

4/29/40

Dear Max:

On the Russian front: LD continues to contradict himself and even more gloriously his stupid epigones. In the latest issues of the Opposition Bulletin #82-85, Feb.-March-April there appears an article, "STALIN AFTER THE FINNISH EXPERIENCE", (marked ~~xxx~~ "written for the British bourgeois press" but does not state which particular journal; that's a peculiarly novel N.B.; heretofore we would mention either for which paper it was written, or leave loophole notations off). After characterizing Stalin as provincial, narrow person sans ideas who first took the ideas of Lenin, then Zinoviev-Kamenev, then Bukharin, and now:

"In these conditions the only politician who could impress Stalin was Hitler. Ecce homo! Hitler has all the traits characteristic of Stalin: contempt for the masses, freedom from principles, ambitiousness, a totalitarian apparatus. And Hitler also possesses that which Stalin has not: imagination, ability to exult the masses, boldness. Under cover of Hitler Stalin tried to adapt the methods of Hitler in internal politics. First it seemed all went smoothly: Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. But in Finland he misadvised first, and not at all accidentally. The Finnish miscalculation opens up in the biography of Stalin in the chapter of his downfall. of Poland

"In the days of the invasion by the Red Army the Soviet press suddenly revealed the great ~~(strategic)~~ talents of Stalin ~~(A.A.V.)~~; supposedly ~~xxx~~ revealed back in the days of the civil war, and immediately proclaimed him a super-Napoleon. During the negotiations with the Baltic delegations this same press characterized him as the greatest of diplomats. It promised a series of wonders in the future, to be realized without shedding of blood, merely with the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ power of the combination (strategy) of a genius. But it did not happen thus... Thus started the shameful war - needlessly, without a clear perspective, without material preparations or uplifting of the morale, at a moment when it seemed that even the calendar warned against the adventure.

to go to the front  
"Remarkably characteristic: Stalin did not even think, according to the example of his inspirer Hitler. The Kremlin is extremely careful not to ~~xxx~~ stake his false reputation as a strategist. Moreover, face to face with the masses he has nothing to say. It is impossible even to imagine this gray figure, with the immobile face, with yellowish squirrel-like eyes, with weak and inexpressive natural voice face to face with masses of soldiers either in the trenches or on the march. The super-Napoleon cautiously remained in the Kremlin, surrounded by telephones and secretaries.

"During 2 1/2 months the Red Army experienced nothing but defeats, sufferings and humiliation; nothing was foreseen, not even the climate. The 2nd attack was developed more slowly but cost many sacrifices. The absence of the promised "lightning" victory over a weak opponent was in itself a defeat. To justify at least partially the mistakes, failures and losses, at to ~~xxx~~ ~~xxx~~ at least retrospectively the masses of the U. R. to the rash invasion in Finland was possible only one way, namely, by winning the sympathy of at least part of the Finnish peasants and workers through the path of social revolution. Stalin understood this and openly declared ~~xxx~~ the overthrow of the ~~xxx~~ bourgeois his aim; for this

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he brought from the chancellery of the Kremlin the ill-starred Kuusinen. But Stalin got frightened of intervention by England and France, of the dissatisfaction of Hitler, - and retreated. The tragical adventure ended with a bastard peace: in form "dictatorial", in essence, a rotten compromise.

"With the help of the Soviet-Finnish war, Hitler compromised Stalin and bound him tighter to his chariot. With the help of the peace treaty, he assured himself the future delivery of Scandinavian raw materials. The USSR received, it is true, on the north-western strategic advantages, but at what price? The prestige of the Red Army is undermined. The confidence of the toiling masses and oppressed peoples of the whole world is lost. Stalin personally came out of the whole affair fully beaten. The general feeling in the country is undoubtedly as follows: it was not necessary to start this unworthy war; and once it was begun, it was necessary to bring it to a conclusion, i.e., to the sovietization of Finland. Stalin promised this but did not execute it. That means he foresaw nothing: neither the resistance of the Finns, nor the frosts, nor the dangers from the Allies. Along with the role of diplomat and strategist he suffered a defeat as the "leader of world socialism" and "liberator of the Finnish people." The authority of the dictator suffered an irreparable blow.....

"It is true, Stalin can temporarily receive help from the outside: but for this it would have been necessary that the Allies launch a war against the USSR. Such a war would have played before the people of the USSR the question of the fate, not of the Stalinist dictatorship, but the fate of the country. Defense from foreign intervention would have inevitably strengthened the position of the bureaucracy. In a defensive war the Red Army would have undoubtedly conducted itself more successfully than in an aggressive war. In ~~active~~ self-defense the Kremlin would have even been capable of revolutionary measures. But even in such a case it would have been a ~~question~~ matter only of postponement (deferment). The insolvency of the Stalinist dictatorship has clearly become exposed in the past 15 weeks. One should not think that the people, suppressed by the totalitarian hoop, have lost the ability to observe and judge. They draw their conclusions slowly but all the surer and more profoundly. The apogee of Stalin is behind. Ahead there are not a few difficult tests. Now, when the whole planet is beaten out of its balance, Stalin will be incapable of saving the unstable equilibrium of the totalitarian bureaucracy."

March 13, 1940.

(The translation is not smooth; but it is literal)

I have meant to see you also on other matters as I mean to quit work and leave town, but there is time yet to discuss that though I already have plans; when I get ~~the chance~~ a few free moments I'll drop in to see your high self,

Comradely,

Ral

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