

Eastern Europe, cont'd

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Preliminary remarks

... Now, before I begin, I must tell you, since I keep you up to date with the inner convolutions of my fragile mind [*laughter*], and that is that I am really tired. I mean, the insomnia is getting to a point where it's getting really ridiculous — I was reading Plutarch at 5:30 this morning [*laughter*]. If Plutarch on the tenth reading doesn't put you to sleep, nothing does. So this is not going to be our finest collective hour, but let's pick up the pieces here and there.

Lecture

It's the 5th of March of 1953, and Stalin dies. And with the death of Stalin, quite obviously, the structure of the dictatorship of the Soviet Union would not die with him. But the form that dictatorship took would certainly change. Because you move from a personal dictator, from the one man Stalin, who had the bureaucracy and the power in his hand, and you move, then, in the Soviet Union, to what is called "collective leadership." Or, in the immediate aftermath of Stalin, specifically, that collective leadership of three of those great apparatchiks, three of those great upper bureaucrats of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, [Nikita] Khrushchev and [Georgy] Malenkov and [Vyacheslav] Molotov. They became the so-called Troika that take power into their hands.

And, of course, there will be changes because as soon as this Troika took power there already was some kind of an effort to make certain kinds of selective, conscious moves that are the very first moves down the path of what we ultimately will call de-Stalinization. And you understand what that is about and why that happened. Why should it be that, in the aftermath of Stalin, immediately, those who are born and raised in his image, as it were, in the Soviet bureaucracy, insist that they must make moves that begin to curb some of the excesses of Stalin? Well, the reason is obvious. And that is that those last years of Stalin were really quite awful for the Soviet public. And what these people, who were upper bureaucrats, tried to do was to begin to lift away that veil of intimidation and fear that had fallen over the Soviet people. and they tried to put a certain amount of curb upon the Soviet police apparatus. And they tried to change some of those policies in the economy that had led, really, to such disasters.

And if you read, for example, in that rather incredible book of Roy Medvedev on Stalin, you find something about what those very last years were like in terms of the kinds of arbitrary policies that were imposed upon the Soviet people and the kind of terror, really, under which they lived. And so we read in Medvedev's book [*Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*] on the question of how Stalin decided on industrial policy in those last years:

"Stalin's Olympian isolation, his ignorance of conditions in the country, reached the point where he almost always caused a great deal of trouble when he intervened. The 'great Stalinist plan for the transformation of nature,' the erection of tall buildings in Moscow, the beginnings of the Turkmen Canal, the dozens of ostentatious and expensive pavilions at the Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow — these are a few examples of Stalin's blunders. They were intended to be grandiose monuments of his epoch, though they were utterly at variance with the needs of the time. In 1949, to take another spectacular example, Stalin ordered the [Salekhard-]Igarka railway line, which was supposed to duplicate on land the Great Northern sea route. Over hundreds of kilometers through northern wasteland, rails were laid and settlements for railway workers were built along with stations and bridges. And then, when billions of rubles had been spent, the whole construction was stopped 'because the railway was unnecessary.'"

And then Medvedev, in his conclusion, talks about what it was like in those very last years. And then you understand why one like Khrushchev or one like Malenkov or one like Molotov, who really were in the shadow of this man, felt that they had to begin to lift this veil:

"Decrepitude marked the last years of Stalin's life, following his seventieth birthday in 1949. The old despot became more and more suspicious. Few were allowed to know where he would be at any given moment, in the Kremlin or in one of his dachas. The woods surrounding the dachas were filled with traps and mines. The corps of guards, under his direct command, grew larger. Everyone who was summoned to a reception was carefully searched. None of them, even a Politburo member, ever knew how such a reception would end: with his arrest or with his return home.

"And for the most part Stalin lived in complete isolation, both in his Kremlin apartment and in his dachas. Isolation gave rise to strange habits. He began, for example, to cut pictures out of magazines and newspapers and make them into montages that he stuck on the wall of his rooms and office. To argue with Stalin, to dispute his opinions, was equivalent to suicide. One could only agree with him, since it was known a priori that Stalin never made wrong decisions. Officials called in to play chess with him were warned not to win.

"In these years, Stalin even became suspicious of such devoted aides as Molotov, [Lazar] Kaganovich, [Kliment] Voroshilov. Molotov's wife was arrested in exile... Kaganovich's brother was driven to suicide. More and more these chief aides were excluded from important decision making."

So you understand why the changes came. But the real question, you see, is what is de-Stalinization? The real question is whether you have simply a curbing of the excesses of Stalin, or whether, fundamentally, you bring the entire structure of bureaucratic centralism into question — in other words, whether you are simply trying to stabilize the system? Or to put it in other words, whether you are moving power from the hands of a given dictator into the bureaucracy, or whether in fact you are going to devolve that power to those from whom it has been alienated, namely to the mass? Or to put it in other terms, whether you are just going to loosen the reins over control over Eastern European countries, or whether you are going to destroy those reins and tell those countries that they are on their own to develop as they will? Or to put it yet in other terms, whether polycentrism, whether the many roads to socialism was to be a reality — in which peoples could, by their own will and by their own perception of their problems, construct what they consider to be a viable structure of socialism — or whether polycentrism simply was to mean combinations and permutations of the Soviet model, variations but no real departures or no real change? That was the question.

And the Troika began in the obvious place. The 10th of July of 1953, there was in the *Pravda* an announcement that the chief of the secret police, the one who was so hated in those years, called [Lavrentiy] Beria — the one who, after all, was to concoct all of those secret trials in the Soviet Union and all of those public trials in the East European countries — that this communiqué in *Pravda* of the 10th of July, of very high crimes against the Party and the state. And he was stripped of all of his political offices, and he was placed under arrest. And then, on the 10th of December 1953, Beria was executed. And consequently, you began to put a certain rein on the police apparatus which has been so autonomous and so ubiquitous.

And in that same month of July of 1953, there was called together by the Troika a secret meeting of the Cominform. So the leaders of the various socialist states of Eastern Europe were called together. And there the Troika told them a little bit of what the truth was and what they had to do — told them, after all, that they had to, after all, that there had been abuses of the "cult of personality" under Stalin and that, consequently, they had to diffuse power a little bit through "collective leadership." And so they were telling all of the little Stalins, if you please, in Eastern Europe — they were telling [Walter] Ulbricht, they were telling [Bolesław] Bierut in Poland, they were telling [Antonín] Novotný in Czechoslovakia — that no longer could they concentrate all power in their hands, but they had to begin to diffuse it a little bit. And said, in the second

place, that there had been very many abuses in the economic development of the Soviet Union and of the satellite countries, and that they had to begin to embark on a new course; that they could not drive their people so hard. This they told the Cominform when it met here at the end of July of 1953.

And you see what the problem is. If you tell these little Stalins in Eastern Europe, if you say that you must embark on a new course and you must diffuse power, the question is whether you can control that movement — whether you can limit that movement, is it possible simply to move from one man rule to the collective rule of the bureaucrats? Is it possible simply to say we will have some little revision in our economic policy or, if you please, do you open a pandora's box? Do you let out all of the grievances? Do you reveal all of the contradictions in society because you have said, already, that things are not perfect and that some things ought to be revised? And this really is so fundamental in Eastern Europe. Because, you see, in those East European countries, where the Communist regimes had roots that were shallow, where the roots were not nearly so deep as they were in the Soviet Union, in those particular countries, you have two profound kinds of contradictions: you have a structural contradiction and a programmatic contradiction. And those two contradictions, after all, mean that the grievances run very deep among the people of those particular societies.

And when I talk about a structural contradiction in those Eastern countries, what I mean is that you have imposed the Soviet model of socialism upon those countries: that you imposed, exactly, the forms of alienation that have existed in the Soviet system. I mean the political alienation, to begin with, that power is exercised by the Party, and within the Party, power is exercised by a privileged stratum of bureaucrats. And consequently, power is alienated from the people who have no say. But it is something even more profound than that, and something that is at the very heart of the question of whether real revision of a socialist society in those areas. And that is that there is alienation by the workers of their own labor. And, if you please, think of what that means: that the whole *raison d'être* of socialism, after all, is to give to those who produce what they do produce; is to end precisely that alienation of work labor which is the characteristic of capitalism — that a worker, after all, produces and he gives off in surplus value or in profit to the capitalist.

What is it possibly that I am saying, when I say that you superimpose upon these East European countries a form of alienation that was built into the Soviet model, namely, the alienation of work labor? Well, look. Soviet economists themselves, as of 1956 and 1957, in the period after the 20th Congress report of Khrushchev, admitted, in fact, that Soviet workers and workers in Communist societies did not get the whole product of what they produced — that they did suffer alienated labor. That their labor was divided, as Marxists say, into two parts: into that part which

was necessary for their own reproduction, in other words, the wage which enabled them to survive; and, then, surplus value and that they did not get but that went to someplace else, exactly as under capitalism. The justification for that being, in a socialist society, that that surplus value that the workers produced then went to the state. And the state, after all, made a fund out of that — a fund for investment, a fund for the social services, and, consequently, it was for the usefulness of the community.

But one must examine that, after all, in its detail. Essentially, what that means is that that surplus labor goes to the Gosplan, in this kind of structure. The Gosplan is the central planning agency of the Soviet Union, and it has its analogues in each of the East European countries. And that Gosplan takes this investment fund, does it not — it takes the surplus value that is produced by these workers under socialism. And there the Gosplan, a highly centralized planning agency, decides everything. It decides, after all, what products each enterprise will produce and how it will produce them. It decides how many workers there will be in each enterprise and how much those workers will be paid. It decides where those products will go, whether they go into shops or whether they go into other factories. And the wages that the workers get, there's no relationship to the quantity or quality of their work. They are given wages in accordance with the allocation of the work force. So, they are given more in those places where the planners want the workers to go and less in other places where they want to try to restrict production. And you see what all of this means: that the Soviet worker or the worker in the East European society has no control over the product that he produces, has no control over what the uses of it will be, has no control over the condition of his work and, certainly, no control over his wage — does not even have a striking union in which he can, after all, manifest a desire for more.

And so, the question: Is that exploitation? Is that exploitation in the terms in which we use it in capitalist society? And I recommend to your attention the brilliant work on this subject by Pierre Naville — one of the seminal works, after all, on the inner structure of Communist societies — a work called *Le salaire socialiste*, on socialist wages. And it is the contention of Naville, and extremely well argued, that in fact this is exploitation — that when that wage is taken, or that surplus value is taken, from the worker in the Soviet Union or in the East European country — it is inefficient and insufficient to say that it is simply turned over to an investment fund. Under capitalism, we say it is wrenched by the private owners of the means of production. In the socialist societies as they developed in Eastern Europe, as Naville points out to us, it is taken by a stratum of the bureaucracy. Now, you might say that that bureaucracy does not own the means of production, but it does plan how that production will go on, it does set the wage; it does live at very much higher standards of living and very much higher wages. Naville's final contention is that if this is not juridically the ownership of the means of production, effectively it is. And what the workers are doing is working for these bureaucrats. And this is a contradiction, after all,

which if you begin to raise the whole question of the system, begins to seep out in one form or another.

And we talk about the programmatic contradiction. And with that I mean the program of economic development that was imposed in the late years of Stalin upon these East European countries. What you mean is the very rapid industrialization. What you mean is the collectivization of agriculture — because, you see, unlike the imperialism of the West in underdeveloped areas, the idea of Stalin the Soviet leadership was not to keep these East European countries in backward, raw-material producing conditions. What the Stalinists wanted to do was to create an industrial infrastructure, in Eastern Europe, in order to build up the industrial potential and strength of the Soviet Union in a period when it was confronting the Cold War, when it was confronting the tremendous industrial potentiality of the United States. And so there was the push, from 1949 on, for all of these East European countries, really to distort their planning by very rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture; the industrialization, if you please, without any sense of correlation between raw material and final production, between agriculture and industry, between heavy industry and light industry, between heavy industry and light industry, between consumer goods and producer goods. So that what you get are messes, industrially, in those countries; what you get, really, are plans for industrial development that do not really have at their base either skilled labor or raw material or even enough basic machinery in order to carry those plans through.

And it's even worse in agriculture. You had to collectivize agriculture, it was said, in order to release workers from the land and push them into the cities, and also in order to raise enough food so that they could feed the industrial structure that you were building in these countries. And you see what the problem is: after all, that you have divided the land, in 1945 to 1947, and you have divided the land, in 1945 to 1947, and you have given millions of peasant families a taste of the land. And it is inefficient. And it isn't a good structure. And you have minuscule land holding. And in a country like Poland, you average no more than five hectare per holding. And it's inefficient. And ultimately it really ought to go toward collectivization — but, you see, in due time: slowly, and with training, and with education. But, no, no. From 1949 on, from the time that the Cominform attacked Tito and said that he was coddling the kulaks, the idea was that he was coddling the kulaks, the idea was that these East European countries had to make war in the countryside. And it was war between the peasantry and these Communist parties. The peasants had to give up their plots and go into these inefficient collectives for which there was not even adequate farm machinery.

Oh, oh... so much that may seep out, you see, once you begin saying that Stalin made mistakes. And so the question is: Can you keep the lid on? Can they keep the lid on? And that is the

question of our lives; it is the question everywhere. Once people begin to know, how then can you contain the consequences of what they know?

And so we take the year 1953, and we see a little bit about what the problems of these de-Stalinizers in the Kremlin really were. Take the case of East Germany, of the Democratic Republic of Germany, which is established in East Berlin and in the old Russian zone of a divided Germany. And in that East Germany in the summer of 1952, it is the Communist chief Walter Ulbricht who decides, after all, that there must be a very, very rapid program of Bolshevization in East Germany — in other words, that there must be rapid industrialization, rapid collectivization of the land. You must eliminate the artisans; you must eliminate small shop keepers. What Herr Ulbricht said is that East Germany will become a kind of perfect Bolshevik model. And so they begin doing that, and you know that when they began to collectivize that land in 1952, in the Democratic Republic, those German farmers went off the land, and they begin to flee into the West. And they went off into West Berlin. And they left, many of them, or they sabotaged the land. And by the time you get into 1953, there are very serious shortages in East Germany. There are shortages of foodstuffs, shortages of meat, shortages of potatoes, and there is the beginning of grumbling. And so Ulbricht goes to his Kremlin friends, and he asks in April of 1953 for some kind of significant help from the Soviet Union in order to get over the hump, so he can satisfy his people and give them enough to eat while there is this tremendous transformation. And suddenly, even though he is a good apparatchik, and he has always been a very, very good Communist, Ulbricht hears what he had never heard before: the Kremlin people say no, they will not give him help.

And behind that there's a story. And it is, in part, that there are rivals to Ulbricht in the Central Committee of the German Communist Party. There are those who say that he is going too far. But that's not really the full story. The story is that, in the Kremlin, you see, they are playing an old game. It makes no difference that Stalin is no longer there. And the game they are playing is that maybe East Germany really is expendable for the sake of international *détente*, because already there is the thought that West Germany may be militarized. It may go into the Atlantic alliance, into NATO; it may, after all, be a kind of a dagger at the very heart of the Soviet Union. And the way in which that might be avoided is to have a Big Four power parley on Germany in which you finally unify the two Germanies. And if you unify and you bring this more radical east into the unification then, quite obviously, it will be a neutralist Germany, and it will not go into one bloc or the other. But if you are to have that four-power parley and if you are to unify Germany then you must scrap your socialism in eastern Germany because you must have a continuity or coherence of institutions. You can't have collectivized land in one part and private land in the other. And, consequently, that structure of socialism is expendable.

And there is Churchill on the 11th of May 1953 picking up the bait, and saying in a speech in the House of Commons, "Yes, yes: let's have a four-power parley on Germany, and we will not rearm Germany if we can get an agreement on integration of the two Germanies." And the leadership in the Kremlin is seeing that, and they say to Ulbricht, "No, no. We're not helping go ahead with this."

And for the one time in his life — a bit exhilarating, if you stop to think about it — for the one time in his life, Ulbricht simply defies the Russians. And he says, "I mean, the implications of what I understand are that, if there is this integration of Germany, I have no place left anyway." And, consequently, he goes on. And he refuses, after all, to give up this idea, and he makes the worst possible decision. The 28th of May of 1953, he pushes through the Central Committee the rule on so-called "10% increase in norms": in other words, the way in which to push this new Bolshevization of Eastern Germany is to intensify labor, to increase the workday, to get 10% more productivity out of the workers. And that 10% increase is then pushed through on the 28th of May of 1953, and there is really the beginning of labor disturbance.

And so the Russians send an emissary: [Vladimir] Semyonov, who is the high commissioner of Russia in East Berlin. And Semyonov brings, on the 11th of June of 1953, a message to Ulbricht. And what the message is, really, is a self-criticism" and Ulbricht is supposed to sign it. And it is to be published, then, in the Party newspaper. And Ulbricht does this. And consequently, the 12th of June of 1953, is published the following in the *Neues Deutschland*, in the Party newspaper, in which there is a promise to: "Correct the faults committed in the various sectors of our society by our government and administration and to improve the standard of living of our workers, intellectual workers, peasants, artisans and other strata of the middle class." In other words, Ulbricht is required by the Russians now to say that there's going to be a certain new course or a certain kind of relaxation. And in the wake of that there are a few concessions made: that the children of the bourgeoisie can go to the university, which they were excluded from doing; that the peasantry will not have to give up so much in compulsory requisitions now to the state, and so forth. But the 28th of May rule, for the workers, stays on the books.

And so it is that, on the 16th of June of 1953, the contradiction in that German society breaks out in a strike. And it begins in East Berlin. And the workers go off their jobs and by mid-afternoon there are literally thousands in the streets of Berlin, in this tightly controlled and organized Communist society, and they are demanding changes in their work condition. And by that evening, Ulbricht and the Central Committee see that it is dangerous, and so they revoke the 28th of May order on the 10% increase in productivity. But it is not sufficient at that point. Because, by the end of the 16th of June, already it is no longer that edict, but it is a whole range of demands. It is cheaper food; it is the resignation of the government; it is free elections by secret

ballot. And it all begins to echo the kinds of demands that were heard at Kronstadt in 1921.

And the 17th of June is a classic day in that history. Because, from the working-class districts on the outskirts of Berlin, the workers poured toward the center of the city. And they began to attack government buildings. And at that particular point, of course, the Russians sent armed force in. And they sent two armored divisions into the city of Berlin. They made certain arrests and certain summary executions. And, by the night of the 17th of June, order reigned in Berlin. But that strike spread to Leipzig, that great city of Leipzig, where on the 18th of June 1953 the workers gathered around the city and tore all the pictures of the great Communist chieftains off the buildings — with the exception of the picture of Karl Marx, which was left up everywhere. And they began to shout their particular slogans. And in one of those remarkable brochures that comes out of Leipzig that day, we read, "We are Communists, and so we want to be free men and not slaves." And so it isn't against communism, but it is in that tradition, after all, of Kronstadt.

And then it spreads to Halle, and it spreads to Dresden, and it spreads through East Germany until the Soviet military force subdues it. And then you see what you do. And Ulbricht, you see, lucked out. Because he could, then, say that at this point it would be a disaster if the Soviet Union withdrew support from him. It would be a disaster if the state showed any weakness. And so he was defended.

And the Soviet Union supported him. And he remained in power because, you see, if you remove Ulbricht or if you conceded too much the example was dangerous. Note that well, because that is repeated over and over again. Why in hell, after all, do the Russians roll tanks into Prague in August of 1968, at the time of the Prague uprising? Not because a bunch of intellectuals were shrieking their heads off; the Russians could care less. It's like Stalin talking about the pope and asking how many divisions he has. And, consequently, with intellectuals, it doesn't make any difference. But, you see, when the Czech workers began to organize those workers councils in the factories, then they began to show a model. Well, here, you see, are German workers demanding their kind of *autogestion*, their kind of freedom, their kind of work councils. And, consequently, you must defend the central administration.

You see the point. The point is that you can go so far and no further. You go to the point where the de-Stalinization is in the charge of the people who are suggesting it and not really in a dialogue with those who are proposing the problems from below. And that is even more clearly illustrated in the case of Hungary in 1953, which is a case that you really must remember. Because Hungary in '56, three years later, becomes the great case of what may be possible within this particular world. And, you see, Hungary is such a tragedy. Because if there is any country in

Europe that deserved to have a revolution, it was Hungary. It was overdue. And what they did between 1945 and 1947 wasn't sensational, but it was damn good. And it was a good thing that that old structure was gone. But then, you see, comes the Stalinization period, the period when the whole revolution hardened and gets much too rapid. And then you begin to get hatreds built up. And then, if there is to be revision, the consequence is going to be powerful. And the question is going to be how far, really, can one go.

You see, this is the problem of Hungary. What happened was that the Communists who came back to Hungary in 1945 — I'm talking about the chieftains now, led by [Mátyás] Rákosi — and Rákosi, of course, the great figure in this particular story, from the point of view of his power and his central position. And Rákosi and people like [István] Bata, the ones that came back from Moscow, were really very hardened, very embittered kinds of Communists. Rákosi had spent sixteen years in Horthy prisons. Well, you know fascist prisons are not such a good place to really become benevolent in your nature. And consequently, Rákosi was a baldheaded, bullheaded man — he was a monster. And he really was sadistic. And consequently, he comes back, and he heads up the Communist movement. And he plays it a little bit under wraps in that period between '45 and '47. And he lets a few of the so-called national Communists into the top structure. People like János Kádár, for example, or like [László] Rajk who goes to trial later. But then, when the turn comes with the anti-Tito movement, when the trial of Rajk comes, then all of these national Communists are eliminated and you get, really, a very, very pernicious and harsh police. You get the AVO [*here Goldberg means the ÁVH*], which is the Hungarian secret police under a pretty monstrous chief of police (or chief of the secret police), a man named Gábor Péter — and so bad that even Rákosi can't take him, and dismisses him in January of 1953. And the police are ubiquitous. They're in the schools; they're in the administration; they run these labor camps; they run internment camps. And it is that kind of society.

And what is worst of all is that you have this utterly planned society which turns out to be chaotic. Now, somebody who makes the most pungent criticism of the whole problem is, of course, Imre Nagy. And that's a name you must remember because it comes up so often and becomes the key name in 1956. And with Nagy you get somebody who writes a memoir to the Central Committee in 1955, in which he defines pretty well what the economic disaster of the country was in that period after 1949 with all this planning. He points out, for example, that there is so much industrialization planned in Hungary — that doesn't have proper natural resources — that so much export has to be made in order to get just basic raw materials. And you can't make exports because Hungary's prices are too high in the world market for almost anything. And Nagy goes on in this memoir of 1955 to say this:

"The conditions in which industrialization, and in particular the development of many

industries, took place — that is, the absence of all scientific analysis or any calculation about usefulness — aggravated the situation. Great investment was poured into the expansion of our productive capacity, but our technology remained backward. Our machine tools were more than twenty years old. Our textile machines were fifty years old. And yet in 1951-52, in spite of the grim realities of our daily life, in spite of the profound discouragement in the country, the government painted the success of the economic plan in bright colors."

Meantime, purchasing power was lower in 1953 than it had been in 1949. And Nagy goes on to point out some of the atrocities of the Russian nexus in trade — that the Russians fixed terms of trade favorable to them — points out that the worst disaster area is in agriculture because you are supposed to collectivize and you don't even have the proper materials, the proper machinery or fertilizer in order to run big collective farms.

Now, the Russians, in that period after the death of Stalin, look at Hungary, and they decide that it's a target area. It really has to do something. It's in very bad shape, and the people are really restless. Consequently, in May of 1953, Rákosi is called up to Moscow, and they say to him, "Now, look Rákosi, you have all these powers in your hand. You are the First Secretary of the Party; you are also the prime minister; you must get rid of some of your jobs. You must distribute the jobs around a bit. And furthermore, you must begin to set Hungary off on a somewhat more lenient course. You must not put her through this terrible iron discipline." Well, Rákosi goes back then to Hungary as though he hadn't heard. And he goes back; he does nothing about giving up his post. What he does is to introduce the second five-year plan, which has even more grandiose goals than the first five-year plan, and which will really put Hungary in the nether lands. And, consequently, there is nothing imposed upon Rákosi that is good.

Then comes the explosion in Germany. And at this point the Kremlin people are uptight. And so they call the Hungarians back en masse: they call Rákosi, they call [Ernő] Gerő, they call Mihály Farkas, all of those tough Muscovites who were in the leadership. But they also call Imre Nagy. Now, I must tell you something about Imre Nagy, because he's very different than these others. Now, I'm not going to make a great hero out of Nagy, even though he dies for a certain kind of liberalization. And I'm not going to say that he's a loyal Party guy. The point about Nagy — who, incidentally, at least, doesn't look like Rákosi: I mean he doesn't look as though he's going to put you in prison; he's a very mild little man; he looks like a notary and has a little moustache and so forth — but the interesting thing about Nagy is that he comes from the land. Here are all these other Communists. They are the sons of petty bourgeois intellectuals or, if they're like [György] Lukács, they're the sons of great bourgeois. And here is Nagy who really comes from the village, and he understands the land. And when he himself, after all, has become a Communist, it was

when he was a prisoner of war up in Russia, in the First World War, and he saw what the Bolsheviks did in terms of giving land to the peasants. And that made him a Red.

And all of his life, he was always concerned that he was called a right-winger for this, but he wasn't a right-winger; that's not the proper appellation. That's not the point. The point is that, all of his life, he felt that you could not impose a system — in other words, that you had to go easily with it. You had to go slowly; you had to have an interaction between the people who were going to be communized or socialized and their experience, their own sensitivity, really, to what the problem was. And that was true with the peasantry, it was true with the intellectuals. And, consequently, in 1949 he opposed the forced collectivization of the land. And he was dismissed from the Central Committee for that. He became a professor of economics in the University of Budapest. And he built up quite a clientele among professors and students and, consequently, became sort of a hero of a certain kind. And Nagy is invited with this group going to Moscow.

Now, when this delegation — after the German affair, mind you — gets up there into Moscow, [Anastas] Mikoyan, who is no easy guy himself — sort of a tough, Mikoyan could be — but Mikoyan nonetheless reads out what he considers his evaluation of the Rákosi regime, and he says: "The excessive development, for example, of steel testifies to sheer adventurism in Hungary. Hungary has neither iron nor coal — then why steel? Or, better yet, how steel?" And, consequently, what they are required to do, these Hungarians, is going back to Budapest and hold a Central Committee meeting.

It is held on the 28th of June. And up there in Russia, they write out what the resolution for that Central Committee is to be. And the resolution is very tough. Because what it does (and Rákosi makes this self-criticism at the meeting of the 28th of June of '53), and the Central Committee resolution reads: "The Party denounces a policy" — that's Rákosi's policy — "which has provoked a bankruptcy of production, broken the alliance of workers and peasants, sapped the power of popular democracy, ignored legality, and turned the masses against the Party and government" — sounds like the Nixon administration! — "in short, which has driven the country to the brink of bankruptcy." Well, that's very tough; that's very tough and very hard and very true.

And, consequently, the Central Committee passes this, decides a new course will be taken, but then decides that it will not publish the resolution — that it is too harsh for the people to know. And, consequently, they will not publish. What they will do is to strip Rákosi of his position as prime minister, and Imre Nagy is named. And so Nagy appears before the Hungarian parliament on the 4th of July of 1953 as the new prime minister, and absolutely flabbergasts the country. Because what he says really is a gloss, really, on this Central Committee resolution. He says,

"We will relax our industrialization. We will not emphasize heavy industry. We will begin to produce consumer goods. We will relax our collectivization of agriculture. We will relax our labor intensification. We will relax our police rule. We will have more freedom of speech." And, you see, the League of Writers, the Union of Writers in Hungary was absolutely elated. They thought, really, that a new day had come.

And here is the question: Had it really come? How far can you go with this? Nagy is a good man. How far can you go? That is the 4th of July. One week later, the 11th of July of 1953, Rákosi is talking to a meeting of Party workers, activists, and he's saying, "Ignore this. We're not really going to do this." And between 1953 and April of 1955, when Nagy is dropped as the prime minister, there is that constant fight by the bureaucrats, inside Hungary to frustrate this new orientation and this new line. Because they had grown in a system where you control and dominate people through terror! And, consequently, the idea that you might have a dialogue is frightening. And they fight it tooth and nail.

Now, Nagy fights back. And he asks the Russians for help. And the Russians, who had insisted upon this, are themselves demure. Because they don't know how far they can go or want to go. And so in October of 1954, Nagy goes to the Central Committee and says, "Dammit, do you believe in that June resolution of 1953 or don't you?" They say yes, and they pass it again. But then, you see, on the 9th of March of 1955, when Nagy has had a temporary heart attack and is out of the Central Committee meeting, Rákosi comes and says, "Nagy is a right-winger. His line will simply destroy communism in Hungary." And consequently, Nagy is accused by the Central Committee of right-wing tendencies. He is asked to recant. He will not recant. And he is dismissed as prime minister in mid-April of 1955, dismissed from the Politburo and dismissed from the Central Committee.

Now, let me say something interesting. And that is that Nagy is a good Party guy. And he will not call the people in against the Party. The thing that distinguishes Nagy, after all, is that he literally believes that socialism was for human beings and not human beings for socialism! He thought that you could not make socialism unless you were making better people out of it and they were participating. And the second thing that makes him interesting is that, in 1956, when the whole 20th Congress report created that great explosion in Hungary, the people brought Nagy back. He was brought on the wave of the people even though he himself would never have initiated that kind of dialogue, being too much ingrained and too old a horse within the Party.

And so you see the problem: Can you de-Stalinize or can't you? Well, does it go further than we have suggested? Yes, it goes further — by fits and starts. And there are two reasons, it seems to me, that it gets pushed further. One is the international framework. There really begins to be as

of 1953 something of a greater atmosphere of détente, and that because the United States (or its policymakers) go through what we call "agonizing reappraisal," or what John Foster Dulles called "agonizing reappraisal." What you are saying is that the Russians became aware of the fact that the United States realized that it could not deploy its power everywhere as it wanted to do.

And there are two factors that operate in that very strongly. One, quite obviously, the consequences of the Korean War. Now, about the Korean War in general we'll talk at another time. It suffices to say that the United States went with great sanguinity into the Korean War in the end of June of 1950. And it went in not to save a terrorist like Syngman Rhee. It went in, in MacArthur's terms, because it wanted to discipline China; it went in, in Truman's terms, because it wanted to work out a strategy of containment in Asia; it went in, in [Secretary of State Dean] Acheson's terms, because it was a way of bludgeoning the Congress into credits. But it went into Korea in the summer of 1950 with every expectation of a cheap and easy victory. Over three years later, on the 27th of July of 1953, the United States made a truce which, after all, involved a stalemate in Korea. Two underdeveloped countries, North Korea and China, had been able to hold this powerhouse to a standstill. With all of the superiority of air power and of naval power and of weaponry, the United States had not been able to win the war in Korea, and came at times very close to being shoved off that particular country.

And, consequently, there was by 1953 a terribly agonizing reappraisal that somehow you had to have another strategy for those underdeveloped, guerrilla-type warfare areas, that you could not commit a land army to Asia — that was a lesson, really, not permanently learned — and that you had to look, after all, for some kind of other way to finance a war than these costly land wars. In other words, there is a moment there, in 1953 and 1954, a moment of real doubt about the capacity to go anywhere and do anything.

The other, of course, has to do with the balance of weaponry. The Russians get the A-bomb by September of 1949. And by the middle of 1951 the Americans are presumed to have about 800 atomic bombs, the Russians about 200, which is called the "balance of terror" — that you cannot claim superiority, that you cannot even claim to have the unique quality of deterrent power — that there is a balance of that kind of terror. All of which means that Malenkov and these Russians can now constantly talk about détente. They can constantly suggest that they will meet the Americans anytime, anywhere, in order to discuss and bargain. That's the international framework within which de-Stalinization can continue to progress.

The other factor, terribly important, is that there are new relations that begin to be worked out with Communist countries. In other words, the Soviet Union finds itself with a new problem in its relationship with Communist states and has to react to that. The problem, primarily, is the

problem of China, you see. Because China — and it's not a great surprise to you — is not Albania, and China is not Bulgaria, and China is not all of Eastern Europe: China is China. And, consequently, to treat it as a satellite, well — well, no, no. Suddenly a country of 500 million or more, with a powerful army of several million; and, consequently, to treat with China, that takes something.

Now, it didn't make any difference to Stalin. Let's put it that way. We know — and we'll go into this in much greater detail — we know the story of Stalin and the Chinese. We know that all through the 1930s and the 1940s, Stalin not only had no use for the Chinese Revolution, but he was hellbent on a proper alliance with the Kuomintang and with Chiang Kai-shek. And every once in a while, the Chinese Communists just seemed to get in his way in trying to work out that particular alliance. So that, you come to the morrow of the war, you come to the 14th of August of 1945, and Stalin makes an alliance — a treaty of friendship — with Chiang Kai-shek, with the nationalist forces of China. And that treaty of friendship, that Sino-Soviet treaty of August of 1945, gives the Russians back certain little pieces of property and concessions that had been taken away at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. And in return, Stalin more or less promises that he will not support a unilateral victory of the Chinese Communists in that particular country.

And we have an absolutely fascinating account of how Stalin treated the Chinese Communists in 1945 and '46 that comes from the witness of [Edvard] Kardelj, the Yugoslavian. And the Yugoslavian Kardelj, who was a leading theorist of the Tito regime, was called up to Moscow in February of 1948 along with [Georgi] Dimitrov, the Bulgarian. And they saw Stalin about a certain question I'll mention in a moment. And in the course of that discussion Kardelj reports, and it is then reproduced in [Vladimir] Dedijer's *Tito Speaks*: "After the war," said Stalin, "we invited the Chinese comrades to come here to discuss the situation in their country. And we told the Chinese Communists bluntly that, in our judgment, the Chinese Revolution had no future whatsoever, and that they had best find a *modus vivendi* with Chiang Kai-shek — that is, enter his government and yield up their separate armies. They agreed. But when they go back to China, they did the opposite. They assembled their forces, organized their army, and are now on their way to victory." Then Stalin adds something that may really blow your mind, because Stalin then said, "And so I admit I was wrong about China. I admit it."

Well, that's rare. That's rare. You know it's never been refuted by the Soviets when Kardelj said that. But, you see, it was for a purpose. Because the story was thrown into the midst of a conversation. The reason that Kardelj and Dimitrov were there in Stalin's presence is because Bulgaria and Yugoslavia at that time were helping the Greek Revolution, and Stalin wanted them to stop. And he said, "You see, you can misinterpret a revolution. You can think it's going to win and it will lose; you think it's going to lose and it will win. I was wrong on China; you're wrong

on Greece. So no more aid to the Greeks, and shut off the frontier and look the other way." But it suffices to say that, nonetheless, the story is extremely revealing.

And all during those years — that you can read about in Bill Hinton's book — all during those years of 1946, '47, '48, when the Chinese are doing incredible things and when they're really reorganizing the liberated zones, you find really no accounts of their army, of their victories, of their zones, in the Soviet press or in the press of the Communist countries of the Soviet bloc. And all of that means that China is not supposed to go Communist in Stalin's judgment. Then, you see, it becomes perfectly obvious that China will go Communist. Well, anyone saw that at the beginning of 1949, so Stalin saw it. And consequently, in the Soviet press you begin to get other kinds of articles. And they're all these articles in which they cull out of Mao's writings all of his references to the Soviet Union and its leadership, to Lenin, to Stalin. Those are the only things that are culled out. And the implication is that the only reason that Chinese Communists are winning at all is that everything was really very neatly categorized for them by the Russians. So that we have [*inaudible*], for example, who is a Soviet propagandist — this is really funny, listen to this — this comes from February of 1949: "In the elaboration of a just Marxist-Leninist policy by the Chinese Communist Party, the works of Comrade Stalin, and especially his works on the Chinese question, have been the primary theoretical tool." Well, you have to have a certain imagination about that since, to the very end, the Russians were saying that this was a workers' revolution — there were 3% workers in China in 1949. And, consequently, to interpret it that way is, at least, to underestimate the role of the peasantry.

But it suffices to say that, at that particular point, Stalin does make an agreement. He has to make an alliance with the Chinese. And so an alliance is struck. And there is that famous Mao-Stalin meeting of October of 1949, and it eventuates in the Sino-Soviet pact or alliance of February of 1950. And this is an alliance that the Chinese enter because the Americans are still trying to bring Chiang back on the mainland, and the Russians, after all, are concerned about the Atlantic alliance. It is a marriage of convenience. And in that period, until the death of Stalin, the Chinese observe the goodwill of the Russians. And they say that the Russians are helping them, but the Russians really try to subordinate the Chinese. There's no question about it, in a whole variety of ways. For example, they did not withdraw their troops from Port Arthur as they said they would do for a period of two years. And they didn't give back the Manchurian Railway, as they said they would do. They insisted upon taking Outer Mongolia and putting it under Soviet influence. Their technicians were extremely, extremely arrogant. They sent in five years only \$300 million — less than they sent to the Poles. All of that was degrading, but the Chinese said nothing. Then Stalin died, and it had to change.

And the new leadership in the Soviet Union knew it had to change because the Chinese, by that

time, had come through the Korean War; they had stood against the United States, Douglas MacArthur. And, consequently, it was necessary to revise the whole relationship. And it was finally revised in the visit that the Russians paid to the Chinese, the visit that they made in October of 1954, Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and [Nikolai] Bulganin, which is a common declaration — listen to this, a common declaration between the Russians and the Chinese: "On the friendly relations between the USSR and China, we have a collaboration which conforms to the principle of the equality of right, of reciprocal advantage, of mutual respect, of national sovereignty and of territorial integrity." Exactly what the Yugoslavs insisted upon in 1948, and were rejected for. Well, the Chinese have now forced a new relationship of equality with the Russians.

And that's going, obviously, to have its effect on the relationship with the Yugoslavs. Because the next step is to open up the Yugoslavian question. And the reason the Russians do that is because the Yugoslavian question was a "Stalin crime." And Khrushchev wanted to point that out. And because he wanted, in the interest of a unity in the Eastern bloc — against the Atlantic alliance, against NATO, against Germany going into NATO in March of 1955 — he wanted the Yugoslavs back. And, you see, and that was really eating crow. Because here is Khrushchev and Bulganin, and they go off to Belgrade in May of 1955, and they have been calling the Titoists fascists and so forth and so on. And, consequently, they go back, here in May of 1955, and Khrushchev makes a mind-blowing speech right at the airport, in which he says, "All this was Stalin's fault. We think the Yugoslavs are good Marxist-Leninists and so forth."

Well, that's fantastic, fantastic. Because, by that time, to recognize Yugoslavia and say you're going to have conditions of equality with them is, first of all, to say that all of the trials against the Titoists were fake — which is what Khrushchev wanted to say because he's about to really go into de-Stalinization in a somewhat bigger way — but, secondly, to take a terrific risk, because the Yugoslavs are making a different kind of socialism. They have undertaken to try to make workers councils the center of their system — not very successfully — but they have attacked the idea of centralization. And, consequently, the Yugoslavs are insisting upon equality are insisting upon genuine polycentrism. And that's the background for going to the 20th Congress.

One more leap — one more leap. Khrushchev goes to that 20th Congress, the 17th to 24th of February 1956. And he had no idea of what kind of Pandora's box he was opening, because that speech was secret. And yet, when it was heard (Poles, for example, Polish Communists didn't hear it until two months later), then they had a special session of the toughest militants — the ones they could take anything before — and fainted when they heard the report. In France, the top leadership of the Communist Party for seven months referred to the "alleged report of Comrade Khrushchev." Well, you see what they said: "God is dead." What they said, after all, was Stalin committed crimes, that was illegal, that he had deported people, that he was a dictator,

that he had made a cult of personality into an atrocity. They said everything to save themselves.

Because you get rid of Stalin to get rid of what is left, to save the remnant. Because, if you are really attacking, you ask why that is possible and why the bureaucracy accepted it, When [Ilya] Ehrenburg said — that poor Ehrenburg, that marvelous writer, who always had his fingers wet to find out which way the wind was blowing; he had to live — and when he finally said in that speech he made in 1955, he said, "Oh, these were terrible things, and I knew so many of them." And Khrushchev said, "Ah, you see, that's the crime. That's the crime of Ehrenburg: he knew. I, at least, didn't know." Well, it's a little bit hard to know what to think of the chief of the Party in the Ukraine didn't really know.

But to de-Stalinize is to get Stalin out, to regularize, to systematize, to keep the system on an even keel — but to keep it from top to bottom, and not from bottom to top. And what happens if you can't do that? What happens is Warsaw in October of 1956, and what happens is Budapest in November of 1956. [*applause*]