off a large-scale revolution is how to prevent the resultant situation from collapsing into one of two opposed extremes. The first--let us, following Mr. Utis, call it Scylla--is reached when the zealots of the revolution, observing that the new world which the revolution was meant to create has somehow not yet come to pass, seek for explanations, culprits, scapegoats, blame it on criminal weakness or treachery on the part of this or that group of their agent or allies, declare the revolution in mortal peril and start a witch hunt which presently develops into a terror, in the course of which various groups of revolutionaries tend to eliminate each other successively, and social existence is in danger of losing the minimum degree of cohesion without which no society can continue to be. This process tends to be checked by some form of counter-revolution, which is brought on by a desperate effort on the part of the majority, whose security is threatened, to preserve itself and achieve stability, an instinctive social recoil from some imminent-looking collapse. This is what occurred during the great French Revolution, to some extent during the Commune of 1871, in some parts of Eastern Europe in 1918, and might have occurred in 1848 had the extreme left-wing parties begun to win. The mounting spiral of terror was, in fact, what Trotsky was suspected of wishing to promote.

The opposite extreme--Charybdis--is subsidence into a weary indifference. When the original impetus of the revolution begins after a time to ebb, and people seek a respite from the terrible tension of the unnatural life to which they have been exposed, they seek relief, comfort, normal forms of life; and the revolution slides by degrees into the ease, Schlamperei, moral squalor, financial chicanery and general corruption of the kind which marked, for example, the French Directoire; or else subsides into some conventional dictatorship or oligarchy, as has happened so often in Latin America and elsewhere. The problem for the makers of the revolution, therefore, is how to keep the revolution going without falling foul of either the Scylla of utopian fanaticism or the Charybdis of cynical opportunism.

Stalin should be credited with having discovered and applied a method which did, in fact, solve this particular problem in a certain sense. Theoretically, history or nature (as interpreted by Hegel or Marx) should, by pursuing its own dialectical process, cause these opposites to collide at the crucial stage, forcing reality to ascend a creative spiral instead of collapsing into one-sided forms of bankruptcy. But since history and nature evidently tend to nod, man must from time to time come to the aid of these impersonal agencies. The government, as soon as it sees signs of the fatal hankering after the flesh-pots of the older life, must tighten the reins, intensify its propaganda, exhort, frighten, terrorize, if need be make examples of as many conspicuous backsliders as may be required to stop the rout. Malingerers, comfort-lovers, doubters, heretics, other "negative elements" are eliminated. This is the "theses." The rest of the population, duly chastened, dominated by terror rather than hope or desire for gain or faith, throw themselves into the required labors, and the economy bounds forward for a while. But then the elite of the revolutionary purists, the fanatical terrorists, the simon-pure heart of the Party, who must be genuinely convinced of the sacred duty of cutting off the rotten branches of the body politic, inevitably go too far. If they did not, if they could stop in time, they would not have been the kind of people to perform the task of inquisition with the desperate zeal and ruthlessness required; hypocrites, half-believers, moderates, opportunists, men of cautious judgment or human feeling are of no use for this purpose, for they will, as Bakunin had warned long ago, compromise halfway. Then the moment arrives when the population, too terrorized to advance, or too starved, becomes listless, downs tools, and efficiency and productivity begin to drop off; this is the moment for clemency. The zealots



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are accused of having gone too far, they are accused of oppressing the people, and—always a popular move—they are in their turn publicly disciplined, that is, in Stalin's heyday, purged and executed. Some small increase of freedom is allowed in remote fields—say, that of literary criticism or poetry or archaeology, nothing so near the center of things as economics or politics. This is the "antithesis." The people breathe again, there is optimism, gratitude, talk of the wisdom of their rulers now that their eyes have been opened to the "excesses" of their unfaithful servants, hope of further liberties, a thaw; production leaps up, the government is praised for returning to some earlier, more tolerant ideal, and a relatively happier period ensues.

This once more leads to the inevitable relaxation of tension, slackening of discipline, lowering of productive effort. Once more there is (the new thesis) a call for a return to ideological purity, for the reestablishment of fundamental principles and loyalties, for the elimination of the parasitical saboteurs, self-seekers, drones, foreign agents, enemies of the people who have in some way managed to creep into the fold. There is a new purge, a new spurt of ideological fanaticism, a new crusade, and the heads of the counter-revolutionary hydra (the new antithesis) have to be cut off once again.

In this way the population is, as it were, kept perpetually on the run, its development proceeds by sigsag path, and individual self-preservation depends on a gift for perceiving at which precise moment the central authority is about to order a retreat or an advance, and a knack for swiftly adjusting oneself to the new direction. Here timing is all. A miscalculation, due to inertia or political insensitiveness or, worse still, political or moral conviction, causing one to linger too long on a road that has been condemned, must almost always, particularly if persisted in, mean disgrace or death.

It cannot be denied that by this deliberate policy of carefully timed purges and counter-purges of various intensities, of contraction and expansion, Stalin did manage to preserve in being a system that cannot be actively approved or felt to be natural by most of those concerned, and indeed to keep it going for a longer period than that for which any other revolution has, thus far, managed to survive. There is a full discussion of the method in the article by Mr. Utis already cited. Although, as the author there maintains, the method, to be successful, requires the master hand of its inventor, it appears to have survived him. Despite the grave shocks to the system caused by the struggle for power among Stalin's successors, the emergence into the open of conflicts and factions, the risings of oppressed peoples in the West totally unforeseen in Moscow, what Mr. Utis calls the "artificial dialectic" appears to be functioning still. The succession, in strict sequence, during the last five years, of "liberal" and repressive moves by the Soviet rulers, both at home and abroad, although no longer conducted with the virtuosity (or the deep personal sadism) of Stalin, has too much regularity of pattern to be unintended. The hypothesis advanced by the author to explain only Stalin's own methods of government seems to fit his successors.

The method is an original political invention, and Stalin deserves full credit for it. One of its deliberate by-products has been the total demoralization of what is still in the USSR called the intelligentsia—persons interested in art or in ideas. Under the worst moments of Tsarist oppression there did, after all, exist some areas of wholly free expression; moreover, one could always be silent. This was altered by Stalin. No areas were excluded from the Party's directives; and to refuse to say what had been ordered was insubordination and led to punishment. "Inner emigration" requires the possibility of the use of one's mind and means of expression at least in neutral ways. But if one's

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chances of sheer survival have been made dependent on continuous active support of principles or policies which may seem absurd or morally abhorrent; and if, moreover, the whole of one's mental capacity is taxed by the perpetual need to chart one's course in fatally dangerous waters, to manoeuvre from position to position, while one's moral fiber is tested by the need to bow one's head low not to one but to many capricious, unpredictably changing divinities, so that the least inattention, slackness or error costs one dear--then there is less and less possibility of thinking one's own thoughts, or of escaping into an inner citadel in which one can remain secretly heterodox and independent and know what one believes. Stalin went further. He forbade more than a minimum degree of official intercommunication between one academic faculty and another, between laboratory and institute, and successfully prevented the growth of any center of intellectual authority, however humble and obedient, however fraudulent and obscurantist. No priesthood of dialectical materialism had been allowed to arise, because no discussion of theoretical issues was permitted; the business of the Academy of Sciences or the Institute of Red Professors or the Marx-Engels Institute was to quote Marx in supporting Stalin's acts: the doctrine he, or some other member of the Politbureau (certainly not a professor), would supply for himself.

Where there is an official church or college of augurs, with its own privileges and mysteries, there is a relatively fenced-off area, with walls within which both orthodoxy and heresy can flourish. Stalin set himself to repress ideas as such--at a very high cost, be it added, not merely in terms of the basic education of Soviet citizens (not to speak of disinterested intellectual activity, "pure" research and so on), but even in the useful and applied sciences which were gravely handicapped by the lack of freedom of discussion and suffered an abnormally high admixture of adventurers, charlatans and professional informers. All this was effective in stifling every form of intellectual life to a far greater degree than was realized by even the most hostile and pessimistic observers in the West, or, for that matter, by Communist Parties outside the Soviet orbit. To have created such a system is a very striking achievement on Stalin's part, whose importance should not be underrated. For it has crushed the life out of what once was one of the most gifted and productive societies in the world. At any rate for the time being.



## SOCIAL PROGRESS ON THE BASIS OF SOCIALISM

Kommunist, No. 15, 1957

by P. Fedoseyev

Extract

Socialist production relations serve as a powerful motive force of production.

However, it would be wrong to consider that the present production relations are some kind of perfect economic form, complete in all respects and not subject to change. The dogmatic interpretation and wide-spread dissemination of the well known formula concerning the complete conformity between production relations and the nature of productive forces under socialism slowed down scientific research into the dialectics of the development of the socialist mode of production. After the publication in 1938 of the Short Course of History of the CPSU (b) in which this formula was put forward for the first time, the problem of the study of contradictions between production forces and productive relations under socialism was removed from our philosophical and economic literature. The magazines "Under the Banner of Marxism" and "Problems of Economics" then stated that recognition of the contradictions between productive forces and production relations under socialism is incompatible with the thesis of their complete conformity. Proceeding from this dogmatic interpretation of the formula concerning the conformity between production relations and the nature of productive forces in a socialist society, we social scientists began to deny the possibility of any contradictions between them.

But this means closing one's eyes to actual facts, to the fact that certain aspects of production relations become obsolete and begin to slow down the development of productive forces. For example, small cooperative farms which grew up in the conditions of feeble development of mechanization in agriculture became economically unprofitable in the main grain areas, when agricultural production obtained powerful modern technical equipment. If the party had not observed this contradiction in time and had not carried out the consolidation of the small collective farms, with the approval of the farmers, this would have delayed the development of productive forces in socialist agriculture. The strengthening of technical equipment also demanded the reconstruction of the management of agriculture, an increase in the role of the MTS and an improvement of the economic relations between the MTS and collective farms. The further growth of the country's productive forces, agricultural mechanization and electrification will lead to a position in which the collective farm-cooperative form of production will be insufficient. Already on many state farms the means of production and the labor force are utilized more effectively and with higher economic indices than on the collective farms.

Therefore it is impossible to be definite concerning the conformity between present production relations and the nature of productive forces. In 1952 in his work "The Economic Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union" Stalin explained that the words "complete conformity" cannot be understood in the absolute sense, i.e., as meaning that under socialism there exists no lagging of production relations behind the development of pro-

ductive forces. But he preserved the conception of "complete conformity" and extended it to certain periods of pre-socialist social formations, particularly to the epoch after the bourgeois revolution, although at that time the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation was making itself felt.

Materialist dialectics teach that any conformity is relatively fluid, because development always proceeds via contradiction - even the same phenomenon, in the course of its development, is not always the same, not always identical with itself. Still less can there be an absolute conformity between two interconnected but different aspects of a social process - for example, between economic development and political superstructure. The general conformity between two aspects or features in the development of phenomena includes both the difference and contradiction between them and therefore a certain discrepancy between them. "Complete conformity", Lenin states, "does not take place even in the simplest natural phenomena" (Works, Vol. 21, p. 135.) Lenin explained that such a conformity "in the sense of an absolute absence of contradiction" never takes place, it cannot exist in the development either of nature or of society." (Works, Volume 27, p. 312.)

Under socialism the conflict between the social character of production and the capitalist form of appropriation, which is peculiar to capitalist society, is liquidated and production relations are brought into the conformity with the nature of productive forces. But it would be wrong to think that at a certain stage of socialist development an absolute conformity is established between productive forces and production relations. Marxism-Leninism teaches, and Stalin explained this clearly, that under socialism, as in any other society, productive forces are more fluid than production relations. Therefore the contradictions between productive forces and production relations arise in socialist society too. Consequently the conformity between production relations and the nature of productive forces is not absolute under socialism, it is not variable, it is fluid and contradictory. Hence the obligation imposed on the leading organs of society constantly to perfect socialist production relations, to improve social-economic forms of production, to achieve the highest development of productive forces.

Contradictions in the development of the socialist mode of production do not amount to contradictions between the growth of technology and the existing forms of ownership. They may also appear and do appear in distribution and exchange relations. When the forms of distribution become obsolete, the principle of material interest is violated, and this begins to slow down the development of productive forces. The improvement of the system of wages for workers and employees and of the distribution of collective farm incomes should naturally be a subject of constant concern for our leading organs. It is well known what a large part was played in the development of agriculture by such party and government measures as the raising of the delivery and purchase prices for agricultural products, the introduction of monthly advances to collective farmers and other forms of stimulating the material interest



of workers. The experience of the Soviet Union and people's democracies shows that the discovery and solution of contradictions between individual aspects of social production relations and also between individual elements in the political superstructure and the growth of production forces is an essential condition for an accelerated rate of production. In this respect the recent reorganization of industry and building in our country is significant. The system of managing branches of the economy via the ministries, which played a positive role in economic construction at one time, had ceased to accord with the present immense scale of production and building; departmental barriers began to impede the further development of industry and fuller use of existing reserves and natural resources in the interests of society.

The establishment of the NECs and the abolition or reorganization of industrial and building ministries and departments meant a certain alteration in the structure of state organs, a change in some elements of the superstructure. But simultaneously there are certain changes in the basis, in economic relations and links. Of course, this is expressed not in some sort of fundamental change in the form of ownership, but primarily in the development of new forms of intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation in production and therefore of new forms of relations between enterprises and between economic regions, within the framework of all national state ownership. The reorganization of the administration of industry and building facilitated the complex development of the economy in these economic regions, it facilitated specialization and cooperation in production and improved conditions for the more effective use of available reserves.

Thus the contradictions in the development of the method of production under socialism are solved by the constant alteration and improvement of production relations, as a result of which these contradictions do not develop into a conflict because in a socialist society there are no classes to impede such an alteration in production relations in order to preserve private ownership of the means of production.