



Comrades! If we sharply criticize today the cult of the individual which was so widespread during Stalin's life and if we speak about the many negative phenomena generated by this cult which is alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, various persons may ask: How could it be? Stalin headed the Party and the country for 30 years and many victories were gained during his lifetime. Can we deny this? In my opinion, the question can be asked in this manner only by those who are blinded and hopelessly hypnotized by the cult of the individual, only by those who do not understand the essence of the revolution and of the Soviet state, only by those who do not understand, in a Leninist manner, the role of the Party and of the nation in the development of the Soviet society.

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Some comrades may ask us: Where were the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee? Why did they not assert themselves against the cult of the individual in time? And why is this being done only now?

First of all we have to consider the fact that the members of the Political Bureau viewed these matters in a different way at different times. Initially, many of them backed Stalin actively because Stalin was one of the strongest Marxists and his logic, his strength and his will greatly influenced the cadres and Party work.

It is known that Stalin, after Lenin's death, especially during the first years, actively fought for Leninism against the enemies of Leninist theory and against those who deviated. Beginning with Leninist theory, the Party, with its Central Committee at the head, started on a great scale the work of socialist industrialization of the country, agricultural collectivization and the cultural revolution. At that time Stalin gained great popularity, sympathy and support. The Party had to fight those who attempted to lead the country away from the correct Leninist path; it had to fight Trotskyites, Zinovievites and rightists, and the bourgeois nationalists. This fight was indispensable. Later, however, Stalin, abusing his power more and more, began to fight eminent Party and government leaders and to use terroristic methods against honest Soviet people.

The following excerpts represent Professor Tucker's efforts to explain the origins of Stalinism:

The Bolshevik Revolution in October, 1917, followed by the establishment of a one-party dictatorship and the nationalization of the Russian economy, nullified the previous sixty-five years of Russian history, during which, despite many setbacks, a trend of basic liberalization had been making itself felt. The Revolution

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thus created conditions for a reversion to that long period in Russian history that had been characterized by the ascendancy of the state over society, and by government through bureaucracy, with the Czar as head bureaucrat. Bolshevism set the stage for a rebirth of elements of the classical political system of Russian Czarism as it had existed before the great reforms of the mid-nineteenth century.

It was Stalin, however, not Lenin, who made himself the key instrument of this process and restored the institution of the autocracy in all but name. In the later years of Stalin's rule, Czar Ivan the Terrible, the supreme historical apostle of Russian absolutism, became the dictator's favorite figure among those whom he regarded as his forerunners. In 1947, Stalin called in a Soviet film producer and ordered him to make a film showing Ivan as a "great and wise ruler." He commented that, of all the leaders in Russian history, Ivan and Lenin were the only two who had introduced a state monopoly of foreign trade. This remark indicates the nature of Stalin's understanding of socialism. It did not seem to him an ideological error to look upon Ivan the Terrible as his great historical forerunner. He saw in Ivan a true socialist, a Stalinist of the sixteenth century. This is significant for an understanding of Soviet Russia's history in the Stalin period, and of the events that followed.

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This great bureaucratic structure of command and control did not come into being all at once; it evolved. The October Revolution and Lenin's Party dictatorship laid the foundation and paved the way. But the evolution itself took place under the direction and pre-eminent influence of Stalin. Without in any way relaxing the iron rule of the Party, Lenin, in 1921, announced the so-called New Economic Policy, or NEP, under which the state retained only the "commanding heights" of the economy, giving some scope for private enterprise and allowing 25 million private peasant farms to exist and contribute to economic revival. This is one reason why, in the Russia of the 1930's and 1940's, many looked back on Lenin and his era with a certain nostalgia.

Stalin, using the Party, of which he had gained control by about 1929, and the secret police, which he increasingly succeeded in wielding as a personal instrument, ended the NEP and then shaped, perfected, and vastly expanded the command and control structure. His aim was to effect in this manner the total state regimentation of society, creating in the totalitarian political structure a mechanism for unlimited exploitation of the human and natural resources of Russia with a view to amassing power in the hands of the Center. The industrialization, beginning with the First Five-Year Plan in 1928, and the terroristic collectivization of

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peasant farming in the succeeding four years were the twin policy programs on the basis of which he carried through the process of total state regimentation of society. This was the period of the emergence of a full-blown, as distinguished from a merely embryonic, totalitarian state system. The policy programs called for more and more coercion and controls, including domestic passports, massive regimentation of the labor force, more and more concentration camps, and police terror as an integral part of daily life. Expansion of controls and governmental functions called for more and more bureaucratic regulation; and this in turn further augmented the need for controls, including controls over the bureaucratic controllers, and so on in a vicious circle. Stalin, possibly with the image of Ivan the Terrible already in mind, christened the whole process the "building of socialism." Actually, it was the first great stage of Stalinization.

No sooner was the basic work accomplished (approximately in 1933) than Stalin turned his attention to the next and culminating step, which was to reconstitute the autocracy. This occupied five years, from 1934 to 1939. That period witnessed the virtual suppression of the Bolshevik Party, carried out by Stalin in the name of Lenin and Bolshevism.

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It is often maintained that Stalin was a necessary product of the "system." One objection to this argument is that it tends to regard the Soviet system as a static being, born whole and intact out of the October Revolution. In reality, there was a parallel and interactive evolution of the system and the autocracy. Thus, the Stalin phenomenon must be viewed as historical cause as well as historical effect. It is true that the pre-existing Party dictatorship provided a highly favorable political milieu for Stalin's drive to absolute power. The Russian national tradition of centralized bureaucratic rule and passive popular acceptance of it also helped to smooth the path for Stalin. However, these objective circumstances did not make the rise of the Stalin autocracy inevitable; at most they made it a possible or probable tendency.

What converted the tendency into a historical reality was not the nature of Russia or the nature of Bolshevism: It was the nature of Stalin. His personality was a factor of crucial importance in shaping the history of the Stalin period. Furthermore, once in existence, the autocracy became an autonomous historical force, reshaping its own political milieu, transforming the whole Soviet system into a mechanism for the projection of Stalin's power and personality. In this sense it may be said that the Stalinist political system was a product of Stalin. It is precisely the latter point that is overlooked, no doubt deliberately, by the Soviet view as voiced by Khrushchev in the secret

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report. That view treats the autocracy as a kind of regrettable excrescence on the otherwise healthy organism of the Soviet system, something that just grew and eventually caused all sorts of painful complications, now happily in the past. The elimination of the excrescence, it is held, restores the organism to its normal state of health. The official Soviet concept of de-Stalinization is founded on this tendency to minimize the meaning of Stalinization.

What general conclusion may be drawn concerning the historical inevitability of Russian Stalinism? Inevitability is a retrospective idea. That is to say, whatever happens in the world becomes inevitable in retrospect by virtue of the fact that it happened: Everything having been precisely as it was beforehand, the event in question resulted. Therefore, the meaningful question is not whether Stalinism was inevitable, for the fact that it "happened" makes it so in retrospect, but rather, What were the critical conditions of its inevitability? In particular, would the Leninist party dictatorship have been transformed into a Stalinist-type totalitarian autocracy, into something resembling Soviet fascism, if there had been no Stalin; if, say, J. Djughashvili had died in infancy? The answer to which the foregoing discussion points, and which the pages to follow will bring out more clearly, is: perhaps, but not necessarily. For the pathological personality of Stalin was a critically important factor in the outcome. It could be argued, with this in mind, that if Stalin had never existed, some other equally and similarly pathological personality would have certainly been there to capitalize on conditions and shape events in like fashion. But this position is impossible to substantiate. How a Soviet Russia minus Stalin would have developed from the 1920's to 1950's must remain, to some extent, an open question.

II. A second major thesis of Togliatti's testament is that the slowness of destalinization is "difficult to explain." In his words:

The problem which claims greater attention, one affecting as much the Soviet Union as the other socialist countries, however, is today, specially that of overcoming the regime of restrictions and suppression of democratic and personal freedom introduced by Stalin. Not all the socialist countries present the same picture. The general impression is that of a slowness and resistance in returning to the Leninist norms that ensured, within the party and outside of it, a wide liberty of expression and debate on culture, art and also on politics. This slowness and resistance is for us difficult to explain, above all in consideration of the present conditions when there is no longer capitalist encirclement and economic construction has had tremendous successes.

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Professor Tucker has devoted a great deal of thought to the limitations, thus far, of destalinization, and he finds the explanation somewhat less difficult than did Togliatti:

We have seen that the early phase of Stalinization brought society under the total command and control of the state, and that a later phase brought the state under the total command and control of Stalin, curtailing Party rule in the process. De-Stalinization has been conceived mainly in terms of the repudiation and partial rectification of the second phase. This, as suggested earlier, exposes the dilemma at the heart of post-Stalin politics; for, in actuality, the two phases were consecutive steps in a single organic process of historical development. Consequently, the repudiation of the latter inescapably poses in the mind of the public the question of repudiating also the earlier phase and its consequences, such as the kolkhoz. But the Soviet regime has striven, and will no doubt continue to strive, to separate phase two from phase one and hold on to the latter. In short, it will seek to preserve intact the underlying structure of command and control of Russian society, although not without significant readjustment.

The intention to separate the two phases of Stalinization shows through very clearly in the documents of the official de-Stalinization campaign, notably in Khrushchev's secret report and in the Party decree of June 30, 1956 (which was the version of the anti-Stalin line published for the Russian people). "It would be a gross error," states the decree, "to draw conclusions, from the existence of the cult of personality in the past, concerning some kind of changes in the social system of the U.S.S.R." This was published after word of the secret report had circulated through the country and it had become evident that elements of the intelligentsia were showing just such a tendency to "draw conclusions" about the need for changes in the social system, i.e., for the undoing of the first as well as the second phase of Stalinization,

It should not be thought, however, that any change had taken place meanwhile in the official concept of de-Stalinization. Even in the secret report, with its savage attack on Stalin, a line is clearly drawn between the two phases. Khrushchev in effect condemns Stalin for the second phase, for the whole sequence of events beginning in 1934 that has been described here as the suppression of the Bolshevik Party and the restoration of Russian autocracy. His condemnation focuses almost entirely upon this, and upon Stalin's later arbitrary uses of the despotic power so gained. So far as the first phase is concerned, Khrushchev flatly states in the secret report: "Here Stalin played a positive role." The direct reference of this laudatory note in the great philippic is to Stalin's political battle against the oppositional trends in the Party in the late 1920's and early 1930's, especially the Bukharinist opposition,

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with its notions of "cotton-dress industrialization" and co-operation with the peasantry. But, indirectly, this is an endorsement of the policies Stalin advocated in those battles, and hence of the whole first phase of Stalinization.

So intent is Khrushchev on establishing the point that he refrains from even a mild criticism of Stalinist coercive methods in collectivization and industrialization, although at the same time he amply documents the sadistic brutality of the methods Stalin used in dealing with the Party. There is no word, for example, of the dreadful human toll exacted by the terroristic collectivization of the Russian peasantry. In effect, Khrushchev suggests that Stalinist methods, intolerable when employed to break the Bolshevik Party, were acceptable when employed to break the Russian peasantry. His double standard of moral evaluation of Stalin is governed by the determination to preserve and perpetuate the basic institutional order that evolved out of the first phase of Stalinization.

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The post-Stalin regime has managed so far to enforce this rigid separation of phases in the process of de-Stalinization. But there are various signs -- including the admonition to the public not to "draw conclusions" concerning changes in the system -- that an unofficial concept of de-Stalinization more far-reaching in scope than the official one has been developing in Russia, especially since the Twentieth Party Congress. It does not operate under the same constraint of separating the two phases. It envisages changes in the control structure that the present regime would deny, such as the partial emancipation of artistic and literary work from official censorship and tutelage, freedom from the straitjacket of ideological conformity, the right of limited political dissent. It shades off at one extreme into a tendency not only to chafe at the limits of de-Stalinization, but also to question the Leninist legacy of dictatorship and one-party rule.

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Although de-Stalinization left the basic command and control structure intact, merely cutting off the superstructure of autocracy and making appropriate adjustments stemming from that, in practice the matter has not been so simple. For the basic structure itself is not simply a structure, but broadly includes its habitual mode of operation, its spirit, techniques, and conceptions of rule; and all this was formed over many years under the peculiar conditions of the superstructure's mode of operation and conceptions, down to and including Stalin's own nocturnal work schedule. Everything was geared to the requirements of total autocratic control of the situation throughout the Soviet world realm. Consequently, the elimination of the superstructure has posed many questions relating to

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reform of the workings of the basic structure and, especially on the economic side, to its partial reorganization. An important aspect of de-Stalinization on this plane has been decentralization, the diffusion of administrative authority, combined with the encouragement of discussion so long as it is thoroughly loyal, and the unbinding of bureaucratic initiative so long as it works in the interests of the regime. In the field of economic administration the reform movement has shown, at times, a tendency to take more account of objective conditions for rational operation of a modern industrialized and urbanized economy. In this connection, the underlying reorientation of concepts and methods of administration may be described as a transition from the direct and absolute centralized control that was so characteristic of Stalinism to indirect and manipulative forms of control. A good illustration of the latter would be the modified profit-incentive system of plant management suggested by the Kharkov economist Liberman in proposals published in September, 1962, for purposes of public discussion.

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At present time, however, ten years after Stalin's death, the limits of the official conception of reform have become abundantly clear. The reform idea with which it has been operating under the leadership of Khrushchev does not envisage the new period as one of a new "unbinding" of society. It sees the solution in terms of reorganizational schemes, the decentralization of the bureaucracy, the restoration of Party rule, the relaxation of police terror. It attacks the agrarian crisis by the cultivation of virgin lands and corn rather than by the abolition of the kolkhoz. More recently, Khrushchev has been emphasizing material things, adumbrating, as the new formula for "communism," the Soviets-plus-supermarkets. The regime, it would appear, looks to a rise in the material standard of consumption as a means of reconciling the Russian people to unfreedom in perpetuity.

But it is doubtful that a policy of reform operating within these narrow limits can repair the rupture between the state and society that is reflected in the revival of the image of a dual Russia. A moral renovation of the national life, a fundamental reordering of relations, a process of genuine "unbinding," or, in other words, an alteration in the nature of the system, would be needed. The state cannot resolve the situation satisfactorily so long as it clings to the positions won in its reconquest of the Russian land, just as it cannot work out firm relations with the peoples of Eastern Europe so long as it holds on to the structure and idea of empire. But of reforms on this major scale the present leadership appears to be, for various reasons, incapable. So it goes on attempting to square the circle, to make the system function well by merely tinkering with it rather than by fundamentally altering it. This is the dilemma of Russia today.

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