

# Tempo

Section 5

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It's as true in Russia and China as it is in Hollywood; as one star rises, another is sure to fall



Illustration by John Hersey

## Dictators— who's hot

### Lenin: Here, there and nowhere

By Howard Witt

Times Staff Writer

**S**T. PETERSBURG, Russia—Vladimir Ilyich Lenin slept here.

And here. And over there. And in this hut. And in that shed.

He used this bathtub. He rode this train. He read this book. He touched this pen.

In fact, in this historic city that used to be called Leningrad, where the great October Revolution of 1917 took place, it's almost easier to enumerate the places Lenin didn't stay than the places he stopped for a week, a day, an hour or even a few minutes.

There are Lenin plaques around practically every corner, affixed to more than 250 buildings where the founder of the Soviet Union at one time or another spoke, ate, slept or hid during the months he orchestrated the revolution.

There are maps showing a riot of colored, dotted lines—resembling nothing so much as American football playbooks—that document every walk, stroll and ride Lenin ever took through the city.

There are more than 20 Lenin busts and monuments—as well as the factory that forged most of the approximately 40,000 Lenin statues that were scattered across the vast expanse of the former Soviet Union.

And there are the museums: four apartments preserved as they looked when Lenin briefly occupied them, plus one entire steam locomotive—preserved under glass—that was used to pull a train Lenin rode from Finland.

On St. Petersburg's outskirts, the inventory includes one wood cabin—also encased in a huge glass pavilion—where a plaque reports, Lenin lived for "a few days," and one grass hut—reared in concrete because the original long ago burned down—where Lenin hid out in the forest.

There's just one problem with all these national historic sites so lovingly cared for during the long Soviet era: Most Russians would prefer to forget all about them. The cult of Lenin is about as popular these days as the cult of David Koresh.

So the loyal Lenin museum guides spend most of their days

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### Mao: Death becomes him

By Uri Schmetzer

Times Staff Writer

**B**ELING—in China's crowded streets, the thriving commerce in copies of "The Little Red Book" and aluminum buttons with his portrait are evidence that Mao Zedong has made a comeback in a nostalgic nation.

The Great Helmsman has been dead and entombed in a mausoleum for 17 years. But his ghost still holds sway over millions of superstitious Chinese who are convinced that he is endowed with supernatural powers.

Hardly a truck or taxi now navigates along highways or country roads without the insurance of a portrait of the man once called the Scorching Red Sun of China. His face dangles from rear-view mirrors or is plastered on dashboards like a St. Christopher medal.

Mao posters and portraits are thought to fend off evil spirits, particularly if they show him as a freedom fighter of the 1930s and '50s. That was when, as a sort of Chinese Robin Hood, he battled arrogant mandarins and

merciless tax collectors.

In a narrow Beijing alley, a middle-age woman carved her tiny bronze Mao statue and gave voice to the general unpopularity over the re-emergence of corruption among Communist Party bigwigs and other favored individuals who make China's rich-poor gap increasingly obvious.

"Mao made us proud of China," she said. "Now and then we still stand in front of him in the house and say, 'Long live Chairman Mao!'"

In northeastern Shandong province, a group of Chinese tourists recently watched, visibly embittered, while peasants with bruised shoulders piggybacked some newly rich vacationers to the top of a sacred mountain.

"That would have never happened in Mao's day," one woman blurted.

Even in China's funky new cocktail bars, pop singers and student poets eulogize Mao. Filmmakers churn out Mao movies against the backdrop of his glorious days. A wave of new Cultural Revolution restorations

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### Lenin's preservers in a real pickle

By Howard Witt

Times Staff Writer

**M**OSCOW—Times are not so good in the dictator-preservation business.

What with democracy rearing its inconvenient head in many formerly communist countries, a lot of the old clients of Moscow's Research Institute on Biological Structures—the folks who keep Vladimir Lenin looking perpetually calm—aren't well, going under. And new commissions are not exactly flooding in.

Take Georgi Demitrov, for example, the former communist leader of formerly communist Bulgaria. The institute used its secret formula to preserve him for public display after he died in 1980. But the new, democratic Bulgarian government buried him after the collapse of the East bloc.

Ditto Klement Gottwald, the former Czech leader who died in 1953 and was another, presumably satisfied, institute customer.

The fate of the remains of Agostinho Neto, former dictator of Angola, is less clear, owing to the ongoing civil war in that former Soviet satellite.

"We had some of our experts stationed there to take care of Neto, but we had to evacuate them about eight months ago because of the war," said Yuri Denisov-Nikolsky, deputy director of the institute. "So I don't know what is going on with him."

That leaves the institute with exactly two remaining clients.

Ho Chi Minh, a 1969 job, is still lying in good shape in his Hanoi tomb, dutifully attended at all times by two Russian specialists from the institute. "The government of Vietnam pays for all of our services," Denisov-Nikolsky said, "and they pay in hard currency."

And, then, of course, there's Lenin, the major-domo of mummified dictators. For nearly 70 years—with a few interludes for World War II and necessary "renovations"—what's left of the founder of the Soviet Union has been on public display in the famous tomb on Moscow's Red Square.

Uncounted millions of visitors have shuffled past Lenin's glass-enclosed, softly lit, impeccably dressed corpse. How does he stay so kept that it looks youthful? Only his embalmers know for sure. sit up at any moment and start exhorting the workers of the world to unite.

That could never happen, Denisov-Nikolsky hastened to explain, despite persistent tabloid rumors.

"All speculation in the press about treacherous communists hoping to revive Lenin in the future is irresponsible fantasy aimed at uneducated people," he said. "This is confirmed by the fact that we took out the brain and some other internal organs a long time ago."

The idea of preserving Lenin's corpse was born shortly after the Bolshevik leader died at age 53 on Jan. 21, 1924, after a series of strokes.

Initially Krevin leaders planned only a normal wake followed by a burial, but tens of thousands of mourners kept streaming to Moscow to view Lenin's body.

By spring, with the weather warming and the corpse quickly deteriorating, officials decided something more permanent was in order. They convened an expert committee of biologists, few of whom had any experience in embalming.

"But the scientists hesitated for some time and then demanded a written promise that they would not be shot if they made a mistake," Denisov-Nikolsky said.

With their own preservation assistant, the scientists managed to concoct a formaldehyde formula that they figured would last a few years. Work on the marble tomb was begun.

After World War II (the body had been evacuated to Siberia in 1941 to protect it from the invading Germans), the current Research Institute on Biological Structures was founded.

Working with the best equipment available—far better than anything available in Soviet hospitals of the time—the institute's experts eventually created one of the greatest masterworks of totalitarian science: the top-secret refrigeration-and-chemical combination that keeps Lenin looking fresh to this day.

The process has never been revealed to outsiders, a fact that has long fueled popular rumors—scuffed at by the institute—that what is on display is not really Lenin's corpse at all but a wax figure.

The broad outlines of the ritual are known, however. Twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays, Lenin's tomb is closed to the public and the tier

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**Up from the streets**  
Saxophonist Charles Gayle now earns a living playing his jazz in clubs rather than on the streets. Page 3



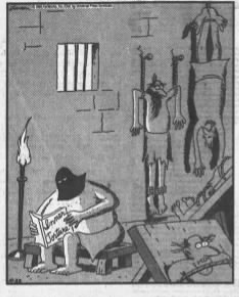
**INSIDE**  
**Going for gold**  
Trashy novels "A Stranger in the Mirror" and "Remember" manage to shine—garishly—on TV. Page 5



**Between the lines**  
Miss Manners is asked to rule on the message, if any, behind a letter writer's choice of stamps. Page 2

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THE FAR SIDE



No hiding
From the Illustrated Dictionary of Place Names, edited by Keesie B. Harder (Facts on File, 1985), here's how six small towns got their names:
1. Venice, Ill.—streets often flooded
2. Urbana, Kan.—after New York Tribune
3. Verli, Nev.—named by opera lover
4. Mansfield, Texas—R.S. Mann and Julian Field
5. Perry Go Place, Wis.—T. Perigo
6. Evening Shade, Ark.—named during early evening while applying for postal town name

Should a woman send a letter stamped with love?

By Judith Martin
UNITED FEATURES SYNDICATE
Dear Miss Manners: Do you think using the post office's "Love" stamps on letters to men might be misconstrued as what used to be called "forward"? Possibly this is a foolish thought in these liberated times. Please give us some guidelines on the proper use of Love stamps.



My husband spent about 15 minutes talking to the guests before they left. I knew they were there, but I felt no immediate obligation, the young man's situation being more important at the moment.

Miss Manners suggests not. She was just trying to save herself the trouble of sorting out the two very different questions you have packaged here.
(1) Do gentlemen read a language of flowers, the way people used to recognize a language of flowers, in which the sentiments of the gentleman could be read in his choice of blossoms? Well, maybe. It would sure keep them busy rubbing out to receive maidens who happen to paste their flag stamps on upside down.

Miss Manners

Dear Miss Manners: If someone hands us a gift at our anniversary party—we specified "no gifts" on the invitation—how should we handle this?
Gentle Reader: There is a rule that requires you to be gracious accepting a present, even if you didn't expect it. And there is a rule that requires you to avoid embarrassing your other guests, so that they are not made to feel that they should have brought you presents.

Illustration by Tom Bachtel

To make as little fuss as possible, say a simple "Thank you" and put the present aside without opening it. Let us hope that there is a card inside (but you might have a pencil handy to jot down the name discreetly, just in case) because you are going to have to write a letter to express proper thanks once you have opened the present in private.

However, the troubled young man gave us his confidence, which should have been respected. Miss Manners is hoping that she misunderstood your letter and that you did not actually explain to the visitors the nature of your prior engagement.

Lenin

Comments From Page 1
Listening to the radio or reading romance novels, waiting for tour buses that never come.
The windows are broken and the displays vandalized at the Lenin Visitor Center, next to the "concocted" hat.
Bird droppings spatter the Lenin locomotive's glass enclosure.



A common sight since the fall of the Soviet Union has been disposal of Lenin monuments, leaving worried historians in their wake.

And the caretaker of the glass-encased Lenin wood cabin no longer has a telephone. One of Russia's new millionaire businessmen, constructing a mansion down the road, swiped it for his house.
Meanwhile, back in Moscow, even greater apostasies are being heard.
The mayor wants to seize the building housing the Central Lenin Museum, the nation's main repository of Lenin documents, Lenin portraits, Lenin clothing, commemorative Lenin plates and ceremonial Lenin embroidered arm rugs.

which Lenin supposedly slept have identical iron frames, pillows and linens.
The explanations on the walls offer details like this:
"From Oct. 20 to Nov. 6, 1917, Lenin lived here and conducted the revolution."
But nowhere is there even the slightest clue about Lenin's personality, his personal life or the dark aspects of his character.

It is only inadvertently, in fact, that any of the sites says something remotely interesting to contemporary visitors. One of the apartments where Lenin briefly had belonged to a wealthy merchant, and it is preserved as it looked in those pre-revolutionary days: large, airy and richly furnished.
But to get to it, visitors must climb a dark, broken stairway strewn with garbage and snoop a grim legacy of Lenin's Soviet disciples, who transformed the once-beautiful Art Deco building into dismal communal flats, with four families stuffed into apartments built for one.

Horoscope

Listen to that one's advice, she or he will be lucky, too.
Taurus (April 20-May 20): If a co-worker gets on your nerves today, it's in the best of ways. Join forces with one who's going in the same direction you're headed.
Gemini (May 21-June 21): This is a nervous day for you. Love, friendship and possibilities abound. A very tonight will be magical.
Cancer (June 22-July 22): You may be frustrated by the wants or needs of a loved one. Your money is needed, but you're probably not willing to go along with a thousand one. Hold onto a few dollars.
Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Although most things should go well for you today, don't get out for one who tends to hold a grudge. If you don't do something, you'll be regretting it.
Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): A well-earned expense may be putting pressure on your savings. You'll come up with another way to make money, if you study from an old friend.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): You'll be successful all about anything you try, so you can afford to be picky. Don't trade your money around, though.
Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): If your home is the scene of furious brawls, you may have to get involved even if you don't feel like it. Run, you'll probably learn a lot and meet new people.
Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): At work, concentrate hard so you can finish a disappointing task. Later tonight, you should have no trouble finding interesting people to chat with.
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): If you've been a pessimist, take heart. Things are just about to take a turn in your favor.
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): This should be a successful day for you. Don't go around bragging, though, but everyone may share your opinion.
Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Instead of doing what one wants and making another angry, do all of each tomorrow. You need to choose a course of action that will benefit yourself, except if there's

Preserve

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bearing his body is lowered dramatically into a basement laboratory so technicians can provide what Denisov-Nikolsky describes as "necessary medical assistance."
A more exhaustive overhaul is done every 18 months, when scientists "study the body in detail and rub our liquids into it," Denisov-Nikolsky said. Also at that time, Lenin gets a new, custom-made navy blue suit and red spotted tie.

It's the next Firm

...It shares with The Firm a virtue for which no graceful word has yet been invented: page-turnability.
PHILLIP MARGOLIN GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Advertisement for 'The Firm' book by Phillip Margolin. Text: 'It's the next Firm... It shares with The Firm a virtue for which no graceful word has yet been invented: page-turnability.'

dressed these days than the scientists who minister to him. The government of President Boris Yeltsin stopped funding the institute more than two years ago, and that, combined with the loss of the old dictator contracts, forced the directors to start a side business. The institute is now testing medicines for a private pharmaceutical company.
But it's not enough. The institute is down to 40 full-time scientists, from a high of 60 when the Soviet Union was still intact, and most of the microscopes, beakers and test tubes in its downtown Moscow laboratories are collecting dust. The average monthly salary is equivalent to \$20, and last summer several monthly payrolls were missed altogether.

NATIONAL BESTSELLER!

Advertisement for 'The Firm' book. Text: 'PLAYING WAS JUST A WAY TO DREAM—until she hit the \$60 million jackpot and the dream came true.'

Advertisement for 'PREPS PLUS' magazine. Text: 'SWIMMING... PREPS PLUS STYLE. It's more than just the score. It's full-color coverage of the high school sports scene in your community, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.'