THE
Stalin-Howard
INTERVIEW

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The Stalin-Howard Interview

(Interview Given by Joseph Stalin to Roy Howard, Representative of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Chain, on March 1, 1936)

HOWARD: What in your opinion would be the consequences of the recent events in Japan for the situation in the Far East?

Stalin: So far it is difficult to say. Too little material is available to do so. The picture is not sufficiently clear.

Howard: What will be the Soviet attitude should Japan launch the long predicted military drive against Outer Mongolia?

Stalin: If Japan should venture to attack the Mongolian People's Republic and encroach upon its independence, we will have to help the Mongolian People's Republic. Stomonyakov, Litvinov's assistant, recently informed the Japanese ambassador in Moscow of this and pointed to the immutable friendly relations which the U.S.S.R. has been maintaining with the Mongolian People's Republic since 1921. We will help the Mongolian People's Republic just as we helped it in 1921.

Howard: Would a Japanese attempt to seize Ulan Bator make positive action by the U.S.S.R. a necessity?

Stalin: Yes.

Howard: Have recent events developed any new Japanese activities in this region which are construed by the Soviets as of an aggressive nature?

Stalin: The Japanese, I think, are continuing to concentrate troops on the frontiers of the Mongolian People's Republic, but no new attempts at frontier conflicts are so far observed.

Howard: The Soviet Union appears to believe that Germany and Poland have aggressive designs against the Soviet Union and are planning military cooperation. Poland, however, protested her unwillingness to permit any foreign troops using her territory as a base for operations against a third nation. How does the Soviet Union envisage such aggression by Germany? From what position, in what direction would the German forces operate?

Stalin: History shows that when any state intends to make war against another state, even not adjacent, it begins to seek for frontiers across which it can reach the frontiers of the state it wants to attack. Usually the aggressive state finds such frontiers. It either finds them with the aid of force, as was the case in 1914 when Germany invaded Belgium in order to strike at France, or it "borrows" such a frontier, as Germany, for example, did from Latvia in 1918, in her drive to Leningrad. I do not know precisely what frontiers Germany may adapt to her aims, but I think she will find people willing to "lend" her a frontier.

Howard: Seemingly, the entire world today is predicting another great war. If war proves inevitable, when, Mr. Stalin, do you think it will come?

Stalin: It is impossible to predict that. War may break out unexpectedly. Wars are not declared, nowadays. They simply start. On the other hand, however, I think the positions of the friends of peace are becoming stronger. The friends of peace can work

openly. They rely on the power of public opinion. They have at their command instruments like the League of Nations, for example. This is where the friends of peace have the advantage. Their strength lies in the fact that their activities against war are backed by the will of the broad masses of the people. There is not a people in the world that wants war. As for the enemies of peace, they are compelled to work secretly. That is where the enemies of peace are at a disadvantage. Incidentally, it is not precluded that precisely because of this they may decide upon a military adventure as an act of desperation.

One of the latest successes the friends of peace have achieved is the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance by the French Chamber of Deputies. To a certain extent this pact is an obstacle to the enemies of peace.

Howard: Should war come, Mr. Stalin, where is it most likely to break out? Where are the war clouds the most menacing, in the East or in the West?

Stalin: In my opinion there are two seats of war danger. The first is in the Far East, in the zone of Japan. I have in mind the numerous statements made by Japanese military men containing threats against other powers. The second seat is in the zone of Germany. It is hard to say which is the most menacing, but both exist and are active. Compared with these two principal seats of war danger the Italo-Ethiopian war is an episode. At present the Far Eastern seat of danger reveals the greatest activity. However, the center of this danger may shift to Europe. This is indicated, for example, by the interview which Herr Hitler recently gave to a French newspaper. In this interview Hitler

seems to have tried to say peaceful things, but he sprinkled his "peacefulness" so plentifully with threats against both France and the Soviet Union that nothing remained of his "peacefulness". You see, even when Herr Hitler wants to speak of peace he cannot avoid uttering threats. This is symptomatic.

Howard: What situation or condition, in your opinion, furnishes the chief war menace today?

Stalin: Capitalism.

Howard: In which specific manifestation of capitalism?

Stalin: Its imperialist, usurpatory manifestation.

You remember how the first World War arose. It arose out of the desire to redivide the world. Today we have the same background. There are capitalist states which consider that they were cheated in the previous redistribution of spheres of influence, territories, sources of raw materials, markets, etc., and which would want another redivision that would be in their favor. Capitalism in its imperialist phase is a system which considers war to be a legitimate instrument for settling international disputes, a legal method in fact, if not in law.

Howard: May there not be an element of danger in the genuine fear existent in what you term capitalistic countries of an intent on the part of the Soviet Union to force its political theories on other nations?

Stalin: There is no justification whatever for such fears. If you think that Soviet people want to change the face of surrounding states, and by forcible means at that, you are entirely mistaken. Of course, Soviet people would like to see the face of surrounding states changed, but that is the business of the surrounding

states. I fail to see what danger the surrounding states can perceive in the ideas of Soviet people if these states are really sitting firmly in the saddle.

Howard: Does this, your statement, mean that the Soviet Union has to any degree abandoned its plans and intentions for bringing about a world revolution?

Stalin: We never had such plans and intentions.

Howard: You appreciate, no doubt, Mr. Stalin, that much of the world has long entertained a different impression.

Stalin: This is the product of a misunderstanding.

Howard: A tragic misunderstanding?

Stalin: No, a comical one. Or, perhaps, tragi-comic. You see, we Marxists believe that a revolution will also take place in other countries. But it will take place only when the revolutionaries in those countries think it possible, or necessary. The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country will make its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not want to there will be no revolution. For example, our country wanted to make a revolution and made it, and now we are building a new, classless society. But to assert that we want to make a revolution in other countries, to interfere in their lives, means saying what is untrue, and what we have never advocated.

Howard: At the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., President Roosevelt and Litvinov exchanged identical notes concerning the question of propaganda. Paragraph four of Litvinov's letter to President Roosevelt said that the Soviet government undertakes "not to permit the formation or residence on its territory of any organization or group—and to prevent the activity on

its territory of any organization or group, or of representatives or officials of any organization or group—which has as its aim the overthrow or preparation for the overthrow of, or the bringing about by force of a change in the political or social order of the whole or any part of its territories or possessions". Why, Mr. Stalin, did Litvinov sign this letter if compliance with the terms of paragraph four is incompatible with the interests of the Soviet Union or beyond its control?

Stalin: The fulfilment of the obligations contained in the paragraph you have quoted is within our control; we have fulfilled, and will continue to fulfil, these obligations.

According to our constitution political emigrants have the right to reside on our territory. We provide them with the right of asylum just as the United States gives right of asylum to political emigrants. It is quite obvious that when Litvinov signed that letter he assumed that the obligations contained in it were mutual. Do you think, Mr. Howard, that the fact that there are on the territory of the U.S.A. Russian whiteguard emigrants who are carrying on propaganda against the Soviets and in favor of capitalism, who enjoy the material support of American citizens and who in some cases represent groups of terrorists, is contrary to the terms of the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement? Evidently these emigrants enjoy the right of asylum, which also exists in the United States. As far as we are concerned, we would never tolerate on our territory a single terrorist, no matter against whom his criminal designs were directed. Evidently the right of asylum is given a wider interpretation in the U.S.A. than in our country. But we are not complaining.

Perhaps you will say that we sympathize with the political emigrants who come on to our territory. But are there no American citizens who sympathize with the whiteguard emigrants who carry on propaganda in favor of capitalism and against the Soviets? So what is the point? The point is not to assist these people, not to finance their activities. The point is that official persons in either country must refrain from interfering in the internal life of the other country. Our officials are honestly fulfilling this obligation. If any of them has failed in his duty let us be informed about it.

If we were to go too far and to demand that all the whiteguard emigrants be deported from the United States, that would be encroaching on the right of asylum proclaimed both in the U.S.A. and in the U.S.S.R. A reasonable limit to claims and counter-claims must be recognized. Litvinov signed his letter to President Roosevelt, not in a private capacity, but in the capacity of a representative of a state, just as President Roosevelt did. Their agreement is an agreement between two states. In signing that agreement both Litvinov and President Roosevelt, as representatives of two states, had in mind the activities of the agents of their states who must not and will not interfere in the internal affairs of the other side. The right of asylum proclaimed in both countries could not be affected by this agreement. The Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement, as an agreement between the representatives of two states, should be interpreted within these limits.

Howard: Did not Browder and Darcy, the American Communists, appearing before the Seventh Congress of the Communist International last summer, appeal for the overthrow by force of the American government?

Stalin: I confess I do not remember the speeches of Comrades Browder and Darcy; I do not even remember what they spoke about. Perhaps they did say something of the kind. But it was not Soviet people who formed the American Communist Party. It was formed by Americans. It exists in the U.S.A. legally. It puts up its candidates at elections, including presidential elections. If Comrades Browder and Darcy made speeches in Moscow once, they made hundreds of similar, and certainly stronger, speeches at home, in the U.S.A. The American Communists are permitted to advocate their ideas freely, are they not? It would be quite wrong to hold the Soviet government responsible for the activities of American Communists.

Howard: But in this instance, is it not a fact that their activities took place on Soviet soil contrary to the terms of paragraph four of the agreement between Roosevelt and Litvinov?

Stalin: What are the activities of the Communist Party; in what way can they manifest themselves? Usually their activities consist in organizing the masses of the workers, in organizing meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc. It goes without saying that the American Communists cannot do all this on Soviet territory. We have no American workers in the U.S.S.R.

Howard: I take it that the gist of your thought then is that an interpretation can be made which will safeguard and continue good relations between our countries.

Stalin: Yes, absolutely.

Howard: Admittedly communism has not been achieved in Russia. State socialism has been built. Have not fascism in Italy and National-Socialism in Germany

claimed that they have attained similar results? Have not both been achieved at the price of privation and personal liberty, sacrificed for the good of the state?

Stalin: The term "state socialism" is inexact. Many people take this term to mean the system under which a certain part of wealth, sometimes a fairly considerable part, passes into the hands of the state, or under its control, while in the overwhelming majority of cases the works, factories and the land remain the property of private persons. This is what many people take "state socialism" to mean. Sometimes this term covers a system under which the capitalist state, in order to prepare for or wage war, runs a certain number of private enterprises at its own expense. The society which we have built cannot possibly be called "state socialism". Our Soviet society is socialist society, because the private ownership of the factories, works, the land, the banks and the transport system has been abolished and public ownership put in its place. The social organization which we have created may be called a Soviet socialist organization, not entirely completed, but fundamentally, a socialist organization of society. The foundation of this society is public property: state, *i.e.*, national, and also cooperative, collective farm, property. Neither Italian fascism nor German National-"Socialism" has anything in common with such a society. Primarily, this is because the private ownership of the factories and works, of the land, the banks, transport, etc., has remained intact, and therefore, capitalism remains in full force in Germany and in Italy.

Yes, you are right, we have not yet built communist society. It is not so easy to build such a society. You are probably aware of the difference between socialist

society and communist society. In socialist society certain inequalities in property still exist. But in socialist society there is no longer unemployment, no exploitation, no oppression of nationalities. In socialist society everyone is obliged to work, although he does not in return for his labor receive according to his requirements, but according to the quantity and quality of the work he has performed. That is why wages, and, moreover, unequal, differentiated wages, still exist. Only when we have succeeded in creating a system under which in return for their labor people will receive from society, not according to the quantity and quality of the labor they perform, but according to their requirements, will it be possible to say that we have built communist society.

You say that in order to build our socialist society we sacrificed personal liberty and suffered privation. Your question suggests that socialist society denies personal liberty. That is not true. Of course, in order to build something new one must economize, acccumulate resources, reduce one's consumption for a time and borrow from others. If one wants to build a house one saves up money, cuts down consumption for a time, otherwise the house would never be built. How much more true is this when it is a matter of building a new human society! We had to cut down consumption somewhat for a time, collect the necessary resources and exert great effort. This is exactly what we did and we built a socialist society.

But we did not build this society in order to restrict personal liberty but in order that the human individual may feel really free. We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without quotation marks. It is

difficult for me to imagine what "personal liberty" is enjoyed by an unemployed person, who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment. Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home and of bread. Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible.

Howard: Do you view as compatible the coincidental development of American democracy and the Soviet system?

Stalin: American democracy and the Soviet system may peacefully exist side by side and compete with each other. But one cannot evolve into the other. The Soviet system will not evolve into American democracy, or *vice versa*. We can peacefully exist side by side if we do not find fault with each other over every trifling matter.

Howard: A new constitution is being elaborated in the U.S.S.R. providing for a new system of elections. To what degree can this new system alter the situation in the U.S.S.R. since, as formerly, only one party will come forward at elections?

Stalin: We shall probably adopt our new constitution at the end of this year. The commission appointed to draw up the constitution is working and should finish its labors soon. As has been announced already, according to the new constitution, the suffrage will be universal, equal, direct and secret. You are puzzled by the fact that only one party will come forward at elections. You cannot see how election contests can take place under these conditions. Evidently, candidates will be put forward not only by the Communist Party, but

by all sorts of public, non-Party organizations. And we have hundreds of these. We have no contending parties any more than we have a capitalist class contending against a working class which is exploited by the capitalists. Our society consists exclusively of free toilers of town and country—workers, peasants, intellectuals. Each of these strata may have its special interests and express them by means of the numerous public organizations that exist. But since there are no classes, since the dividing lines between classes have been obliterated, since only a slight, but not a fundamental, difference between various strata in socialist society has remained, there can be no soil for the creation of contending parties. Where there are not several classes there cannot be several parties, for a party is part of a class.

Under National-"Socialism" there is also only one party. But nothing will come of this fascist one-party system. The point is that in Germany, capitalism and classes have remained, the class struggle has remained and will force itself to the surface in spite of everything, even in the struggle between parties which represent antagonistic classes, just as it did in Spain, for example. In Italy there is also only one party, the Fascist Party. But nothing will come of it there for the same reasons.

Why will our suffrage be universal? Because all citizens, except those deprived of the franchise by the courts, will have the right to elect and be elected.

Why will our suffrage be equal? Because neither differences in property (which still exist to some extent) nor racial or national affiliation will entail either privilege or disability. Women will enjoy the same rights to elect and be elected as men. Our suffrage will be really equal.

Why secret? Because we want to give Soviet people complete freedom to vote for those they want to elect, for those whom they trust to safeguard their interests.

Why direct? Because direct elections to all representative institutions, right up to the supreme bodies, will best of all safeguard the interests of the toilers of our boundless country.

You think that there will be no election contests. But there will be, and I foresee very lively election campaigns. There are not a few institutions in our country which work badly. Cases occur when this or that local government body fails to satisfy certain of the multifarious and growing requirements of the toilers of town and country. Have you built a good school or not? Have you improved housing conditions? Are you a bureaucrat? Have you helped to make our labor more effective and our lives more cultured? Such will be the criteria with which millions of electors will measure the fitness of candidates, reject the unsuitable, expunge their names from candidates' lists, and promote and nominate the best. Yes, election campaigns will be lively, they will be conducted around numerous, very acute problems, principally of a practical nature, of first class importance for the people. Our new electoral system will tighten up all institutions and organizations and compel them to improve their work. Universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage in the U.S.S.R. will be a whip in the hands of the population against the organs of government which work badly. In my opinion our new Soviet constitution will be the most democratic constitution in the world.

(*Recorded by K. Umansky.*)

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