Slobodan M. Draskovich

While the unexpected launching of the Soviet earth satellite has focused the frustrated attention of the free world on the scientific achievements and military plans of the communists, we appear to be in the process of losing the war in the more decisive field of the struggle for the minds of men. To be unable to identify the enemy is dangerous. But to interpret a message of doom as a message of salvation and hail as a martyr for freedom a communist who is desperately trying to save communism can lead to disaster. That is the essence of the West’s acceptance and interpretation of Milovan Djilas’ The New Class (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1957. 214 pp.).

In the past decade hardly any political book has been greeted so enthusiastically and promoted so lavishly and persistently as The New Class. Djilas’ admirers and promoters have told us that it took extraordinary courage to write the book, smuggle it out of communist Yugoslavia, and above all to send the message that the book must be published “regardless of what happens to me personally.”

The New Class is allegedly revealing the innermost secrets of communist rule, exposing for the whole world to see its moral ugliness, ruthlessness, deceit and betrayal of all its heavenly promises of equality, brotherhood, progress, justice and freedom. The book is said to be exceptionally important because it was written by a man who was until 1954 the No. 3 communist of Yugoslavia, and because in exposing communism he has used the dialectical method, thus turning against the communist power-holders their main weapon of political analysis and persuasion.

On these grounds, Djilas was proclaimed a hero and martyr for freedom, and The New Class a historical event marking the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. The Communist Manifesto in 1848 marked the birth of the communist world movement. The New Class is — assertedly — an anti-communist manifesto marking the beginning of its end.

Should this be the case, the book unquestionably deserves the greatest possible attention. But if the free world is hailing as anti-communistic a book which predicts the coming victory of communism, and if it is idolizing as an anti-communist fighter a communist using all the strategems of communist dialectics to save communism, The New Class and its author deserve even greater attention.

Djilas Started “Deviating” in 1951

The New Class is by no means a bolt from the blue, a reversal in Djilas’ political thinking and writing, or a surprise to his fellow communists. Djilas started “deviating” as early as 1951 when he was a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and No. 3 in the Yugoslav communist hierarchy. He wrote a series of articles in the official organ of the Party, Borba, in September, 1951, on “the freedom of criticism,” “the duty of communists and progressive people to learn . . .,” the “necessity of looking for new roads,” and “the spiritual misery and brutality of the bureaucrats.”

These views bear great resemblance to the views presented in The New Class. Djilas is alarmed at the sad state of affairs in the ranks of Yugoslav communists. The unselfish, progressive, and militant communist of the struggle for power has given
way to the selfish, corrupt, sterile communist now exercising and enjoying power. The practice of communism in Yugoslavia has become bureaucratic and “a hindrance to further development, and thus reactionary.” This is because Yugoslav communists think that it is enough to hold power, forgetting that “socialistic democracy” which is being born in Yugoslavia must be different both from the Soviet bureaucratic system and from bourgeois democracy. At the same time he stresses that if Yugoslavia is building socialistic democracy, it is not in order to create “something third” between bureaucratism and capitalism, but “something new in the general direction of the march of all peoples towards socialism.”

To avoid bureaucratic stagnation, says Djilas, the Yugoslav communists must realize that “the revolution” must develop towards democracy, i.e. towards relationships “genuinely socialistic, genuinely democratic, genuinely human.” What matters is to effectuate the “dialectic jump” from seizure and consolidation of the power of the proletariat to the withering away of that power.

However, the Yugoslav communists seem to be far from fulfilling these precepts, since “ideological and practical examples are nowhere to be found . . . and the masses of Yugoslav communists are helplessly stumbling between the Cominform morass and . . . the warming up of the hopes in the capitalist West.” This shows “the lack of faith in the forces of the peoples of Yugoslavia, the lack of faith in the new roads they have taken and a lack of understanding of our new reality.”

To scare the Yugoslav communists away from the path leading to bureaucratism, Djilas declares that “the bureaucracy is in a state of permanent war against . . . the working class and working masses.” It especially “hates the true intellectuals who in their quest of artistic and scientific truth cannot help exposing the true nature and the parasitic, insatiable and uncultured soul of the bureaucracy.” That is why the bureaucracy wants “to break the intellectuals, bend their spines . . . orientate their activities towards vulgar sycophantism and praise-singing.” The work of the bureaucrats is “sheer imposture, parasitism, despotism and exploitation” of the workers. But at the same time, Djilas, contradicting himself, is unworried about bureaucratism, since it does not pertain to the essence of communism but is only “an irrational and transitory remnant of the past.”

The fact however remains that the communist order has not kept its promises. The revolution has taken place, the means of production belong to society, and the power is in communist hands; but, while the basic economic pre-requisites of society have been more than met, the surplus does not go to the proletariat. The Marxian surplus-value, says Djilas, is in effect asking: “Where am I being led, furtively, what am I being used for, why, after the millenial sufferings of mankind, after so much blood spilt and tears shed, am I not being given today, now that the material conditions have been met, to those who have created me at the price of their blood and sweat?”

What prevents a satisfactory answer to that question is apparently that before tackling that task, it is necessary to do away completely and thoroughly with capitalism. “The democratic and socialist world has not yet been able to unmask the bestial cruelty and the propensity to the worst crimes (committed in the name of the loftiest ideals) because on the other side there is capitalism with all its exploitation and oppression.” Djilas concluded that nevertheless, “social development itself some day will force this world to see the evil, fight it and do away with it.”

It should not be difficult to identify, in this first document of Djilas’ “deviation” the two basic and permanent contradictions in Djilas’ thinking: (1) that bureaucratism is an unavoidable consequence of “the
power of the proletariat," i.e. communism, and that it is as Kardelj says, "the last rampart, the last remnant of the class society in the USSR"; (2) that communism in Yugoslavia is thoroughly different from communism in the USSR because the latter has degenerated into bureaucratism, while the former is socialistic and democratic — but that bureaucratism is engulfing communist Yugoslavia as well as the USSR.

In any case, Djilas' "deviation" in 1951 was by no means heresy. It was the official Yugoslav line, promoted by Tito, Kardelj and all others. After the break with Stalin in 1948, the Yugoslav communists (especially Kardelj) did their best to prove at all costs that the regime in Yugoslavia was identical with the regime in the USSR. But since they were meeting rebuff after rebuff, they could not help but embark on the path of proving that they were basically different: the Soviets were bureaucratic and imperialistic, while they, the Yugoslav communists, were democrats and fighters for national independence. With all their harsh criticism of Yugoslav conditions, Djilas' "reflections" were expressive of the Yugoslav communist "general line."

Having full confidence in Djilas, Tito sent him as head of a three-man mission (with Colakovic and Bebler) to Asia to preach at the Congress of the Asian Socialist Parties in Rangoon the message of "different" communism (December 1952 — February 1953). Djilas performed the assigned task with great success since he apparently convinced the Burmese, Indians and others that communism "need not necessarily be imperialistic" (as a high Indian official expressed himself), that besides bad imperialistic Soviet communism, there was also good democratic communism, as practiced in and preached by communist Yugoslavia.

"The Beginning of the End and of the Beginning"

A few months later Djilas resumed his anti-bureaucratic writing. In the periodical Nova Misao (New Thought) of August 1953, he wrote a long article under the revealing title of "The Beginning of the End and of the Beginning" in which he re-examined the problem of bureaucratism. He attacked it more strongly than two years before but became even more deeply involved in his own contradictions. He declares that bureaucratism is an unavoidable product of communist power since communism cannot defeat its enemies without becoming bureaucratic. At the same time he contends that bureaucratism is not identical with communism and socialism, but only a remnant of the past. Further, he assails Stalin's rule, i.e. bureaucratism in the USSR, as a regime "more totalitarian than any in history," under which there is less freedom and more misery than under any regime "from the pharaohs to the proletariat." At the same time he glorified Stalin ("the only real personality in the USSR") as a man who rendered unparalleled services to the cause of socialism and therefore enjoyed the support of the masses.

But under bureaucratism "the relationship of exploitation remains." The only change is that "the old antagonism: worker-owners, assumes a new aspect: producers-rulers." So Djilas seems to predict the end of communist rule in the USSR through popular revolt. "Silence and darkness reign over the huge spaces from the Danube to the Yellow Sea, but underneath the smooth surface are brewing storms and passions collected from the whole history of mankind." And further: "The working masses of Eastern Europe . . . have put a bloody stamp on the beginning of the end of the Stalinist rule. They have opened the volcanic crater, above which the bloody and entangled knot of bureaucratic social relations has started unravelling. The volcano is smoldering and chilling the bones of the cowardly and frightened bureaucracy." But these ominous threats of doom, typical of The New Class condemnations, are not taken too seriously by any red-blooded
dialectician, particularly by Djilas himself. First of all, the bureaucracy is much stronger, compact and elastic than any other class, “because it is constantly being renewed from the depths of the people.” Any expectation that communism could be overthrown is completely unfounded and ridiculous, says Djilas, because the people while being against bureaucratism, are for true communism. The “Soviet bureaucracy is very vulnerable before a really socialistic, democratic criticism (as presented by Yugoslavia for instance) . . . (but) it is and will in the future resist and almost be immune to any capitalistic criticism and all tendencies aiming at restoration of the old order in East Europe.”

As for Yugoslavia, it has been only slightly affected by bureaucratism, because it has — under the leadership of Tito, who is “a true revolutionary, always close to the masses of the people” — followed the true “democratic socialist” path. This means that communist Yugoslavia is ruthlessly against “the class enemy” and is consolidating its power. At the same time the state is withering away, since the Yugoslav communists are giving power directly to the people through decentralization, workers’ councils, etc. In any case bureaucratism cannot be destroyed before capitalism is destroyed: “Before ‘pure,’ ‘ideal’, complete socialist conditions can be created . . . capitalism must be broken, capitalism must collapse.”

Djilas had finished his article when he learned about the speech which Malenkov, the then Soviet Premier, had delivered on August 8, 1953, before the Supreme Soviet. So Djilas wrote a postscript to his article, re-asserting his belief in the unavoidable democratization of bureaucratism as a consequence of the process of de-Stalinization in the USSR. “Malenkov is a transitory form, — little Stalinism, Stalinism in decadence. Democracy has begun in bureaucratic shell and garb.”

Djilas’ “Heretical” Articles (1953/54)

But while he proclaimed that bureaucratism had been mastered in Yugoslavia and was yielding to democracy in the Soviet Union, Djilas knew that he was not telling the truth. The basic problem remained: communism had not kept its promises. Why? And how to force communism really to become democratic? Djilas attempted to find the answer in a series of articles he wrote from September 1953 to January 1954.

As readers of The New Class know, Djilas is master of unprecise and contradictory thinking and of confusedly abstruse writing. In his “heretic” articles of the Fall of 1953 he was even more so. But his aim is clear: Djilas realizes that communism has failed in Yugoslavia, in the same manner as it has failed in the USSR, to put into practice the theoretical concepts of communism. Bureaucratism is advancing irresistibly and Djilas is “scared to death that bureaucracy may win in Yugoslavia.” The more so since bureaucratism springs “from our own system, from the conditions in which we live.” The Yugoslav regime is actually “Yugoslav Stalinism,” but Djilas cannot accept the idea that communist Yugoslavia instead of saving the revolution is betraying it in the same manner as the Soviet communists. Djilas wants the Yugoslav communists to save the communist idea and the world revolution at any cost.

“The Yugoslav battle is in the center of all world knots,” exults Djilas. It is “an unseen battle which the whole world is watching breathlessly.” Communist Yugoslavia is “in the center and is the center of all controversies.” The fate of communism in the world depends on communist Yugoslavia: “If only one — our — revolution ends up in the splendor of the new democracy, that will give a new brilliant lustre to the intoxicating idea of the revolution . . . the faith in the new world, in socialism becomes reality.”

To achieve this task Djilas has only one remedy, — to democratize communism. Political power will safely remain in communist hands to prevent the restoration
of the "bourgeois order." But democracy will be promoted by drawing non-communists into the discussion of various problems, and by increased ideological activity on the part of the communists who will use persuasion, not force, to convince the people of the superiority of communism and thereby convert them to Marxism-Leninism.

Later, in January 1954, when Djilas had to answer before the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) for his views, everybody suddenly knew that his ideas were non-Marxist. But it is noteworthy that while he was writing, everyone seemed pleased and Tito himself encouraged him to write. Moreover, while Tito claims that in December he began to disapprove of Djilas' views, the fact is that Djilas was appointed President of the Yugoslav National Assembly on December 25, 1953, that is, after uttering most of his "heretical" blasts, including the one about the Yugoslav regime being Stalinistic and "therefore stinking with similar ideological stench." Djilas was stopped only after publishing on January 8, 1954, an article in which he sharply criticized the leaders of the Yugoslav communist hierarchy and their wives, with hardly concealed personal references.

The important thing, which has ever since been misrepresented — and most recently and most flagrantly in the TV dramatization of The New Class (CBS Network, February 5, 1958) — is that after two days of hearings Djilas did not stand his ground, but admitted his anti-Marxist guilt. He never said, as alleged: "I will not retract a single word of what I have said or written," but on the contrary accepted the criticism of the Central Committee completely and in detail. He stated: "Outside of the Communist Party and outside of the state and economic organs, I do not visualize nor can I imagine the realization of socialism in our country and its democratic development ... it is completely certain ... that I found myself in the position: either finally to reject all communist practice and idea ... or to attempt in some way or other to turn to you, (the Central Committee), to the Party, and to that whole policy of ours."

For almost a whole year after his deviation was dealt with Djilas lived comfortably on a state pension, in political retirement. Towards the end of 1954, while Tito was in Asia, Djilas gave an interview to a foreign newspaper man, assailing the Yugoslav regime as Stalinistic, both he and Tito's official biographer, Dedijer, who defended him, were tried and given suspended sentences. The press in the free world praised Djilas' "courage" to speak his mind, but none gave heed to the very simple and very basic fact that Djilas was able to contact foreign newspapermen only because the Yugoslav "Stalinist" regime made it possible for him.

Djilas in 1956

In 1956 Djilas was assertedly subjected to close police surveillance. Nevertheless he was able to write to the New York Times (May 31) and complain that the Yugoslav authorities were preventing the publication of a book he had written. Oddly enough the regime, which did not want the manuscript published, failed to display the slightest interest in what the manuscript contained. Djilas had been demoted in 1954, resigned from the party a few months later, was given a suspended sentence in January 1955 for attacking the regime, and was harried by constant surveillance, but the authorities did not seem the least alarmed by what he was writing.

In June 1956, when Tito was visiting the Soviet Union, sealing his reconciliation with Moscow with joyous celebrations and pledges of indissoluble solidarity in war and peace, Djilas was not prevented from having several articles published in American and French newspapers, wherein he criticized Krushchev and the collective leadership of the Soviet Union as being more dangerous to the West than Stalin. Was it just a coincidence that Djilas was
permitted to criticize the regime's policy precisely at times when Tito was outside of Yugoslavia making important moves in favor of world communism? Or was the intent possibly to show to the world that whatever Tito might be doing, the very fact that Djilas was openly criticizing him, was an irrefutable proof that the regime was democratic?

The "New Leader" Article

In November 1956, immediately after the Hungarian revolution was bloodily suppressed, Djilas wrote an article for the magazine The New Leader, in which he said that the events in Hungary were marking "the beginning of the end of Communism generally," and had "brought to the fore . . . the replacement of communism by a new system, and, along with this, the right of a people heretofore under communist rule to choose its own—non—communist—path of development." While this sounds very revolutionary and anti-communist, let us not forget that we are dealing with a communist dialectician whose efforts to "democratize" communism fit perfectly in the de-Stalinization campaign pursued by Moscow. By attacking Stalin, who was the symbol of communist victories, the new Soviet leaders were deliberately taking a uniquely bold step which alone could exculpate communism in the world from the crimes committed by all communists and inherent in communism as a system of thought and of power.2 "By attacking Stalin, Communism may be protected as an ideology," wrote perspicaciously the U.S. News and World Report. "This could be a very convincing line both inside and outside Russia, and mislead a lot of people."73

This may help understand the logic of Djilas’ denunciation of the Soviet intervention in Hungary. While all communist leaders, from Mao to Tito, approved of the Soviet intervention, the “democratic” face of post-Stalin communism could be saved only by indicting the Soviet intervention. Djilas, the “deviationist” from another "Deviationist" (Tito), was best qualified for that task. Djilas explained that the revolution in Hungary signaled the “beginning of the end of communism generally” only in the sense that “Yugoslav communism, separating itself from Moscow, initiated the crisis of Soviet imperialism.” The facts are, however, that the Stalin-Tito rift did not hurt imperialism, but made it more penetrating, especially in Asia.

As for the right of the people to “a new system” and a “non-communist path of development,” Djilas gives no direct explanation. He is disappointed by the failure of the Hungarian communists to “institute the kind of reforms that would gradually transform and lead communism to freedom.” Whatever the Hungarian communists could have done and failed to do, the essential problem of our age remains, according to Djilas, “the problem of freedom in communism.” (In The New Class on page 45 he makes it clear that he is in favor of putting an end to “communist monopolism and totalitarianism,” but only in favor of “democracy and freedom in communism.”)5

On November 19, 1956, Djilas was arrested.

Towards the end of July 1957, it was announced that Djilas had written a sensational anti-communist book which would be published shortly. The promotion campaign for The New Class (published on August 12, 1957) was under way. These are the facts which constitute the indispensable background for proper understanding of this work and its true message.  

Djilas Condemns Communism

It is undeniable that in the course of his lengthy, repetitive and contradictory presentation of the various facets of communism, Djilas has uttered very harsh judgments on the practice of communism, as well as on the main characteristics of communist power. To sum up Djilas’ views, communism is the most oppressive, most brutal, most deceptive, most corrupt, most
wasteful, and most shameful regime in history. If he were not a communist and a dialectician, if we were not living in the era of “different” communism, and if The New Class were Djilas’ first “deviationist” writing, his devastating statements on communism would undoubtedly establish him as an enemy of communism determined to fight with all his strength against such a uniquely evil regime. But Djilas is dialectician, a communist and, as we have seen, a deviationist with a long record.

From the Communist Manifesto (1848) on, the task of the communists has never been to interpret events, but to help shape them. The communist doctrine has never been anything but a “guide to action” to seize power for the Communist Party and to keep it once firmly in hand. Thus when a communist writes a book, he is “shooting an arrow at the target of the communist revolution,” to use Mao Tse-tung’s formula. This is precisely what Djilas has done — very methodically — in his new work.

Djilas Defends Communism

First, Djilas has made it clear from the very beginning (p. vii) that he has not criticized “communism as an idea,” nor the communist theory, but only “contemporary” communism. Throughout the book Djilas has followed this standard communist procedure of saving the communist idea by divorcing it from the communist practice. Original, pure, true communism is to him full of virtues, “. . . a Communist movement always begins as one of highest idealism and most selfless sacrifice attracting into its ranks the most gifted, the bravest, and even the most able intellects of the nation.” (p. 152). “Loyalty, mutual aid, frankness about even the most intimate thoughts — those are generally the ideals of true, ideal Communists” (p. 153). Communism was corrupted after it “tasted the fruits of power. In practice nothing is done according to Marx,” (p. 104). “The communists are not developing any sort of true socialism.” (p. 98). Thus “contemporary” communism is un-Marxist. It represents the betrayal of the communist idea, not its realization. “The heroic era of Communism is past. . . . The new class has been created . . . it is without new ideas. It has nothing more to tell the people. The only thing that remains is for it to justify itself.” (p. 54).

Thus the task which Djilas has taken upon himself is: to justify communism historically and politically. The law of mankind being “to increase and perfect production,” Djilas explains the success or failure of communism in various countries according to their success or failure in industrialization. Western Europe and America succeeded in building up industry under conditions of “bourgeois” democracy and have avoided communism; “in such places revolution becomes nonsensical and unrealistic.” In other countries (Russia, China, Yugoslavia), however, the fateful question of industrial development can be solved only through communist revolution. “There was no other way of bringing about industrialization.” Communism not only was inevitable, but it “made possible rapid economic progress.” And the most important thing, he contends, is that the industrial revolution in the underdeveloped countries of Europe and Asia opened the road to freedom in those countries. “The communist revolution cannot attain a single one of the ideals named as its motivating force. However, the Communist revolution brought about a measure of industrial civilization to vast areas of Europe and Asia. In this way, material bases have actually been created for a more free future society. Thus, while bringing about the most complete despotism, the Communist revolution has also created the basis for the abolition of despotism. As the nineteenth century introduced modern industry to the West, the twentieth century will introduce modern industry to the East. The shadow of Lenin extends over the vast expanse of Eurasia in one way or another. In despotic form in China, in democratic form in India and Burma, all of the remaining Asiatic and
other nations are inevitably entering an industrial revolution. The Russian revolution initiated this process. The process remains the incalculable and historically significant fact of the revolution,” (pp. 30/31). And he goes even further: “Backward peoples in communist systems experience a cultural renaissance along with the technical one.” (p. 136).

Then Djilas commences to justify even the worst features of communism, in the same breath as he denounces them. “Absolute brutality . . . is in accord with the grandiosity of communist aims.” “History will pardon communists for much, establishing that they were forced into many brutal acts because of circumstances and the need to defend their existence.” Djilas speaks enthusiastically of the “grandiose ventures” which communism has accomplished. He praises Lenin and Stalin as the two greatest figures in history. He stresses the positive qualities of the new class. He especially emphasizes the strength of communism, at the core of which is the strength of the new class which is “better prepared for greater sacrifices and heroic exploits” than other classes in history, and “is strong enough to carry out material and other ventures that no other class was ever able to do.” (p. 60).

“The Communist society is as a whole more unified than any other.” (p. 97). Communism has “penetrated into all the pores of society and of the personality—into the vision of the scientists, the inspiration of the poets, and the dreams of lovers.” Djilas asserts that, after all, the people are for communism. “Most of the individuals in the Communist system are not opposed to socialism, but opposed to the way in which it is being achieved.” People are against the new class only because it is not realizing true communism—because it is not communist enough!

Finally, the evils of communism are of a temporary nature and can be eradicated. “It has not always been like this in communist systems, nor is it inevitable that it should be so.”

What then is to happen? Djilas’ admirers and promoters have tirelessly spread the line that he predicted the end of communism. This is a gross misstatement, for such an idea is as remote from Djilas’ mind as from Tito’s, Khrushchev’s or Mao Tse-tung’s. In 1953, Djilas had announced “the beginning of the end” of bureaucratic communism of the Stalin era and the “beginning of the beginning” of communist “democracy” under Malenkov. He had stressed that the only way to criticize bureaucratism in the USSR was “from socialist positions.” Any other kind of criticism would only strengthen capitalism and bureaucratism and obstruct the realization of the new world of “real freedom and the real free association of mankind,” towards which all peoples are “already advancing, passing from capitalism to socialism, advancing inexorably, be it through dictatorships and wars and revolutions, plunder and oppression, but — they are advancing.”

The Role of the U. S. and the “Practical” Contemporary Communists

In that process the United States could lend a very helping hand. “The United States is carrying out nationalization . . . by putting a considerable portion of the national income into the hands of the government.” (p. 199). “If the United States would achieve a completely nationalized economy, tendencies toward the unification of the contemporary world would receive still greater impetus.” (p. 199).

But the main promoters of world unity, of course, are the communists, according to Djilas. “Contemporary Communism could help achieve the goal of world unification most of all by political means — by internal democratization and by becoming more accessible to the outside world.” All that is necessary is for the “greatest minds to perceive that it is the exploiting class and that its reign is unjustified,” and after that “to renounce the means it is using.” The main sin of the
"new class" is that of being unrealistic by stifling criticism completely and holding absolute power. Fortunately however, reality, i.e. "the basic tendency toward the unification of production," is forcing the communist leaders to be realistic. They are learning and improving, "they are now more practical men than they used to be." Those practical communists, according to Djilas, are the "collective leadership" in the Soviet Union and Tito in Yugoslavia.

Djilas and Tito

The "heretic" and "anti-communist" martyr Djilas is unchangeably full of praise for Tito, the head of the Yugoslav "new class." "Tito is a great revolutionary. Tito is a representative of the people." (p. 53). While in the Soviet Union communism has gone through the revolutionary phase (Lenin) and the dogmatic phase (Stalin) to arrive at its present "realistic" phase under Khrushchev, Yugoslavia has passed through all three phases in a relatively short time and with the same personalities at the summit. (p. 168). And evidently because Tito represents a "three-in-one" combination of revolutionary Lenin, dogmatic Stalin and realist Khrushchev, "Yugoslav Communism has been more consistent than other parties in preserving the substance of Communism, yet never renouncing any form which could be of value to it." (p. 53).

Djilas' Message

Consequently, the message of Djilas' book, skillfully concealed by a flood of high-sounding anti-communist phrases, yet unmistakable and unequivocal, is that:

- communism was unavoidable in those countries where it came to power;
- communist methods were historically justified;
- communism "accomplished grandiose ventures;"
- communism will unavoidably conquer the whole of Asia and Africa and other underdeveloped countries;
- capitalism will be destroyed;
- communism will remain and the main problem of our age, freedom, will be solved within communism, through the device of communist self-improvement.

In other words, *The New Class* is not a book about the imminent defeat of communism, but about its imminent victory. For all the failure of Western observers to grasp Djilas' message, the fact remains that his thesis of communist self-improvement, his prediction that Western Europe may keep its capitalism, but Asia and Africa will go communist; his forecast of the disappearance of communism as a consequence of world unification, not however before liquidating capitalism, — are all thoroughly Leninist, i.e. truly communist.

This conclusion is corroborated not only by what Djilas said about communism, but also by his choice of the issues he carefully avoided discussing.

The Issues Which Djilas Did Not Discuss

Djilas has discussed communism as a moral, political and economic system within various countries, but not as a system of power which has conquered one-third of the world and is bent upon further conquest. This can hardly be accidental. Communists relied not on the laws of mankind, but on organized political action to seize power from Russia (1917) to Northern Vietnam (1954). If Djilas has now undergone a change of heart through a democratic awakening, why does he avoid discussing the Stalin-Tito rift of 1948, the Khrushchev-Tito reconciliation of 1955 and the pledge of Tito in Stalingrad (June 1956) to "march in time of war as in time of peace shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet people toward the same goal, the goal of the victory of socialism?"

Another basic omission is Djilas' failure to discuss his own role in Asia (1952/1953). Why did Tito send him to Asia? What did he do there? If communism marches in Asia under the banner or shadow of Lenin — who proclaimed that
the road to Berlin leads through Peiping and Calcutta — why does Djilas not say a single word about the connection between that Leninist concept of world conquest and his own “world unification?”

Finally, in discussing in 214 pages the mortal sins of communism against freedom, Djilas does not say a single word about the freedom of greatest concern, the freedom of the people to decide about their government, i.e. whether to remove their communist dictators and destroy — not improve — communism. Can the silence of an “anti-communist” on this issue be accidental in a book which is “rocking the communist world?”

Conclusion

Criticisms and mutual attacks between communists are partly a result of their craving and struggle for power, but they do not affect their stand toward communism and communist world conquest, nor do they affect their loyalty to communist power. Trotsky rebelled in 1927 against Stalin who had “betrayed the Revolution” and whose regime he called “the most inquisitorial system of all time.” However, he continued to pledge his loyalty to the USSR and Stalin personally. Djilas himself quotes in one of his articles of 1951 the instance of the Albanian communist Kochi Dzodze, “who was slandered, hurt, abused, cheated and finally assassinated by the Albanian sycophants in the service of Moscow and who, in spite of all that, remained faithful to Moscow and Stalin.” The Soviet leaders called Tito an imperialist agent, a Judas, a fascist dog, and Tito reciprocated in kind; but a few years later they reconciled and became again “dear comrades” and “brothers-in-arms.” Dedijer, Tito’s official biographer, became a “heretic” in 1954 by defending Djilas; he was given a suspended sentence in 1955 and ever since has been considered a “subversive” element. But in September 1957 he declared himself willing to “put my hand in the fire for Tito.” Gomulka was restored to power to save Poland from Stalinism. But Stalin’s agents Cyrankiewicz and Zawadski kept their posts after the “big change” in October 1956.

Thus the notion that Djilas is against communism because of The New Class contradicts all known experience about intra-communist disputes and conflicts. And far from being a matter of conjecture, it is a matter of factual evidence that Tito does not consider Djilas an enemy. Why otherwise would he in November 1956 allow the telegram of the New Leader to be immediately delivered to Djilas, and his article immediately sent to New York? And especially how can one explain the total inefficiency of the Yugoslav police regarding Djilas and his “heretical, anti-communist” writings? According to the New York Times of November 20, 1956, Djilas had lived “for nearly a year under the close watch of the Yugoslav police . . . there had been a police car parked at the curb outside, an officer to question any visitors and a cameraman stationed in a window across the street to take their pictures.”

And according to a number of reports, when Djilas was arrested on November 19, 1956, “all his papers and manuscripts . . . were confiscated” (The Evening Star, Washington, D. C., November 20, 1956). The Reuters version (November 20) was that the police “went through all his belongings and took him away with a suitcase full of his manuscripts.” All of which means that he either took his finished manuscript of The New Class to jail or finished it in jail.

According to the Voice of America broadcast of September 27, 1957, the manuscript was smuggled out of Djilas’ prison cell. This is also the version of the International News Service (October 4, 1957). The most competent testimony is that of Jakov Levi, long-time Yugoslav communist correspondent in New York (turned defector a few months ago) who confirms that “Djilas smuggled the manuscript of his explosively anti-Communist book right out of his jail cell . . .”

The majority of the 18 million people
in Yugoslavia are strongly against the regime. Is it not strange, very strange, that not a single anti-communist could write and smuggle out of jail an anti-communist book, but that this was reserved for the former third ranking communist of Yugoslavia?

The appraisal of Djilas' book would be incomplete if we ignored that fact the we are not dealing with a naive intellectual who fell in love with a political idea, while remaining aloof from its practice, but a politician with a devastating record, a true member of the “new class.” Djilas is responsible for the death of many people, especially in his native Montenegro. He has been, with Kardelj, a chief philosopher and architect of whatever Yugoslav communism represents today. When he condemns contemporary communism today, he has as many skeletons in his closet as does Khrushchev indicting Stalin, or Mao Tse-tung expressing his love for blooming flowers and ideas after liquidating twenty million Chinese.

In view of this it is quite possible that Djilas is being groomed to play the role of Gomulka in Yugoslavia. A reconciliation between a benign forgiver Tito and the “democratic” hero and martyr Djilas would make the Yugoslav communist regime appear irresistibly and irrefutably democratic and humanitarian (Tito only recently spoke of the necessity for communism to be “humanitarian”). When Djilas in The New Class (p. vi) wrote that he had become “increasingly estranged from the reality of contemporary communism and had come closer to the idea of democratic socialism,” many reviewers in the free world gasped with delight. Djilas was becoming a democrat almost a freedom fighter! They overlooked the fact that such was precisely the Leninist line of Khrushchev and his friend Tito who declared in May 1956 that “the big change in the Soviet Union was carried out through socialist democratization.”

The New Class is a symptom of the grave crisis of communism throughout the world. It could be used to expose communism and inflict on it a strong propaganda defeat and loss of face in the world. The very risky game of self-criticism which the communists, — faced with their explosive internal troubles and unrest — are playing today is good strategy only as long as the free world does not use against the Communists the weapons which their self-criticism offers. While The New Class has revealed nothing about communism that had not been known for years, it is nevertheless a very useful document, full of admissions which could be used with great effect against communism and all its leaders, Stalinist and Titoist and Djilasist, unregenerate and “repentent” alike, throughout the world.

But this work is also part of the new communist strategy of winning, not by missiles and nuclear war, but by a psychological warfare which will induce us to hail as allies and saviors would-be executioners. It was written and in some quarters is being promoted and idolized not to enlighten communists, but for the sake of confusing the public opinion of the free world. It was written to confirm once more and with renewed emphasis the fundamental strategic slogan of communist propaganda: that communism must inevitably win, because history wills it. From Marx and Engels to Lenin and Stalin and Mao and Molotov and Zhdanov and Khrushchev and Kadar and Gomulka and Tito and Djilas, all communists, purgers and purged alike, were and are in perfect agreement on this basic point, because they know that once the “bourgeois enemy” starts viewing communism as “the wave of the future,” all struggle against communism becomes senseless.

This psychological offensive cannot be promoted more successfully than by having the communists monopolize all the positions and play all the roles on the scene of modern history in the decisive battle between freedom and communism. So, the communists pursue ruthless imperialist and colonial policies and at the same time are
the champions of national independence and self-determination. And while on the one hand communists (Krushchev, Mao, Tito, et al.) extol the glorious and unique achievements ("grandiose ventures") of communism, they at the same time appear as its most severe and best informed critics (Djilas). Thus the aggressive communist drive and the opposition to it, the ruthless bureaucratic and tyrannical communist rule and the opposition to it, and the unification of the world through communist self-criticism and self-improvement are virtually all safe in communist hands. In the popular-front era, the communists were telling us who are our enemies and who are our allies. Now, in the era of "different" communism, they are apparently even willing to undertake the task of fighting communism for us! Back in 1953 in one of his "heretical" articles, Djilas had written: "to renounce power is progressive and socialistic, but only insofar as . . . nobody (no other class, party) seizes it. In any case to relinquish power is equal to treason." Four years later he was not writing The New Class to destroy communism, but rather to place the blame for communist failures, crimes and betrayals upon the new class scapegoat, thus clearing the path for the "improvement" of communism, its expansion in Asia and Africa and its final victory. He has thus been playing an important role in the present strategy of world communism, in which the struggles for national independence, the collective leaderships, the denunciations of the "cult of personality", the "rectification campaigns," the administrative decentralizations, and the workers' councils all serve only better to disarm the hostility of the people against communism. Consequently communism is able to consolidate the ruthless dictatorship, promote communist ideas, debilitate and confuse the thinking of the free world, make acceptable communist solutions, and advance on the path of communist conquest.

While Djilas cannot presently exert any direct political influence on Yugoslav policies, he is playing an important role in the process of the political disarmament of the West. The same Western political circles which for years have been glorifying Djilas as a most deserving enemy of Moscow, are now glorifying Djilas as a most deserving enemy of communism. They are at the same time for Djilas and for Tito. No Djilas supporter and believer of the anti-communist message of The New Class has noticed this striking fact much less attempted to explain it.

By writing The New Class Djilas was not serving — nor did he mean to serve — the cause of freedom. Instead, he was shooting another efficient arrow at the target of the communist world revolution. We do not say that the Djilas case was pre-arranged any more than the Stalin-Tito conflict of 1948 was pre-arranged. Both events took place as a result of internal communist tensions, troubles and difficulties of adaptation to changed world conditions. But in both cases communists turned their predicament into advantage. If this maneuver is not thoroughly understood, the communists will continue to use The New Class as a weapon to impose on us political concepts designed to pave the way for ultimate communist victory.

'These articles were published in the official Yugoslav monthly review, Questions Actuelles Du Socialisme (Paris, November — December 1951), under the title "Reflexions Diverses."
'Italics added.