

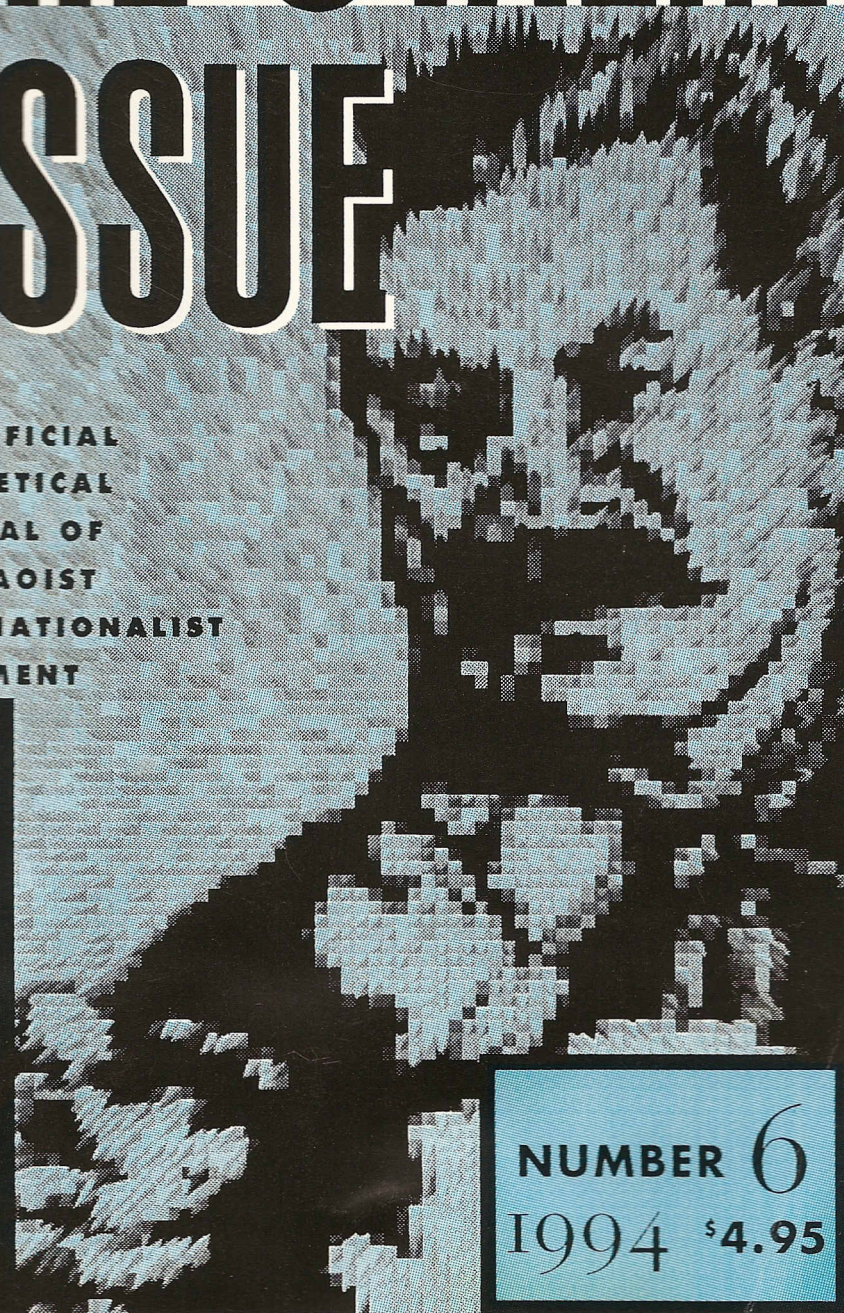
Struggle with Open Polemic | Stalin Bio's Reviewed | The United Front



MIM THEORY

THE STALIN ISSUE

THE OFFICIAL
THEORETICAL
JOURNAL OF
THE MAOIST
INTERNATIONALIST
MOVEMENT



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"Ever since the monster of imperialism came into being, the affairs of the world have become so closely interwoven that it is impossible to separate them. We Chinese have the spirit to fight the enemy to the last drop of our blood, the determination to recover our lost territory by our own efforts, and the ability to stand on our own feet in the family of nations. But this does not mean that we can dispense with international support; no, today international support is necessary for the revolutionary struggle of any nation or country."

— Mao Zedong,
December 1935.

"On Tactics Against
Japanese Imperialism,"

Selected Works of
Mao Zedong, Vol. 1, p. 170.

MIM THEORY

1994
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MAOIST INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT

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Maoism is very deep thought. It requires study, struggles and arguments, arguments, arguments. The imperialists print millions of pages a day telling their side of the story. MIM has as many thoughts as the imperialists, but not as much paper, especially the green kind.

Struggle with MIM—in person, by computer, by mail: just do it somehow because the imperialists are already struggling with you by television, newspapers and radio. No one can advance their own thinking and the cause of revolution by themselves. The most progress is brought about in the challenge of a revolutionary collective—a vanguard party.

MIM theory is the official theoretical journal of the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM). Subscriptions are \$10 per year/four issues. Overseas airmail is \$20 per year.

MIM also publishes MIM Notes, the party's official voice on current news. Subscriptions are \$12 per year or \$1 an issue.

MIM is an underground party that does not publish the names of its comrades in order to avoid state surveillance and repression that has been historically directed at communist parties and anti-imperialist movements.

"MC" in a byline means "MIM comrade" or a party member; "MA" means "MIM associate."

To send money to MIM for any purpose, send cash or a check payable to "ABS."

MIM

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What is MIM?

The Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) is a revolutionary communist party that upholds Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. MIM is an internationalist organization that works from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat; thus, its members are not Americans, but world citizens.



MIM struggles to end the oppression of all groups over groups: classes, genders, nations. MIM knows this is only possible by building public opinion to seize power through armed struggle.

Revolution is a reality for the United States as the military becomes over extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

MIM differs from other communist parties on three main questions: (1) MIM holds that after the proletariat seizes power in socialist revolution, the potential exists for capitalist restoration under the leadership of a new bourgeoisie within the communist party itself. In the case of the USSR, the bourgeoisie seized power after the death of Stalin in 1953; in China, it was after Mao's death and the overthrow of the Gang of Four in 1976. (2) MIM upholds the Chinese Cultural Revolution as the farthest advance of communism in human history. (3) MIM believes the North American white-working class is primarily a non-revolutionary worker-elite at this time; thus, it is not the principal vehicle to advance Maoism in this country.

MIM accepts people as members who agree on these basic principles and accept democratic centralism, the system of majority rule, on other questions of party line.

The theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is universally applicable. We should regard it not as a dogma, but as a guide to action. Studying it is not merely a matter of learning terms and phrases but of learning Marxism-Leninism as the science of revolution.

—Mao Zedong, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 208.

Number 6 1994

THE STALIN ISSUE

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Introduction to this issue

Anti-communist propagandists around the world opened up new offensives against Josef Stalin in 1985 when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and introduced glasnost, and in 1991 when the state capitalist Soviet Union fell apart. The attacks on Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1953 when it was a socialist country, are often ostensibly based on new evidence — documents previously held in secret Soviet government archives. For this reason, MIM now reviews some of the most influential anti-Stalin biographies.

Since MIM only defends Stalin as 70% correct, we undertook this review largely expecting to revise some of our views in support of Stalin. Instead, MIM has found that the quality of the opposition to Stalin still leaves much to be desired 40 years after his death. In particular the low level of scientific endeavor by Stalin's opponents is holding MIM back from advancing the process of struggle. MIM will eventually have to find someone fluent in Russian to undertake the study of Stalin archives directly. For now we will settle for a review of these biographies and advise interested readers to undertake detailed study of the specialist literature on economics and military matters.

There are now books on Stalin labeled "new," "conclusive," "from the inside," based on "secret archives," etc. Some also claim that it is a "time for judgement" on Stalin. This is a good way to sell books, but the contradictions among the scholars who oppose Stalin on all the important issues demonstrate that history is far from speaking a conclusive word on Stalin. Many people must spend a lot more time in the opened archives before Stalin can be completely summed up.

MIM is not asking anyone to love Josef Stalin as a person. Rather, we ask our comrades in the international communist movement, and critical thinkers in general, to apply a materialist method to evaluate Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union. Bourgeois culture places a great value on individual and personal power as an extension of private and personal property, which partly accounts for the bourgeois scholars' focus on Stalin the individual. MIM, by contrast, evaluates Stalin and the choices he made in the context of a materialist understanding of the internal and external challenges, conditions, and constraints on the Soviet Union in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.

A materialist appraisal of the Stalinist era in the Soviet Union analyzes the period in terms of its advances and setbacks for the development of socialism. To argue, as idealists do, that Stalinism was merely a "human rights" catastrophe ignores the numerous advances in socialist strategy effected during the Stalinist period, advances outlined in this edition of MIM Theory, crucial to contemporary communists.

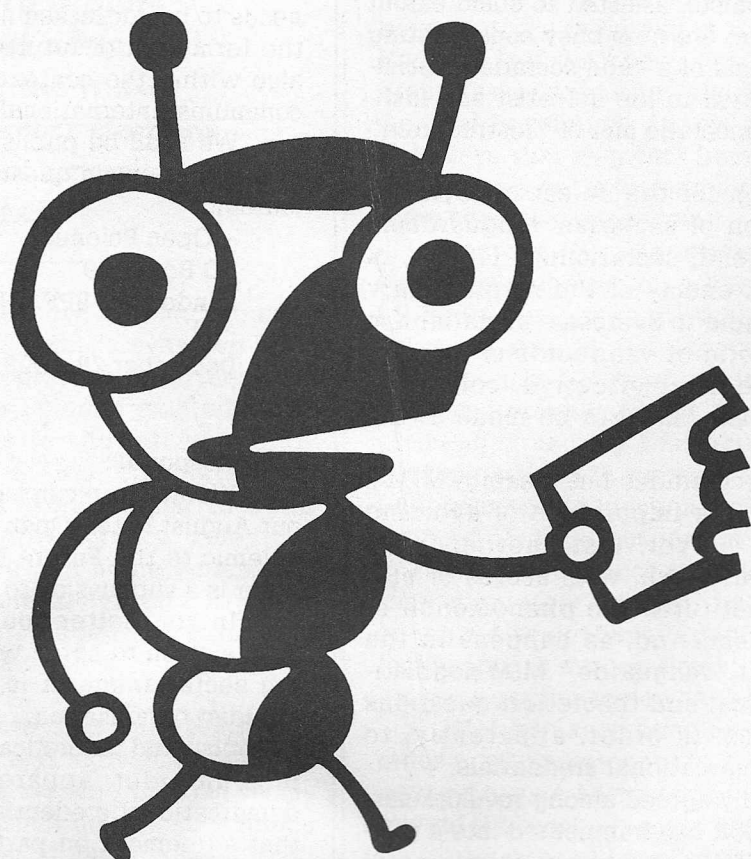
Stalin led the creation of the first socialist society, and in the process paved the way for many future struggles, setting important positive as well as negative examples. As the reader will see from the focus in this issue of MIM Theory, Stalin pioneered a crucial area of communist revolutionary strategy with the policy of the United Front, based on principles that remain crucial for revolutionaries today.

These two great achievements of the Soviet people — developing an industrialized socialist society and pioneering the United Front — led directly to the defeat of fascism in World War II. That victory in turn helped make possible socialist revolutions in China, Albania and other countries. Thus, the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership made important material and theoretical contributions to all socialist accomplishments that came after 1917.

From this history, MIM concludes that no revolutionary communist movement can succeed without a materialist understanding of the Soviet Union and Stalin's leadership — the good, the bad, and the ugly-but-necessary.

— MC5 & MC44

Chapter 1 **Letters**



Open Polemic struggles with MIM

Dear MIM:

With reference to your letter of 24 August 1993. . .

We regard revisionism, manifested in a rejection of that body of scientific knowledge referred to as Marxism-Leninism, and sectarianism, manifested in the existence of dogmatically demarcated, vanguardist organisations, as the enemies of the revolutionary movement. The one succours the other and both objectively serve the interests of reaction. For decades past, revisionism has enjoyed considerable success, not least with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Opposed to the concept of a vanguard party of the working class, revisionists, assisted to some extent by the politically naive, are now busy consolidating revisionism on the basis of a "non-sectarian, socialist movement" dedicated to the defeatist and fashionable, left social democratic aim of "restructured" capitalism.

The precondition for the defeat of revisionism is the eradication of sectarian vanguardism. As an established trend, sectarianism is now, in this sense, the main enemy of the revolutionary movement. The struggle to overcome sectarianism in its "organised" form of vanguardism through open polemic is the most effective, collective response to revisionism that can be made at the present time.

So we are sorry comrades but, despite MIM's claim to agree with the importance of avoiding sectarianism, it is, as yet, just another, vanguardist organisation which, with scores of others, collectively constitutes the phenomenon of sectarian vanguardism. And, as happens in the case of so many other "vanguards," MIM dogmatically converts historical and theoretical questions into basic principles, in order, apparently, to establish its own demarcational credentials.

It is now generally agreed among revolutionaries that the former USSR has fragmented into a variety of unstable, capitalist states but there is still some debate as to whether the fate of China has

been finally settled. These developments as well as the significance or otherwise of the Cultural Revolution are, and will continue to be, matters of historical interpretation which hopefully will enable us now and in the future to draw appropriate lessons.

But, we would stress that agreement on particular historical interpretations is only necessary to the extent that it enables us to meet the revolutionary demands of today and to ensure the movement's progress towards the future party of a new type.

Concerning other theoretical questions: The bourgeoisie as a class is founded on the private ownership of the means of production and it lives upon profits obtained from the exploitation of wage labour. The potentiality for bourgeois forces to newly arise is clearly a crucial theoretical question that needs to be addressed but, that does not make it a basic principle.

The character and extent of the "non-revolutionary worker-elite," or labour aristocracy, in the imperialist countries, and their common factor in this respect, is not a basic principle but, again, a theoretical question. A crucial one, of course, which needs to be addressed not only within the context of the formation of future parties of a new type but also within the context of the formation of a new communist international.

We shall be publishing both of our letters and MIM's three main questions in the next issue of the journal.

—Open Polemic

PO Box 1169

London W3 9PF ENGLAND

December 28, 1993

MIM Responds:

We are in receipt of your December 6 reply to our August letter, Open Polemic #8 and "From Open Polemic to the Future Party of a New Type." This letter is a submission to your magazine.

In your letter you inform MIM that "despite MIM's claim to agree with the importance of avoiding sectarianism, it is, as yet, just another, vanguardist organisation. . . MIM dogmatically converts historical and theoretical questions into basic principles, in order, apparently, to establish its own demarcational credentials. . . But we would stress that agreement on particular historical interpretations is only necessary to the extent that it enables

us to meet the revolutionary demands of today and to ensure the movement's progress towards the future party of a new type."

Open Polemic came to these conclusions with the receipt of MIM's first letter of contact with Open Polemic and questions that MIM asked on its three basic principles. It is apparently the practice of Open Polemic to skirt the manifestations of class struggle in practice, though it claims to the contrary: "In this way, we can all identify, not only those who simply do not support those fundamentals, but also those who support them in theory but not in actual practice." ("From Open Polemic to the Future Party of a New Type," p. 55)

In practice, long before Open Polemic existed, MIM opened its newspaper and theory journal and other media to "open polemic." This has included reviewing the positions of various British groups, complete with address and subscription rate information. We note that such information about the letter-writers is not available in Open Polemic #8.

**The vanguard is quite
simply the most advanced
proletarian, the most
scientifically correct element
of society that actually
exists.**

Though we are supposedly a "sect" equivalent to a "circle" in Open Polemic's eyes, we have already done much more in practice to further public polemics. Before Open Polemic existed, MIM collected a list of groups to the left of social-democracy in the United States, complete with addresses to distribute. A group similar to Open Polemic in Maryland, but now defunct, called our list "fair" and informative. On some occasions, MIM has steered its potential recruits to other organizations because MIM does not want any members with Trotskyist, anarchist or other incorrect ideologies.

Materially speaking, we distribute the literature of other organizations and individuals that we believe is most correct. We are also printing incorrect material for the purposes of polemic in volumes and in costs surpassing that of Open Polemic. Yet, Open Polemic needs to deny this without investiga-

tion "to establish its own demarcational credentials," because like it or not Open Polemic has a line.

MIM can sincerely offer the Open Polemic comrades that if they want to conduct "open polemic" they can work with MIM and form a fraternal party in England. There is nothing about being a part of this "vanguardist organization" that prevents "open polemic." The only thing that can stop the Open Polemic comrades is disagreement with MIM on the three main questions — the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution and the nature of the imperialist country working class — what we take as the cardinal questions in upholding Maoism in the imperialist countries.

THE SYMPTOMS

MIM has in practice demonstrated its belief in a need for open polemic. Where we disagree with the Open Polemic is its interpretation of history — much as it would like to deny having one.

Open Polemic starts with the assumption that 34 organizations claiming some adherence to Marxism-Leninism in the United Kingdom is too many. MIM is of the opinion that it isn't enough, because there is no longer a single Maoist party in England last we knew, despite the claims of one group that last we knew did not uphold the Chinese Cultural Revolution. At this moment we are forced to believe that elements from defunct organizations are now the de facto vanguard of England. We wish them success in regrouping.

Despite the agnosticism of Open Polemic, (admittedly abetted by some incorrect formulations by Stalin on this point) there is in each society a vanguard, even if that vanguard does not recognize itself as such. The vanguard is quite simply the most advanced proletarian, the most scientifically correct element of society that actually exists. There is always one, and in the case of Quebec for example, until recently, its function was carried out by organization(s) that did not recognize themselves as vanguard. However, since there was nothing in Quebec that concretely existed that was better or more advanced than these organizations, they were in fact vanguard in their time. (In recent years, the situation is getting somewhat better.)

MIM has seen time and time again that any other position amounts to liquidationism. There is never an excuse to adopt an agnostic attitude toward the most advanced pole that one is aware of, no matter how weak quantitatively. Indeed, once a revolutionary movement has been smashed, it is all

the more incumbent on comrades to seek out and breathe life into the new communist forces, however weak they may be due to the ebb of the movement. Even while studying, struggling and questioning, comrades must at every given moment come to a conclusion about what is the most advanced element in society. It means nothing less than applying revolutionary science in practice.

Having adopted its agnostic attitude toward historical questions, Open Polemic inevitably turns toward liquidationism — except on a more massive scale than imagined except by the bourgeoisie itself: "The general position of Open Polemic therefore implies, not only self-critical, ideological reappraisal on the part of all the 'vanguards', but also their political dissolution." ("From Open Polemic to the Future Party of a New Type," p. 33) MIM has seen this happen often enough in North America, but contrary to the position of Open Polemic and organizations like it in North America, the result has not been the creation of something better than what existed before.

Indeed, the evil of idealist agnosticism is here coupled with the evil of pragmatist, atheoretical "sizeism" as MIM calls it. The assumption is that if the comrades of the 34 organizations could unite, their numbers would make it possible to lead "the" working class.

Nowhere does Open Polemic feel a need to prove that such a strategy actually worked anytime in any country. (Its most thorough attempt is to equate all the revisionist groups with "circles" in Lenin's pre-1917 Russia — a position which in practice eliminates the distinction between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.)

Elsewhere, MIM has referred to this sort of "sizeist" position for the unity of the "left" (or substitute the "Marxist-Leninists") as dogmatic pragmatism. It's pragmatism for attempting to wed together various groups of differing theories helter-skelter and it's dogmatism because Open Polemic adheres to this position without any proof of its historical validity. It's only one more step to "dogmatic reformism" where a reformist strategy for the proletariat is advocated in the face of its abysmal history of failure relative to revolutionary struggle. Dogmatic pragmatism and dogmatic reformism themselves are reflections of the domination of the logic of bourgeois electoral politics in the superstructure. Having observed the bourgeois parties jockey for position in the Parliament and election campaigns for so long, the dogmatic pragmatists

consciously or unconsciously surmise that they are not in power because they don't play the head-counting and vote-counting games the competing bourgeois factions do.

The fact is that the most successful revolutions in this century were led by initially small and weak organizations that catapulted past much larger and amorphous organizations only because the smaller organizations had a more scientific grasp of reality. A real contribution that Open Polemic could make is to review the history of these movements and the arguments about size and see how they stand up. This would help our young communists with as yet no experience or learning in communist history.

In any case, Open Polemic has yet to absorb the lessons of the collapse of the Second International. At that time, Lenin and the Bolsheviks found it necessary to separate from what were superficially similar political ideologies — Menshevism/social-democracy above all. They also explicitly eschewed large membership if it meant any compromise with imperialism. Speaking for the Bolsheviks in 1916, Zinoviev suggested that it would be superior to be a thoroughly socialist organization 20% the size of a larger but more vacillating organization.

This position derived from a concrete analysis of that time period. In contrast, Open Polemic bemoans the plethora of organizations claiming Lenin. It does not appear to Open Polemic that there might be any reason that in the last 70 years something might have happened to justify these divisions, much as the Bolsheviks' separation from the Mensheviks and the Second International.

In 1916, Lenin and Zinoviev went into great detail in speeches on the exact nature of differences with the people they were not long ago associated with. They even detailed the social bases for the existence of German social-chauvinism, with analysis of material conditions in Germany, let alone the bases for such differences in Russia.

In contrast with Lenin and Zinoviev in 1916, Open Polemic is now playing the role of Trotsky — straddling the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and maintaining strict "neutrality," as he did in his years before he joined the Bolsheviks in 1917. The position of Open Polemic is an example of idealism — agnosticism.

Such idealism is rampant in the imperialist world that has many truths to learn and many to face. Probably half of the 34 groups that Open Polemic alludes to are Trotskyist of one shade or

another. Why does Open Polemic include them in its process? The answer is that it has an historical interpretation centering on the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917: "Historically then, the point of departure for Open Polemic, which bases itself firmly on the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, is, and can only be, the October revolution of 1917 and its immediate aftermath." ("From Open Polemic to the Future Party of a New Type," p. 6)

Open Polemic could have chosen the Chinese Revolution in 1949 or the Albanian Revolution or any number of revolutions, but it chose to focus on the only one that Trotskyists played a role in. This is not surprising given the common idealism between Trotskyism and Open Polemic, which both fail to face the fact that in practice Trotskyism has only split communist movements and has never produced a revolution anywhere in the world, not even a "deformed workers' state." In truth, it contributed to revolution in only one country, while the ideology of Stalin and Mao produced revolution in several countries.

Open Polemic, if it has a use, should educate communist youth with regard to the important historical facts in the international communist movement, but instead it chooses to obscure them by focussing comrades on the Russian Revolution of 1917, as if nothing happened since then, and as if the bulk of communist history is not found in the Third World.

Then Open Polemic has the gall to turn around and blame others for adopting an historical interpretation. It contributes to provincialism by arguing that these "historical" questions do not matter to the struggle of the here and now. This again is an atheoretical pragmatist and idealist mistake.

Having had no socialism in England or North America, the communist movements in these societies have no option but to study the socialist histories of other societies as a high priority. Open Polemic performs a very high priority task of the bourgeoisie by disarming those who would like to build socialism by steering them away from understanding the experience of building socialism: It's supposedly irrelevant to Open Polemic.

If comrades cannot face facts, the facts that are available now from societies that concretely existed, how will they ever unite to build socialism in countries where it never existed? If they cannot agree on what is capitalism (e.g. the Soviet Union in 1956) and what is socialism (e.g. China until 1976), how can they build socialism? No one can build anything

without knowing what it is they are building, unless it is merely another pie-in-the-sky ideal or poetry collection that needs building.

Knowing how to build socialism, and hence how to build a communist movement means being able to recognize socialism in practice first and foremost. Anything else is not worthy of the name.

THE CAUSES OF THE DISEASE

Idealism is the symptom, but why must so many parties avoid the simple facts of international communist history? Why must they retreat to the clouds of idealism? The question of what idealism is and how it manifests itself on the one hand is separate from its causes. Here we will explain to the reader why so many "communist" organizations exist in the imperialist countries. In the Third World, where the revolution heats up and starts to claim power, the masses quickly unite behind parties with a legacy in Stalin and Mao, as they do now in Peru and the Philippines. The question at hand is why the imperialist country "communists" appear to flail about in "division."

One important reason for the wide variety of revisionisms and opportunisms is superprofits and the corruption spawned by national chauvinism. That is the fundamental reason that not even the Chinese Revolution is of any account to these so-called communists.

Bribed in a million ways as Lenin said, the so-called communists in the imperialist countries ignore the revolutions following in Bolshevik traditions in China and Albania: The reason is simple — great nation chauvinism. When it comes to deciding on whom to unite with and struggle with, Open Polemic gives the great nation chauvinists credit instead of serving as a vehicle to help young communists face the realities of communist history.

As MIM explains elsewhere, such great nation chauvinism has such a large material basis that there is no longer a proletariat within the imperialist countries, only within the oppressed countries. (See MIM Theory 1) Even according to Lenin in his day, the whole stream of social-chauvinist organizations could not disappear under imperialism and in fact, they would flare up the closer revolution approached.

Another important reason for the variety of revisionisms is the disproportionate role that intellectuals play in communist ebbs, in times where there are no revolutionary opportunities. In addition, proportionately speaking there are more

intellectuals and middle-class consumers of intellectualism in the imperialist countries than in the oppressed countries. Intellectuals under capitalism build careers picking apart ideas and setting their own up as "original." They cannot help continuing this practice in the parties they build. The great majority of imperialist country intellectuals have never understood materialism. They strain under the discipline required of revolutionary movements and create millions of intellectual justifications for leaving the most advanced revolutionary movements.

QUICK DIAGNOSIS AND CURE

Most varieties if not the most important forms of "Marxist-Leninist" idealism require only the most elementary grasp of materialist methodology to eradicate. Having grasped materialism, we will easily eradicate sectarianism to the extent that it is possible in the imperialist countries.

In applying the materialist method, MIM has found it necessary to ask again and again, "what was better?" What method and theory produced the best results that were steps toward the elimination of oppression? (Never mind if the dictatorship of the proletariat is "deformed" or not: the question is, is it progressive or not and what produced that progressive step? In every case in the world, that step was produced by the communists in the tradition of Stalin and Mao and not in the tradition of Trotsky, the anarchists etc.)

In this fashion, MIM has easily eliminated most of the problem of sect variety — Trotskyism, humanism and unconscious anarchism. The idealists are able to criticize revolutionary movements in the traditions of Stalin and Mao all over the world only from the vantage point of ideals, and not from the vantage point of a superior practice.

Generally, every criticism that idealist-nihilists make of our tradition is doubly applicable to the critics. They ask, "where were you in Indonesia during the massacre of communists? Look how your side gave inadequate aid to Vietnam etc." The real question is where were the critics of the tradition of Stalin and Mao. The answer is they were criticizing from the sidelines without making a revolution themselves. As this has happened all over the world again and again, it is not a question of a mistake or missing subjective intention. It is a question of the materialist method itself and being able to apply it. There will be many imperialist country "communists"

able to understand this essay and the nature of materialism. There are very few that can face reality and apply it.

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Chapter 2 **Stalin Biographies**



The Josef Stalin bibliography

by MC5

Antonov-Ovseyenko.

The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyranny.

New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981, 374pp.

Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko's father was an insurrection leader in the October Revolution of 1917. From his military office, he helped Trotsky in a last gasp struggle against Stalin in 1925. Stalin "demoted" him to 12 years of diplomatic service and had him executed in 1937. His son survived and wrote this book, the most complete collection of hateful anti-Stalin rumors available from Soviet sources.

Bazhanov, Boris.

Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin.

David W. Doyle, trans. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990, 285pp.

While not surpassing Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko in hateful rumors, Boris Bazhanov is our most far-right wing critic of Stalin here. Bazhanov was a member of the intelligentsia who thought much of his own expertise and technocratic talents as Stalin's right-hand secretary in the 1920s before defecting. He may have been the most powerful person in his twenties at the time in the Soviet Union, but he did not understand much about Marxism. He did such a good job opposing Stalin after defecting, according to Bazhanov himself, the Nazis offered him a job in the German invasion of the Soviet Union. He rounds out his book declaiming the lack of will in the West to save Christian civilization from the communists.

Deutscher, Isaac. *Stalin: A Political Biography.*

NY: Vintage Books, 1960, 600pp.

Isaac Deutscher was a well-known Trotskyist. Like all Trotskyists he had his fallings out with other Trotskyists. His work demonstrates some experience with political and ideological issues that Trotskyists enjoy. Deutscher's is also the most overt-

ly racist of all the works reviewed by MIM in this issue of MIM Theory.

Djilas, Milovan.

Conversations with Stalin.

NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962, 211pp.

Djilas is a former follower of Stalin in Yugoslavia, who came to believe that a "new class" took over in the Soviet bloc and destroyed socialism. Mao had his views studied within the Chinese Communist Party as reference material, but Djilas believed that Stalin was "the greatest criminal in history." (Djilas, p. 187)

Khrushchev, N.

Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes.

Jerrold L. Schecter with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov trans. and ed. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1990, 219pp.

Nikita Khrushchev was Stalin's successor in the Soviet Union. He was the first leader of a communist government to restore capitalism (if we don't count Tito in Yugoslavia). In his "secret speech" in 1956 as party leader, the Soviet Union's Communist Party denounced Stalin for "crimes" against humanity.

Medvedev, Roy.

Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism. George Shriver, ed. and trans.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, 903pp.

Roy Medvedev was a "dissident" historian in the old Soviet Union, whose father was arrested by Stalin's government. (Medvedev, p. 619) Today Medvedev is a social-democrat, maybe even a "left social-democrat." His book is largely based on rumors — "by the victims of repression or their friends or relatives." (Medvedev, p. xx) He distinguishes himself from pure anti-communists by writing favorably of the "Old Bolsheviks" against Stalin, particularly where it came to upholding their human-rights. "They were revolutionaries who were sincerely striving to destroy the injustices and defects of society in Russia and the world of their time." (Medvedev, p. 472, see p. 471 for an explanation of his logic of laying moral blame contrasted with Solzhenitsyn's.)

Molotov, V. M. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics.* Compiled by Felix Chuev.

Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993, 438pp.

The late Molotov is perhaps the only author out of the above who might be on our side of the barricades. He was second to Stalin overall in the Stalin era and his work represents the thoughts of an insider who did not repudiate Stalin, even after Stalin had his wife arrested and prepared to have Molotov imprisoned or executed.

Molotov recognizes that Khrushchev took the Soviet Union off the socialist road, but Molotov did not subscribe to Mao's views. In fairness, he came close on some occasions, and we must account for what avenues of struggle were open to him, especially as someone well-known, very old and under surveillance. Molotov was already 66 when Khrushchev moved against him and other Stalin supporters in 1956. Molotov's memoirs come from the last 17 years of his 96 year life. During the 1960s, the Chinese communists made a point of hailing Molotov every chance they got, as a way of criticizing Khrushchev.

Stalin's daughter recalls how Molotov and his wife, even after being arrested by Stalin and after Stalin was dead, sat her down and told her: "Your father was a genius... There's no revolutionary spirit around nowadays, just opportunism everywhere... China's our only hope! Only they have kept alive the revolutionary spirit," said Molotov's wife while Molotov nodded and said "yes." (Roy Medvedev, *All Stalin's Men: Six Who Carried Out the Bloody Policies* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1985), pp. 107, 109.)

Pomper, Philip. *Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 446pp.

In that very large vague space between openly bourgeois politics and Trotskyism is Philip Pomper. For the most part he accepted the Trotskyist view of history while disagreeing with Trotsky on key points. Like Trotsky himself, Pomper has a penchant for psychobiography. Thus, we cannot expect any meaningful comparative economic or military analysis from Pomper, but he is above average among psychobiographers in trying to understand ideology and historical context.

Rancour-Lafferiere, Daniel. *The Mind of Stalin*. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1988, 161pp.

Daniel Rancour-Lafferiere is a typical bourgeois psychologist of the West. His view of Stalin is bourgeois mainstream and typical of the evils of the pre-scientific intelligentsia.

Tucker, Robert C.

Stalin as Revolutionary. New York, 1972.

Robert Tucker may consider himself a Marxist humanist; we're not sure. However, he is our most formidable opponent, above all because we believe he does understand Stalin's political line more than the other bourgeois experts do. Tucker knows Marxism-Leninism's ideological and political line as much as anyone can from the sidelines.

Ulam, Adam B. *Stalin: The Man and His Era*.

Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 760pp.

Adam Ulam is director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University — a major Cold War thinktank and CIA stronghold. His views, along with those of Robert Conquest and Richard Pipes, are those of Russia scholars with a large influence in the Western media and intelligence agencies. Along with Deutscher's book, his book suffers something of a marketing problem in that it is out-of-date, even in the 1989 edition, which for instance, came out before Bukharin was rehabilitated by Gorbachev.

Volkogonov, Dmitri. *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*.

Harold Shukman trans. New York: Grove

Weidenfeld, 1991, 642pp.

Dmitri Volkogonov poses as an ex-"hardliner" of Marxism-Leninism in the Brezhnev era. Among Stalin's opponents, he might be the most fair and he brings much new information to light from studying the Stalin archives. He is friendly to Trotsky and the Mensheviks. (Volkogonov, p. 547 for views on Mensheviks) His work is a good reason for studying the Russian works on the question before the Western works on Stalin, all other things being equal.

RECOMMENDED READING:

The Chinese Communist Party remains the best material to read on Stalin. In particular, see Mao Zedong Critique of Soviet Economics. New York: Monthly Review, 1977. Try also Peking Review, a magazine with articles on Stalin in the

1950s and early 1960s.

We also recommend Anna Louise Strong's *The Soviets Expected It*; New York: Dial Press, 1941, even though the Soviet Union expelled her for espionage. There were two other independent progressives who wrote worthwhile books at about the same time as Strong did. One is *Moscow 1937: My Visit Described for My Friends*, by Lion Feuchtwanger, translated by Irene Josephy; New York: Viking Press, 1937. The second is *Stalin: A New World Seen Through One Man*, by Henri Barbusse; NY: Macmillan Co., 1935.

By reading these books one can get the context from the time as things happened and before the inter-imperialist part of World War II happened—without the various inventions and post-hoc rationalizations of critics with the benefit of hindsight.

See also Bruce Franklin *The Essential Stalin*. New York: Doubleday, 1972.

Historical idealism rampant in Stalin biographies

The use of biographies and memoirs to evaluate Stalin is an approach fraught with danger. Bourgeois scholars and other Western individualist scholars (including Trotsky) are inclined toward writing biographies and memoirs because of their view that individuals make history. In this way, by engaging the subject of Stalin biographies at all, MIM is temporarily accepting a bourgeois agenda.

We warn the reader from the beginning that our method here is useful for refuting popular misconceptions and laying bare the contradictions of anti-communist propaganda, but it cannot bring complete understanding of the issues at stake.

For works that engage these subjects on a higher plane MIM recommends the economic work of Maurice Dobb and the political economy of Charles Bettelheim. While we don't agree with Dobb or Bettelheim, they have a serious grasp of political economic theory.

The advantage of studying these biographies is

that since most of the active opponents of Stalin are not capable of scientific analysis, this is the only way to understand what the enemy is thinking and writing about Stalin. Interestingly, there are only a few commonalties among the Stalin biographers themselves.

When it comes to bourgeois academics, there is not much middle ground between the irrelevant literature of specialists and the overarching literature of historical moralists. Because of implicit but blinding ideological assumptions, the bourgeois scholar is capable of focussing on a very limited question for a limited scientific exercise with little relevance. On the other hand, there are generalizing biographies in which we learn the authors' ideological assumptions and get a chance to deal with them in a straightforward fashion.

Since neither the bourgeois social science specialists nor the bourgeois biographers are able to seriously engage Marxism, it is better to deal with the bourgeois biographers because they exert greater influence in the media than do the more cautious and mundane writers in economics and sociology.

THE MATERIAL BASES OF PRE-SCIENTIFIC ENDEAVOR: THE BOURGEOISIE, THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN GOVERNORS AND GOVERNED

There are two kinds of opposition to Stalin — scientific and pre-scientific. Here we address the sources of popular pre-scientific opposition to Stalin.

The most obvious reason for a writer to oppose Stalin is opposition to communism as a goal. The bourgeoisie hates Stalin because he led a communist movement, not for anything about Stalin in particular. By the same token, the bourgeoisie would hate any movement leader who brought world-wide communism closer to actuality.

In contrast with the anti-communist bourgeoisie, some middle-class forces are willing to entertain the goal of a classless society without patriarchy and imperialism, if the price is not too high. Yet, this group of people includes members of the intelligentsia that have a career interest in espousing ideas for their own sake.

Since bourgeois academic institutions reward the intelligentsia for "original" ideas, the individual member of the intelligentsia has a penchant for criticizing all ideas except his or her own. They call MIM's references to and quotations of Stalin or Mao "dogmatic" because we recognize that our ideas

often come from somewhere else and are not original.

These intellectuals have a nihilist attitude — an attitude criticizing everything from the standpoint of ideas. Their approach to history is also idealist because it compares reality with ideals and finds reality lacking.

Adam Ulam — director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University, a major Cold War thinktank and CIA stronghold — comes close to recognizing the necessity for condemning Stalin not only in terms of some pre-set dogma such as Christian morals, but also in terms of what was actually possible. Ulam paraphrases the anti-Stalin currents in the Soviet Communist Party of the 1980s:

"To expose Stalin does not mean to minimize the achievements of the Soviet people during those years. But how much more could have been achieved without those crimes and sufferings!" (1)

This argument is absolutely necessary to avoid a simple religious-dogmatist error in criticizing Stalin. As Ulam knows, if he and the other critics cannot prove that something else better was possible, then they will have failed.

In the struggle to prove there was a better road not taken, the favorite recourse of the intellectual authors is to claim that one or another of Stalin's actions was "stupid" or "inefficient." For example, Robert Tucker, one of MIM's most formidable bourgeois opponents on Stalin, struggles mightily and desperately through hundreds of pages to prove that Stalin's pact with Hitler was not good for the Soviet Union. In so doing he found it necessary to make some laughable excuses for British and French 1938 appeasement of Hitler in Munich. (2)

The last words of Tucker's book describing Stalin as "a colossal bungler of high policy, and, as such, an enemy of the people" are the battle-cry of the intelligentsia. In accordance with the intelligentsia's interest as a group, they equate lack of competence with evil, regardless of class.

But the issue is not what we today, with all our scientific wizardry can conceive of, but what the people in the same time and place as Stalin could conceive of. In other words, it is necessary to prove that someone at the time was more "competent" than Stalin. The critics generally fail to do this. They often inadvertently help us demonstrate the foolishness of Stalin's political competitors for leadership of the Soviet communist party.

In general, nihilism is most prominent in the

humanities, followed by the social sciences. It is least prevalent in the practice of the natural sciences. Quoting Stalin and Mao on how to govern is considered dogmatism by the bourgeois intelligentsia, but working in a very narrow niche connected to Einstein's theory of relativity enjoys somewhat more respect in the intelligentsia. Nonetheless, there is a strong streak of nihilism throughout the intelligentsia in all areas of study.

A deadly combination of social forces is present in the nihilist intellectual, with no experience in state power, hired by bourgeois academic institutions. Scholars without experience in state power or concern for experience in state power are again liable to criticize without practical knowledge.

Only a handful of these intellectuals have actually ever run a socialist government. They have no experience in trying to reach communism. Indeed, they don't even have an activist's experience in organizing against imperialism. They know nothing about vanguard parties, movements or communist governments. Such intellectuals usually don't have much experience in capitalist government either, but if they do it is as a member of government intelligence agencies and not in the practical politics of actually trying to achieve a progressive goal.

These intellectuals serve the capitalist class well, because the capitalist class itself is usually not naive enough to make an appealing argument on its own behalf in front of the middle and working classes. Those capitalists who do have this talent of devising smokescreens for the capitalist class quickly become successful politicians.

In contrast with most capitalists, however, naive intellectuals, because they are close enough to the ordinary people to share some of their values, will sound very good attacking communist societies in the bourgeois media. The naivete of the intellectual with no experience in state power is most useful to the ruling class, which unleashes the naive intellectual to criticize foreign communist governments for something all the capitalist governments do with even greater intensity — unbeknownst to the culturally benighted or lying scholar.

Compare the proletarian intellectual of the capitalist countries with the bourgeois intellectual. The proletarian intellectual in the capitalist countries has grown up spoon-fed with imperialist propaganda. As a result s/he knows both the bourgeois academic world and the Marxist scientific approach.

In contrast, we shall see that the bourgeois intellectual is either not educated in any scientific

knowledge or willing to discard such knowledge when it comes to politics, economics, military and sociological matters. As a result, people who write 800-page biographies about Stalin nonetheless do not read what Stalin wrote and know nothing of Marxist-Leninist science.

THE PRE-SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENTSIA: PSYCHOLOGISTS, NIHILISTS AND RACISTS

Before science enjoyed its current-day prestige, intellectuals were the first magicians, founders of religions and witch-doctors. They created the superstitions that filled in where scientific knowledge was lacking. As priests, they used their abilities to gain financially from people trying to avoid the wrath of God or other deities. As magicians and witch-doctors they did much the same thing. What they had in common was an occupation on the mental side of the division of labor, while most labor remained physical labor.

So too it is with the intellectuals' relationship to Stalin and Marxism-Leninism as applied by Stalin. The bourgeois intellectuals are ignorant of Marxism-Leninism and scientific method and when they can't understand Stalin they must invent superstitions to maintain their own place in society as interpreters. Though the bourgeois intellectuals write thousands of pages, they are basically clueless about Stalin after all these years and can only spread rumors and pre-scientific criticisms.

HERO WORSHIP AND HISTORICAL IDEALISM

In a charge that has subsequently been repeated by intellectuals throughout the capitalist world, Trotsky once said that Stalin had no originality. According to Trotsky, in 1917, Stalin "showed no initiative whatever. He made not a single independent proposal" at meetings. (3) Trotsky simultaneously accuses Stalin of deviating from Leninism on one hand and never disagreeing with the Leninist line in the party on the other. As a true bourgeois intellectual, what is important to Trotsky is originality, not the ability to recognize the truth and defend it, even if that truth does first reside with another person.

According to Dimitri Volkogonov, a Soviet author sympathetic to Trotsky and the Mensheviks, "no one else [but Trotsky] wrote so caustically and with such a degree of caricature and invective about Stalin. But nor did anyone else do so much to expose Stalin." (4) He goes on to express his partial debt to Trotsky more completely:

"In my opinion, Stalinism is synonymous with alienation of the working people from power, the installation of a multi-faceted bureaucracy and the inculcation of dogmatic formulas in the public mind." (5)

Volkogonov says Stalin was the one to arrive at a false formulation of class struggle in the 1930s under which class struggle sharpens as socialism proceeds, but on the same page he says that Stalin showed no creativity, demonstrated the influence of his religious training and "never succeeded in freeing himself from the shackles of dogmatism." (6)

Ironically, according to Robert Tucker, "the thesis that the internal class war grows more intense with the approach to socialism is widely regarded as one idea that was truly original with Stalin." (7) In fact, the idea of class struggle under socialism originated with Lenin, but what is revealing is the way that Tucker and Volkogonov handle the facts as they see them.

Still other writers recount how Stalin was to blame for breaking with Lenin on creating "socialism in one country" and even "communism in one country." Thus, the peanut gallery of bourgeois intellectuals managed to call Stalin both unoriginal and a deviant from Marxism-Leninism at the same time.

These critics damn Stalin for not being "creative" or "brilliant," because to them that is the worst criticism they can make. Stalin's peers elected him leader for his ability and perseverance to get things done on behalf of the collective will — a will most concretely expressed in the thought of Lenin — but that just doesn't count for these biographers, who wish only to glorify those who stand above the rest.

DJILAS AND YUGOSLAVIA

Milovan Djilas is a former follower of Stalin in Yugoslavia, who came to believe that a "new class" took over in the Soviet bloc and destroyed socialism. Djilas also believed that Stalin was "the greatest criminal in history." (8) His book, *Conversations with Stalin*, is about Yugoslavia's revolution in the midst of World War II and its aftermath.

With an air of self-critical sarcasm which he means to apply to a whole generation of Stalin's political followers, Djilas titled his main chapters "Raptures," "Doubts" and "Disappointments." Throughout the work he makes it clear that he and others like him in Yugoslavia, including Tito, worshipped Stalin.

Unfortunately, Djilas is trying to prove that he was once serious about communism and now has his doubts and believes Stalin was a criminal. In contrast, MIM looks at the book as a classic case of simplistic ultraleftism leading to rightism. What we should gather from his chapter titled with the religious-sounding word "raptures" is not that Djilas followed Stalin to the hilt then, but that Djilas and his comrades from the very beginning did not apply the materialist method, and ended up holding Stalin to godly standards only to find Stalin lacking:

"Stalin was something more than a leader in battle. He was the incarnation of an idea, transfigured in Communist minds into pure idea, and thereby into something infallible and sinless." (9)

Ultraleftism pervades *Conversations with Stalin*. Here is Djilas fighting a war with global armies involved. He is helping to parachute supplies to the Yugoslav partisans, thinking about how to get a naval route of supply past the Germans and preparing for international relations as a leader of a new government. Despite all these goings-on, the most consistent complaint that Djilas has in his book is that the Soviet leaders drank alcohol:

"The drinking parties of the Soviet representatives, which were increasingly assuming the character of real bacchanalia and to which they were trying to entice the Yugoslav leaders, could only confirm in my eyes and in the eyes of many others the incongruity between Soviet ideals and actions, their profession of ethics in words and their amorality in deeds." (10)

Djilas transferred his spirituality from Christianity to Stalin. For Djilas, a communist is upright — no drinking, no excessive food, no sex and no sense of humor (though he denies this last point). He freely admits that he had a hard time restraining his religious impulses. When he first landed on Soviet soil, Djilas writes:

"I became embodied in the surge of the Volga and limitless gray steppes and found my primeval self filled with hitherto unknown inner urges. It occurred to me to kiss the Russian soil, the Soviet soil which I was treading and I would have done it had it not seemed religious." (11)

Djilas recalls one of his first encounters with a

Soviet general: "What kind of people are these? They don't drink, they don't eat! We Russians eat well, drink even better, and fight best of all!" (12)

Djilas did not approve:

"Even earlier one could detect a concealed anticipation of the feast among Soviet officers. Thus they all came predisposed to gorge and to guzzle. But the Yugoslavs went as if to a great trial; they had to drink, despite the fact this was not in accord with their 'Communist morality,' that is, with the mores of their army and Party." (13)

Not surprisingly, as a reborn Christian of the ultraleft, Djilas finds democratic centralism — even in war time — to seem phony. He complains that his articles were edited in the Soviet Union to reflect the line of the international communist movement. That meant focussing on the Yugoslavian war against the Nazis and down-playing the social revolution going on in Yugoslavia. Djilas bristles with simple nationalism on this point throughout the book.

The furthest he goes in his politics is a concern with how the Soviet attitude toward Yugoslavia manifests itself. While Stalin valued British aid to Yugoslavia in the midst of the war and didn't want to make it look like Yugoslavia was undergoing an implacable Marxist-Leninist revolution, Djilas would have traded it all for accolades in the Soviet newspapers. If the Yugoslav and Soviet peoples could not win the war with godly means, then it was not worth it to Djilas, who did not appreciate all of Stalin's diplomatic and political maneuvers — maneuvers that did succeed in establishing an Allied air base in Italy to supply the Yugoslav partisans.

We certainly cannot question the commitment of the Yugoslav partisans. There was plenty of bloodshed in Tito's revolution. But the human leadership material for revolution in Yugoslavia was not up to its task. This may have been a result of internal civil war in the communist ranks, something to which Djilas only alludes. Certainly Djilas and his comrades could fight, but they had no profound grasp of the science of Marxism-Leninism.

Yugoslavia's communists went from considering themselves Stalin's most loyal followers to calling themselves the communists most out of synch with Moscow. The path of Djilas' life is parallel to that of the Yugoslav revolution.

By 1984, Djilas was calling for a military build-up by the United States and Europe to counter what

he saw as the coming Soviet invasion. He also made the embarrassing prediction in 1984 — like all the other Western theorists of "totalitarianism" — that "The Soviet system within itself has no important or promising powers of reform." (14) Of course, Gorbachev came to power two years later and brought all the "reforms" that social-democrats like Djilas could want.

PSYCHOLOGY

"It is not difficult to imagine how much self-confidence and pride Lenin's theory must have given to Koba [Stalin's nickname —MC5], who had no recognized standing in official society, who could not play a brilliant part even in the underground. He must have craved some sort of psychological compensation." (15)

"The contrast between his power and his obscurity would have been galling even to a person of lesser ambition and pride." (16)

"Stalin gave no thought to the relation between ends and means. To him, in the pursuit of his personal aims, all means were suitable, including the most inhumane. As a result the cause of socialism was dealt a horrendous blow." (17)

If there is an award for worst psychological idealism on Stalin, Antonov-Ovseyenko has to be in the running:

"Kamenev, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, Frunze, Dzerzhinsky, Petrovsky, Skrypnik, Kosior. If these party leaders had united after Lenin's death, they could have barred Stalin's way to one-man rule. But were there any real men among them?" (18)

Antonov-Ovseyenko reduces history to personalities and the proper quantity of testosterone. Apparently real men would have violated party discipline, ganged up on Stalin and engaged in a war of personalities.

Later, Antonov-Ovseyenko contradicts his own psychological reasoning, and concludes that personalities were not in fact decisive. According to Antonov-Ovseyenko, if Kirov — a very popular and high-ranking leader in the party, and the head of the Leningrad party — had led the Soviet Union, it would not have made a bit of difference; it didn't even matter that Khrushchev (Stalin's successor who

accused Stalin of assassinating Kirov) denounced Stalin:

"The express train of pseudo-socialism had built up such speed that no one could have stopped it, not a group, still less a single individual." (19)

RACISM

"Essentially the Revolution means the people's final break with the Asiatic, with the seventeenth century, with Holy Russia and cockroaches." — Trotsky, 1924 (20)

"In Ethiopia in 1975, 100,000 people died of hunger. But the Ethiopians overthrew their emperor. Those backward, illiterate Africans did it. But in Stalin's Russia, no fewer than ten million died of hunger, and the Tyrant's rule only grew stronger." — Son of a Trotskyist seeking to vindicate his father (21)

"The poorer people are, the more simple and ignorant they are, the more they are susceptible to communist propaganda and the better the chance of the communist revolution succeeding. It is ensured in the countries of Africa and the miserable human anthills of Asia." — Bazhanov, an admirer of Trotsky (22)

The pre-scientific intelligentsia, knowing that it can't make a consistent scientific argument never mind win an argument against defenders of Stalin, frequently employs racism in dealing with Stalin.

We criticize this racism in regard to Stalin and not anti-Georgian chauvinism specifically, because the racist criticism of Stalin is that he was too "Asian" in outlook. This is not something particular to Stalin's Georgian ethnicity. The racist critics of Stalin — which includes most critics of Stalin — are criticizing the peoples of a whole continent as "despotic" and inferior in intelligence and culture. Georgia is just one part of that continent.

Consider the racist anti-Stalinism of Deutscher, as late as 1960:

"We shall only approach the same problem from another angle if we say that culturally all this meant a relative eclipse of European Russia in favour of the backward Asiatic and semi-Asiatic periphery. The standards of European Russia were levelled down and those of the Asiatic periphery

were levelled up. The intelligentsia of Leningrad and Moscow, who once distinguished themselves by their independent mind, and often surpassed their western European counterparts by the earnestness and élan of their intellectual pursuits, were now forced to give up many of their sophisticated aspirations and to meet half-way their much younger and cruder brothers as they came flocking into the universities straight from the Kirghizian or Bashkirian steppes. Under a leader who had himself come from the border of Europe and Asia, European Russia thus became more than half-assimilated to Asia....

"Thus it came about that even Russian poetry and fiction lost its old lustre. ...

"The assimilation of European to Asiatic Russia led to the spiritual isolation and detachment of Russia, as a whole, from Europe. ... The isolation was conditioned by the peculiar climate of the thirties; and it became complete during the great purges." (23)

So it is that the Trotskyist Deutscher explained the Great Purges with a racial theory and it is clear that somehow this is the "essence" of the matter for Deutscher: "Stalin, who was so well suited to speak on behalf of Russian communism to the peoples of the oriental fringe, was also well suited to oriental-ize his party." (24)

As if Europe had no despotism of its own to refer to in history, numerous writers spoke of Stalin as a classic "Oriental despot":

"The contrast between the remoteness of his person and the omnipresence of his influence did invest his figure, especially in the eyes of the younger generation, with something of that awe-inspiring quality by which oriental rulers used to impress their peoples." (25)

Lest anyone think only Deutscher bought into this racist Trotskyist garbage, fellow Menshevik sympathizer Dimitri Volkogonov also casually accepted it: "Trotsky had the much finer, brighter, richer intellect. Eye-witnesses and biographers all agree that his ideas were lively, that his culture was solidly European." (26)

The comparison of Stalin as "Asiatic" and Trotsky as "European" started with an emigre writer that Trotsky read named Essad Bey. (27) After Trotsky picked up the racist agenda, Bukharin also

called Stalin a "'petty Oriental despot'" in a Politburo meeting. (28) This was not the first connection between Trotsky and Bukharin.

In 1937, "The Nazi party organ, Volkischer Beobachter, commented editorially on 3 February. ... Stalin 'has made himself an oriental despot on the pattern of Genghis Khan or Tamerlane,'" quotes Robert Tucker, approvingly. (29)

Whether it was Bukharin, Trotsky or the Nazis, a common thread in anti-Stalinist criticism is racism. MIM is not denying that industry and science of Stalin's day were less developed in Asia than in Europe, or that Marx spoke of an Asian mode of production. But it's a completely different matter to talk about despotism and bureaucracy as a particularly Asian phenomenon. European history has its own share of despots and elements destructive to all culture. Having just witnessed World War I, Trotsky and Bukharin should have needed no more evidence for barbarism in the heart of Europe.

THE CASE OF MICHAEL FRUNZE

Again and again, Stalin's critics accuse him of ruthlessly and cunningly struggling for power for himself. These critics also accuse Stalin of having had his opponents killed in order to maintain his own power. Incapable of understanding anything about Marxist-Leninist politics applied by Stalin, the individualist critics reduce Soviet politics to something they can understand — personal power. They project all the evils of competitive capitalist society, in addition to the evils of all existing socialist societies, onto Stalin himself.

In the case of the important military official Michael Frunze, doctors recommended surgery for a diagnosed bleeding ulcer. The party then backed up the doctors and ordered Frunze to have the surgery for the good of the revolution, partly because Frunze himself was thinking of ignoring the doctors' advice. Frunze died at the operating table.

In the context of a struggle between Stalin and Zinoviev, a rumor arose that Stalin ordered the operation in order to have Frunze killed. Numerous authors repeated this slander that became libel. (30)

The Frunze rumor is the perfect example of pre-scientific thinking. Stalin is criticized for leading the party that ordered Frunze to undergo surgery. Yet, had the party overruled the surgery, Stalin surely would have been blamed for not going along with what the doctors said. Either way, the critics would have found Stalin conspiring to promote the repression of Frunze.

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

Stalin's biographers inevitably address the personality cult. (31) Adam Ulam is able to contribute to scientific discussion where others fail. Noting a speech in which Stalin rebuked those building up his personality cult in 1926, Ulam speculates that the statement was a disingenuous pose, but adds: "It is nonetheless significant that Stalin was capable of striking it." (32)

Others who found examples of Stalin's attacking the personality cult simply said that Stalin was insincere. Even when he was violently angry, as in the case of some World War II medals which Stalin refused to accept, thereby embarrassing his hosts, the anger is assumed to be insincere. (33) Stalin also opposed the publication of a book glorifying his childhood and called for the book to be burned. This too "was calculated in fact to enhance the glorification of Stalin, not to stop it." (34) In order to discount this evidence, the pre-scientific intelligentsia resorts to psychological conclusions about Stalin's "sincerity."

In June of 1945, Stalin read in Pravda that he had received two more medals and the title "Generalissimo." He called the people responsible, including Molotov and Malenkov, into a meeting and criticized them. (35) Stalin had quite a few medals and titles already, but he was struggling to make a combination of political points.

The most important point was that a civilian need not fight to earn leadership of the Generalissimo title. It implied that civilian political leaders would not have been in charge of the military except that Stalin's military exploits persuaded the military that he deserved the honor. It should go without saying that the party leader leads the army. Yet, despite his struggle against all the medals and the debasement of the medal-giving process by politics, Volkogonov concludes Stalin's anger was "fake."

Ulam correctly denied that Stalin's pursuit of power was a matter of personal vanity. His reasoning is admirable for a bourgeois scholar:

"Stalin could not have been motivated by personal vanity. On his fiftieth birthday, in December 1929, he was eulogized as the leader of his country in a manner surpassing any praise lavished on Lenin in his lifetime. Doubters and political enemies were crushed. No dictator could or would have wished for

more. Now a fifty-year-old man might in such circumstances turn to hedonistic rewards of power. Not a few despots would seek the laurels of foreign conquest. But neither mistresses nor military glory attracted Stalin. For the moment his megalomania took the form of vast schemes of social engineering." (36)

Ulam admits that Stalin accumulated power in order to carry out "social engineering," thereby avoiding the naive or sterile view that power is something pursued by people for "its own sake." Ulam is basically forced to admit that Stalin was a communist who sought power to force through the communist program. We hope everyone in MIM also has the guts to stand up to charges of this kind of megalomania. We need more such megalomaniacs, not fewer.

Ulam's other points are also pertinent to the communists of today. They do not accumulate power to accumulate wealth, build a harem or other goals which can usually be accomplished with wealth. Instead the communists build the power of the oppressed in order to eradicate the bases of power itself.

The quickest antidote to ultraleft liberalism is vigorous training in political economy. Ultraleft liberals can be quick to come around when social and economic science has made a sufficient impression.

As for the bourgeois intellectuals, it is especially disingenuous for them to criticize power-seeking "megalomania" by the communists, when these intellectuals fail to criticize the same or worse phenomena in the capitalist world.

Stalin was simply more honest than bourgeois dictators who hide unknown to the public in corporate boardrooms, the Pentagon and the CIA. Stalin honestly said he was leading a dictatorship of the proletariat and was accountable for his actions as general secretary. People with similar decision-making power in the West (such as billionaire Ross Perot) often do not have critical biographies written about them and their decisions, because they are "private" citizens.

The more intelligent of the pre-scientific intellectuals criticizing Stalin for his pursuit of power believe the foolish idea that Stalin really did have more power for oppression than his counterparts in the capitalist countries.

Most anti-Stalin intellectuals, however, are willing to leave out the issue of international comparison of power structures and power struggles

entirely. Most of the time the anti-Stalin intellectuals also leave out the issue of what organization of power does the most to eliminate the power that can be abused. They usually just prefer the power they can't see — the "invisible hand" of the free market.

Another frequent charge against Stalin is that he denied Trotsky's role in the Russian Revolution as part of his own attempt to have absolute personal power. Yet on numerous occasions before Trotsky became more and more outwardly treasonous to the Soviet Union, Stalin credited Trotsky in public. (He also once showed up at Trotsky's house on his birthday in a private attempt to "bury the hatchet.")

Here is one example of Stalin's praise for Trotsky:

"All practical work in connection with the organization of the uprising was done under the immediate direction of Comrade Trotsky, the President of the Petrograd Soviet. It can be stated with certainty that the party is indebted primarily and principally to Comrade Trotsky for the rapid going over of the garrison to the side of the Soviet and the efficient manner in which the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee was organized." (31)

How was this historical statement of Stalin's treated by the authors? Psychobiographer Philip Pomper said, simply, "Stalin knew how to withdraw, how to avoid direct confrontations with someone in a superior position, and how to wait in ambush." (38) If Stalin criticized people, he was scheming for power. If he praised the people who were supposedly his opponents in personal power struggle, he was still scheming for personal power. Either way, Stalin was damned in the eyes of Pomper and other bourgeois biographers.

Power struggle goes on all the time. The only proper rebuttal to the charge of "power struggle" is to prove that one person struggling for power will do more to eliminate all power of people over people than another person. Since Stalin argued that his course was necessary for communism and produced evidence to that effect, he had a rebuttal for the charge of "power struggle" which should be levelled at every politician and creator of public opinion.

THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Writing of the political as if it were only an extension of the personal, Pomper deals with the

grief that Stalin expressed with the death of his first wife. Again Pomper takes a pre-scientific approach in which the alleged Stalin of the Great Purges was the Stalin of 1905:

"Stalin did not show any more tenderness between 1905 and 1907 than he had before or after that time. Rather, he showed the same extreme militancy and casualness about lives expended in revolutionary struggle that he would exhibit on an epic scale after he had assumed supreme power." (39)

First of all, Pomper assumes that kindness cannot be expressed as a militant opposition to oppression. But more important is Pomper's twisted reasoning within his own bourgeois psychological context. Pomper had to write off Stalin's grief as "stylized romantic gestures at ceremonial occasions," and even count these gestures as "evidence" of Stalin's inherent evil. (40)

The pre-scientific moral scrutiny given to Stalin, in the case of his marriages or his meager private property, is far disproportionate to that given stars in the capitalist world. If Stalin did have absolute power and that was bad, why didn't he have a tremendous harem at least equivalent to Mick Jagger's or Magic Johnson's?

In all the criticism by all the biographers of this supposed megalomaniac, only Adam Ulam had the courage to point this out, and we know very well that most bourgeois and ultraleft critics would have left this out entirely with their moralistic approach. If the anti-Stalin critics wanted to talk about the abuses of power, they should have looked at the patriarchal privilege of the rich and famous in the West.

Dictators usually enrich themselves and their family. If Stalin sought "personal power," he did not benefit in this way either. Volkogonov admitted:

"Stalin had a natural bent for physical asceticism. When he died, he was found to have owned very few personal items — some uniforms, a pair of embroidered felt boots and a patched, peasant sheepskin coat. He did not love objects, he loved power." (41)

The same is said of Molotov, who died leaving only enough money to pay for his own funeral. At the same time, Stalin correctly insisted that "lifestyle, valuables and possessions" have nothing to do with a person's politics. (42) It is only the liber-

als who can't see that.

Some writers recount how Stalin, toward the end of his life, found time to see to the financial well-being of the parents and relatives of some of his comrades. Occasionally, when he had time, he would send them money from his salary kept in a safe. But his family obviously did not benefit greatly from his power the way the relatives of most dictators would.

His brother-in-law Stanislaw Redens was executed under his rule; he exiled two sisters-in-law; he relieved his son of a military command when he demonstrated incompetence and as a result, the son eventually ended in political disgrace with an alcoholism problem. Finally, when the son the country was more proud of was captured by the Nazis, Stalin refused to accept the Nazi offer of a trade for his own son. As a result his son was killed in a Nazi camp. (43) The other son — Vasili — was so little protected that he eventually got an eight year prison sentence, and had been seen telling everyone that his father was poisoned to death, (44) something that Molotov and other hard-core Stalin supporters find likely.

For Pomper and others, the fact that Stalin treated his family the same as everyone else only proved that he lacked any capacity for human emotion — "no chords of human feeling," as Volkogonov said. (45) On other hand, if Stalin had used his power to enrich his relatives, keep them out of political trouble and take his sons out of military service, the same critics would have accused him of abusing power.

For the most part Pomper accepted Trotsky's version of history. It's too bad that he wasn't able to follow up on one of his own bits of reasoning in refuting the far-right in Russia: "No matter on what side Trotsky erred — on that of clemency or cruelty — his failures would be seen in the light of his Jewishness." (46) MIM disagrees with Pomper, and would instead argue that Stalin's opposition to Trotsky was in the realm of political line differences, not anti-semitism. Ironically, however, we could employ his reasoning to say, more justly, that "no matter on what side Stalin erred — his failures and triumphs would have been seen in the light of his being a communist, and hence would have been labelled failures."

YOUNG STALIN

Harvard researcher Adam Ulam goes a long way toward remedying the view held by most Stalin

critics that Stalin was undistinguished in his career as youthful revolutionary. Often referring to Trotsky as overshadowing Stalin, the critics tend to deride Stalin as a "young man." Ulam, on the other hand, spends more than 100 pages on the preliminaries to October. He is also at one point able to distinguish between the young Stalin and the Stalin in power:

"We must not too glibly identify the young revolutionary's motivations and impulses with cynicism and craving for power or, by analogy with our own times, see him as acting out of 'alienation' as it is currently understood, out of revolt against parental authority." (47)

Another good reason to look at the young Stalin is the obvious political use of Stalin's early history. Even Roy Medvedev (*Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*), a social-democratic "dissident" Soviet historian whose father was arrested by Stalin's government, believes that some documents used to criticize Stalin's youth were forged. (48)

The documents in question purport to show that Stalin was a police agent under the tsar. Though the biographers do not generally think logically about evidence, they are a little better at collecting evidence and weighing its quality in isolation from the overall train of argument. Even the Western bourgeois psychologist Rancour-Lafferiere admitted that he was initially taken in by invented evidence against Stalin and recommended some authors who were good at debunking it. (49)

STALIN AND LENIN

Stalin rarely disagreed with Lenin, which is one reason Lenin initially pushed to have him as general secretary. There are only a few areas where Stalin disagreed and stuck to his position, instead of deciding that Lenin was more correct.

In *Stalin: A Political Biography*, Isaac Deutscher mentions that during the civil war (1917-1921), comrades noticed that Trotsky was the first to execute Bolsheviks and that Stalin seemed gentlemanly in comparison. According to Volkogonov, in all of 1917, Stalin never disagreed with Lenin except on one occasion. Stalin was the only Bolshevik who "voted against handing over leading liberals to revolutionary tribunals as enemies of the people." (50)

Even the most cynical Russians believe Stalin was better for the Soviet Union than Trotsky or other leaders would have been. While in the West

Trotsky serves as a vehicle for liberals wishing to disguise themselves as radicals, he never gained such popularity in Russia, because the people knew better. (51)

From MIM's impression of the leadership styles of Lenin and Stalin, Lenin was indeed the harsher leader. The difference was that Lenin was quick to push his comrades very hard when he felt they were veering off the correct course and he usually proved correct very quickly. In contrast, as Bukharin and others noted about Stalin — "the great giver of doses," (52) he would quickly raise an issue, but he would let people stew over an issue for years if necessary. Stalin tended to let the facts of day-to-day political struggle prove him correct, even if it took a long time.

One very important area of disagreement between Stalin and Lenin was the peasantry. Stalin distinguished himself for taking a simple pro-peasant line whereas Lenin advocated nationalization of the land with confiscation applied to the large landlords. Stalin, in contrast, said: "We must support full confiscation and redistribution of the [proprietors' land] to the peasants. Thus both nationalization and municipalization are unacceptable." (53)

Stalin's line on the peasantry eventually became the line of the Bolsheviks in 1917 (though Trotsky claims in *The Revolution Betrayed* that land was not denationalized until 1927).

Stalin may also have disagreed with Lenin in the earlier years over the need for theoretical and legal struggle as contrasted with his "practical" and underground work. Within the Bolshevik party this was a small difference, because Lenin backed Stalin as a necessary practitioner and supported, for example, Stalin's armed robberies to fund the party. Only a tiny minority of the party supported these practical efforts to fund the party. (54)

Stalin apparently referred to much polemical work as "a tempest in a teapot" though he would change his mind later and find the Leninist tempest necessary. Indeed, in 1910 Stalin found himself so put off by power struggle and polemics that he refused a position on the Central Committee, though he had been known for some years as the leader of Caucasus workers. (55)

From Lenin's point of view, Stalin "was rude" to his comrades. This was what Lenin said in his "Testament" — letters Lenin wrote at the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923 "discussing the functioning of the Central Committee and giving his

personal characterizations of its leading members." (56) Stalin correctly developed this question further by saying:

"It is significant that the Testament contains not one word, not a hint about Stalin's mistakes. It speaks only of Stalin's rudeness. But rudeness is not, nor can it be, a shortcoming of Stalin's political line or his positions." (57)

At about the same time at the end of his life, Lenin adopted a more liberal opinion on the national question than Stalin. (58) Stalin tended to push the class struggle within Soviet republics further, while Lenin worried more about great-Russian-chauvinism. On the whole though, Lenin did choose Stalin to head the nationalities commission and to write the important articles on the subject.

Finally, one last difference that Stalin had with Lenin presaged Maoism on military science. Stalin sought to push Lenin away from an "experts-in-control" line on military questions. He believed that Trotsky relied too much on old tsarist experts in the civil war and that it was much better to have "red" amateur military leaders than professional tsarist officers. When necessary, Stalin took authority at the front, sometimes at the expense of Lenin or Trotsky — in which case Lenin had to mediate differences between Stalin and Trotsky. (59)

Western communists often think of Mao as casting aside various negative "expert" tendencies in Stalin, but in many regards this is inaccurate. Stalin and Mao shared more fundamental views than is commonly understood. Trotsky criticized Mao for using guerrilla warfare as a Stalinist "adventure," as Mao and Stalin shared quite a bit in military strategic thinking.

The Chinese revisionists have often misquoted out of context Stalin's dictum that "cadres decide everything" to mean that good party and technical leaders, not the people, are decisive. In fact, Stalin contrasted cadres as people from the issue of technical matters. The quote in question ends this way:

"We must above all learn to value people, to value cadres, to value every worker who can be of use to our common cause. We must finally understand that of all the valuable forms of capital in the world the most valuable and decisive capital are people, cadres. We must remember that under our present conditions, cadres are all-decisive." (60)

1917-1918

Movement histories written by outsiders to the movements are a constant source of historical inaccuracy. The outsider historians usually place undue emphasis on the journalists' photos and largely ceremonial events in the movement. Although Adam Ulam is no Bolshevik, his work stands out for recognizing the nuts-and-bolts work that has to occur for a movement to succeed. Hence, he gives Stalin much more credit in 1917 than do most bourgeois individualist historians (including Trotsky).

According to Ulam, it was Stalin and Sverdlov who did the quiet behind-the-scenes work to keep the party together and functioning. Furthermore, Ulam explicitly rejects the overemphasis on revolutionary oratory in the movement. (61) Without the work of the quiet people like Stalin in the four months prior to October, 1917, the revolutionary situation could not have been seized by the Bolsheviks.

Furthermore, the fact that Stalin received the most votes to elected office on the newspaper and also in the organization that was an ancestor to the Politburo is evidence of his recognition within the party. (62)

More importantly, contrary to the critics who emphasize the role of public action, Ulam said that the reason Stalin was not cultivating his own fame in 1917 was that he was ordered not to. His assignment from the party was to stay out of the line of fire and in fact stay in reserve in case the top leaders were captured. (63)

Later, when Bukharin led opposition to Lenin's proposal of peace with the Germans during World War I — and did so to such an extent that Lenin and Sverdlov feared a coup — it appears that Stalin again took an assignment from Lenin to serve as reserve leadership. Hence, Stalin did not even attend the Party Congress, lest he also be arrested in the anticipated coup against Lenin and Sverdlov. (64)

Referring to this period of tension within the party, during the Purge Trials Stalin later argued correctly that Bukharin fomented the environment in which Lenin was shot by an assassin. Bukharin was allied with Social Revolutionaries, who opposed the 1918 Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany that led to the Soviet Union's withdrawal from World War I. It was just such a Social Revolutionary who shot and injured Lenin.

In the civil war that followed the Bolshevik seizure of power, Stalin played a very large role,

dashing from place to place, like Trotsky did. This belied any notion that Stalin had a "fence-sitter" personality as Trotsky tried to suggest. In this most dangerous work, Stalin also excelled, and even Ulam admitted that once again a primeval, Stalin-as-power-struggler theory would not do:

"To give him justice, however, it was not a role which a man who was interested only in power would have sought. Such a man would have preferred to sit in the relative safety of Moscow rather than shoulder hazardous responsibilities in the war zone. A mere politician would have opted for pulling the strings from the center, for building a power base at the head of one of the main Party organizations, as Zinoviev was already doing in Petrograd and Kamenev in Moscow." (65)

LENIN'S DEATH

The biographers point out that when Lenin died, Stalin tendered his resignation at a Central Committee meeting following the Thirteenth Party Congress, because Lenin had asked for Stalin to be removed as general secretary in his political will, known as "Lenin's Testament." (66) Of course there are those who write about the resignation as just another political ploy. If he offered to resign from the top post, critics accuse him of scheming: if he had stayed in the post, he would have been accused of abusing the power Lenin didn't want him to have.

After the December, 1927 15th Congress, Stalin put forward categorically that he should be relieved of his post:

"I think recent circumstances have forced the party to have me in this post, as someone severe enough to provide the antidote to the opposition [Trotsky and Zinoviev, who had been crushed — MC5]. We have Lenin's instructions moreover and I think it is now time to carry them out. I therefore request the plenum to release me from the post of General Secretary. I assure you, comrades, the party can only gain from this." (67)

Nonetheless, the party majority wanted Stalin to retain his post, and he recognized he could not be right or carry his Bolshevik honor without obeying the party majority.

That was not the last time that Stalin offered to resign from his posts in the party. None of the biographers argue that the party was so threatened by Stalin that it could not have forced him out of leader-

ship as late as 1928, and probably as late as 1934. Upon the death of Lenin, the party decided that it needed Stalin's services in the role that he had. In the end, Stalin resigned the job of General Secretary in 1952, a year before his death. (68)

TROTSKY

Even the worst of the Russian historians tend to do better than the Western historians, because the Russian writers are able to look beyond the personal power struggle to the larger context. Social Democrat Roy Medvedev criticized the most common analyses of Stalin:

"It would be just as wrong to follow certain Western historians and portray the struggle among different groups in the party after Lenin's death as merely an unprincipled battle for power, concealed under various theoretical arguments for appearance's sake. No, there were serious theoretical and practical disagreements in the twenties, and they resulted in an important struggle of ideas, especially over the question of the methods and possibilities of socialist construction in the USSR." (69)

Nonetheless, Medvedev goes on to say, "It is true, however, that for Stalin the question of power was the main one." (70)

As early as the 14th Party Congress, many people were calling for Trotsky to be purged. Stalin on the other hand opposed purges in general at that meeting (71), just as he had opposed the purge of Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1917.

Though it can be said that Stalin definitely repressed people who did not agree with him, especially in the late 1930s, it cannot be said that Stalin acted hastily. The feud with Trotsky lasted for years. By the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927, Stalin had clear majority support against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. (72)

To make up for what his line did not have in popularity, Trotsky turned to the military that he formerly headed and where he still had some influence. According to Volkogonov:

"With the help of his old ally, Antonov-Ovseyenko, who was head of the Political Administration of the Revvoensoviet, he proposed to use the armed forces to demonstrate against the Central Committee's line. But, with few exceptions, the Communists in the army and navy would not support him, either." (73)

The fact that Trotsky went to the military after being criticized overwhelmingly inside the party is interesting for two reasons. First, Antonov-Ovseyenko's son would later deny his father's role in opposing the Central Committee. (74) Second, in that context, Trotsky found himself forced to admit that he was seeking to become the party leader through a power-struggle.

While Trotsky was in hot water already in 1924 for such actions as pitting the army against the Central Committee, he did not stop there. Stalin was quite cautious in his approach to communist unity. He let Trotsky expose himself several times before leading decisive action. Trotsky thereby educated the whole party politically as a negative example.

From the 1930s on, Trotsky became increasingly irrelevant and he himself seemed to admit to being tired. The Amerikan Trotskyist Max Eastman noticed that Trotsky's predictions regarding collectivization of agriculture and the political fortunes of Stalin were wrong starting around 1930.

Furthermore, though he agreed with many of Trotsky's criticisms of Stalin, even Medvedev notices in the later 1930s, "in his public statements he often mistook wish for reality." (75) Trotsky continued to maintain that Stalin's "centrist" "Bonapartism" would be thrown on the ash-heap of history either by the right-wing charging Stalin with "Trotskyism" or by the workers in new revolutions.

MIM has always argued that Trotsky was an idealist. His ideas had the most reality in the early 1920s when it seemed as though Germany might have a communist revolution. Once the German revolutionary movement went down in defeat, Trotsky fell out of step with existing conditions and could not make concrete analyses necessary for the advance of revolution.

BUKHARIN AND THE NEW ECONOMIC PROGRAM

"Let it be said simply that Stalin's 'October' [collectivization —MC5] was one of our violent century's most monstrous crimes against humanity." — Robert Tucker (76)

"Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy were in no sense conservative. They were good Marxists with a fervent hope of achieving an industrialized and socialist Russia and of seeing Communism prevail in the world. But they hoped to achieve these ends gradually and without undue cost in human suffering ... and the history of Russia and Communism

would surely have been happier had they been allowed to guide them." —Adam Ulam (77)

In the mid- to late-1920s, Bukharin advocated for the continuation of the New Economic Program (NEP) and the preservation of the voluntary and private character of agricultural production.

The best discussion of the Bukharin line and its context comes in a chapter from the anti-communist Walter Laquer. In *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, Laquer makes numerous comparisons between Stalin and Hitler and finds Hitler morally preferable.

Nonetheless, Laquer concludes it wasn't clear that Bukharin really had an alternate strategy and even Gorbachev's allies concluded there was little maneuvering room between Stalin and Bukharin given the upcoming war with Hitler and the need for rapid growth of heavy industry.

According to Ulam, but contrary to Bukharin's wife Anna Larina, Bukharin did indeed scheme with Kamenev to remove Stalin, just as Stalin charged in the Purge Trials. According to Ulam, any intelligent person could see that Bukharin was mobilizing for a coup against Stalin. As evidence, he pointed to the fact that Bukharin told Kamenev about two high-ranking GPU officials who would support Bukharin. (78) The GPU, the State Political Administration, was the State Security Agency which preceded the NKVD.

Ironically, at the time Trotsky also supported the Bukharin platform. Originally Trotsky criticized Bukharin over his ideas for the slow pace of collectivization and development. Whereas Trotsky had been in favor of militarized labor in the countryside and collectivization, once Stalin pushed for collectivization at the appropriate moment, Trotsky swung to the right to mimic Bukharin, who was calling for voluntary economic relations in the countryside.

Medvedev praises Trotsky's platform. (79) Hence, there is and was a united opposition of anarchists, social-democrats, Bukharinites and Trotskyists who one way or another opposed Stalin's line on collectivization. (80)

Stalin more than doubled the portion of grain procured by the state from the peasants through the success of collectivization. (81) 1930 and 1931 were years of great success. Later there were reports of famine. Stalin did cut back the procurement of grain, but the critics say he should have done more to alleviate famine. (82)

By 1934, the state procured 40 percent of all

grain. (83) In terms of political control of grain, there is no doubt that the power of the kulaks (rich peasants) to appropriate grain fell radically and the power of the central government increased.

In his own defense, Stalin pointed out that other countries had industrialized using barbaric methods. The Euro-American settlers committed genocide against the native population and imported slaves into the United States. As for the other countries, Stalin said their wealth was soaked in the blood of war:

"We are completing the change-over from a peasant country to an industrial one without help from the outside world. How did other countries make this journey? England created her industry by robbing her colonies for a period of fully two hundred years. There can be no question of our taking the same path. Germany took five billion [francs] from defeated France. But that way, too, the way of robbery through victorious wars, is not for us." (84)

To this day, there is no record of a bloodless industrialization; Mao's China was no exception.

In addition to the danger of famine in the cities and the need to prepare for war by the imperialists, the peasants themselves were a reason for a decisive move to collectivization. In his book *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky takes a position between Stalin and Bukharin once the collectivization process started. He thought it should take 10 years and that Stalin lurched from right to ultraleft on the question.

The other writers reviewed here also focus on the question of collectivization pace and the hardships of the peasants. None but Tucker mentions the class war that did break out and could have expanded:

"There were thirty-eight armed outbreaks in the Central Black Earth province between 17 December 1929 and 14 February 1930. In various places the peasant rebels put forward slogans like: 'We're for the Soviet regime, but without Communists!'" (85)

Fifteen thousand peasants in Central Asia also undertook armed struggle against the state in February 1930. The situation required military intervention from Moscow. (86) In such a situation, a lack of decisiveness would have amounted to a green light for civil war, a genuine class war. In such cases

it is better to use force decisively to avoid having to mobilize the whole army for widespread violence.

Not everyone thought that quick collectivization was a bad idea. A notable victory for Stalin was the conversion of Trotskyist Opposition economist Preobrazhensky. After collectivization went better than the Trotskyists imagined for three or four years, he said that if you vote with Stalin you'll never go wrong. (87)

HOMOSEXUALITY

In 1933, Stalin banned same-gender sex between consenting adults. There is no defense for this action. All we can say is that there weren't many political leaders anywhere then that were any better. (88)

The famous writer Maxim Gorky published an article in Pravda criticizing fascist Germany for allowing homosexuality. Apparently some people thought, "'Destroy homosexuals and fascism will disappear.'" (89) The psycho-sexual theories of politics are not restricted to the right-wing attacking the left, as this example shows, but MIM nonetheless opposes all psycho-sexual theories or pseudo-theories of politics.

Illustrating the creativity and the lengths to which the pre-scientific intelligentsia will go to avoid science, according to Daniel Rancour-Lafferiere, Stalin sought the Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler because he identified with Hitler and found him sexually attractive. (90)

THE ASSASSINATION OF SERGEI MIRONOVICH KIROV

According to Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin organized the assassination of Kirov — a very popular and high-ranking leader in the party, and the head of the Leningrad party. Khrushchev speculated there would not be convincing documentary evidence to uncover because Stalin verbally ordered Yagoda, the head of security agency NKVD, to do it. (91)

The Stalin critics see the Kirov assassination as a crucial turning point in the Stalin era. According to them, Stalin used the assassination to justify the repressions of subsequent years, as public opinion swung behind Stalin for firm action against internal enemies of the state. MIM cannot deny that the killing of Kirov was one of the things that generated support for Stalin's line and indeed pushed Stalin, who said he had been "four years too late" in cracking down on the political atmosphere that created

the killing of Kirov.

Despite the propaganda offensive against Stalin, many observers still don't believe Stalin had Kirov killed. (92) Of course, Molotov does not believe it, and says that Kirov was Stalin's favorite in the party. (93) A KGB commission in 1956 found that Stalin did not do it, but Khrushchev suppressed that report. (94) Likewise, bourgeois academic Ulam is among those who don't believe Stalin was behind this pivotal event in the public consciousness. According to Ulam:

"Who lies? Everybody. It is admittedly impossible for someone writing in 1973 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to establish the circumstances of a murder committed in Leningrad on December 1, 1934. But there are certain probabilities as well as facts." (95)

According to Ulam, Stalin was so concerned about assassination attempts it is unlikely he would have had Kirov assassinated successfully: "Anyone familiar with the history of the Russian revolutionary movement must know how intoxicating the news of a successful political assassination can be to victims of political oppression." (96)

It is indeed odd that some of the same critics who, like Tucker, stress over and over that Stalin was "paranoid" about assassination attempts on himself, also believe that Stalin secretly masterminded the greatest assassination of Russian communist history. Once again, this contradiction escaped most of the biographers, with the exception of Ulam and Molotov.

Ulam believes Stalin had an "utter lack of moral sensitivity" (97) as a great "criminal," but this did not prevent Ulam from deploying logic from time to time when it came to the minority of his book in which he sweeps away some anti-Stalin garbage. (98)

Ulam reminds the reader of the international context: "Had the international situation not been what it was, it is at least possible that Stalin's career as dictator would have come to an end in 1933-34. He did not as yet rule the party through terror." (99)

About one-quarter of the party opposed Stalin as general secretary at the time and some Old Bolsheviks apparently favored putting in Kirov as Stalin's replacement at the 17th Congress in 1934.

Some have said that this provided Stalin a motive for killing Kirov.

In the late 1930s the party leadership tended to kill off those party members who caused confusion. And while Kirov himself did not stray from the party line, as correctly enunciated by Stalin, some dissident party members were looking to use Kirov's popularity against the Stalin line in the party.

The idealists had a profound wish in retrospect — "anybody but Stalin." They could not agree among themselves why and in the case of Kirov supporters, obviously did not care about political line. They just wanted to seize power in Kirov's name and then bring forward their own agenda. In the case of the people writing about it years later, they wish someone had seized power in Kirov's name. Hence, from all this, we learn one tactic of opportunists is to pretend they don't disagree and then to seek a change in leadership without political grounds.

The charge against Stalin mainly makes sense from the perspective of 1936 to 1938, when those who persisted in straying from the party line did get executed. However, Kirov died in 1934, not 1936. If Stalin were going to start killing opponents, we think he would have started with those causing more direct trouble than Kirov. Kirov himself opposed the move to have him named general secretary and reported the effort to Stalin. The only confusion entering was in the people seeking to use Kirov, not Kirov himself.

As for the question of whether or not Kirov should have replaced Stalin, it is reassuring that Molotov answered the question just as MIM would have:

"Let them say what they will, but what is valuable in Kirov from a political point of view? Just cite me his ideas that are distinguished by their value or utility — nowhere! Are they distinguished from what Stalin said by their originality, did they say something new?" (100)

Kirov did not in fact have a significant line difference with Stalin. According to Robert Tucker, Kirov advocated increasing attention to housing and consumer goods around 1933 in an effort to boost morale within the Soviet Union, in preparation for a long battle against the Germans. According to Tucker, Stalin, on the other hand, had not yet made up his mind but instead let events dictate the pace. In 1934, Stalin began adopting some of Kirov's pro-

posals. (101)

Based on a reading of their speeches, Tucker argues that both Bukharin and Kirov were more anti-fascist than Stalin. (102) However, other writers have pointed out that the Soviet leaders played divided roles when it came to foreign policy. One leader would say one thing to sound out the Germans and Stalin would say nothing or the opposite as part of a plan for diplomatic dealings. This way the Soviet Union learned of the reactions of the other countries and could play its cards cautiously. As it turns out, party leaders and propagandists said one thing to the people and Stalin said another to the governments of the imperialist countries. MIM finds nothing wrong with this tactic.

Ironically, the very justification for the Great Terror of the late 1930s undermines Tucker's view that Stalin showed a pro-German tilt all along. Inconveniently for Tucker's theory, Stalin condemned the killing of Kirov as the willingness of Zinoviev to conspire with fascism. As a result, the German government took offense and told Stalin so. Nonetheless, the trials connected to the Kirov killing mentioned a Gestapo connection. (103)

Since Kirov replaced Zinoviev as leader in Leningrad, it is not surprising that Zinoviev or his followers organized the killing of Kirov as the first step back to power. Molotov believes that Kirov's killer was angry for being kicked out of the party, and served as good material for the aspirations of the Zinovievites.

There is no denying that Kirov's killer, Nikolaev, had some well-placed help at the top that allowed Nikolaev to get near Kirov. But these circumstances do not cast doubt on Stalin any more than on the Leningrad local party members and Zinovievites. Molotov concludes "Nikolaev, as it were, acted on his own, but, judging by his past, he was a Zinovievite." (104)

SEXUAL POLITICS OF THE KIROV ASSASSINATION

In line with the Bolshevik attitude on such matters, Molotov did not even mention that it was widely rumored that Kirov was sleeping with Nikolaev's wife. All that Molotov said was a very cryptic reference in passing: "I think women had something to do with it. At Smolny Stalin interrogated Nikolaev's wife." (105)

Perhaps in the United States, such evidence would have been the be-all-and-end-all piece of evidence connected to the murder. In the United States, the most common cause of murder (according to the

police definition) is relationships between men and women. The killer is most commonly the spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend of the victim. (106)

In the Soviet Union however, this never received the attention it would have here, because the question still remained in most people's minds — why would Nikolaev kill a top party leader just for sleeping with his wife? What is the politics of that? MIM believes that this Soviet handling of the Kirov/Nikolaev case was several qualitative levels higher than the level at which it would have been handled in the United States. The Soviets were interested in the political atmosphere and where society was headed overall, rather than the individual relationships valued so highly in the West.

It was not appropriate to reduce the issue to one of jealousy. That would only lower the thinking of the masses. It was also not appropriate to remember Kirov after his death by lurid press accounts. Unfortunately, to the extent that the CPSU has taken the high road on the handling of this question, they have left the Western critics the freedom to invent all kinds of fantasies.

A sensational press account of Kirov's sleeping with Nikolaev's wife probably would have quelled most of the desire of Western scholars to blame Stalin, because public opinion would have decided it was a matter of sexual jealousy.

Some anti-Stalin critics want to criticize all Marxism-Leninism as "totalitarianism" from 1917 to 1990, while some want to take more easily defended positions against Stalin of the mid- to late-1930s. If the critics say that Stalin had "absolute power" before 1934, it's hard to explain the necessity of the Kirov assassination from Stalin's perspective.

On the other hand, if the critics try to restrict their argument to the period from 1934 to 1938, the danger to the critics is that many readers will accept that World War II was already on by the time of the Kirov assassination and that Stalin's repressions from 1936 to 1938 hit criminals, traitors and wavers who would have undermined the Soviet side in the coming war with Germany. (107)

THE GREAT TERROR

"The simple truth must be stated: not one of the tyrants and despots of the past persecuted and destroyed so many of his compatriots." —Medvedev (108)

"I have examined critically the various accounts of why Stalin unleashed the terror of 1936-

1939. There is no need to overly complicate the explanation. His main motive (and here I agree completely with Yakubovich [a Socialist Revolutionary Party leader —MC5]) was lust for power, boundless ambition. This all-consuming lust appeared in Stalin much earlier than 1936. Even though he had great power, it was not enough — he wanted absolute power and unlimited submission to his will." —Medvedev, upholding the most popular ideology and contradicting himself on other motivations Stalin supposedly had. (109)

"Thus, in considering the personal aspect of the repression in the thirties, we must take into account not only Stalin's ambition and vanity but also his cruelty and viciousness. We must also note the contradiction between Stalin's limitless ambition and his limited abilities. It was this very contradiction that drove Stalin into conflict not only with those he saw as his present or future opponents but also with many Old Bolsheviks who were personally devoted to him." —Medvedev (110)

"Thanks to 1937 there was no fifth column in our country during the war. ... I don't think we did the right thing to have rehabilitated many of the military who were repressed in 1937. [Referring to rehabilitations after Stalin died and Molotov was out of power —MC5] The documents have not yet seen the light, but in time things will be cleared up. It's unlikely those people were spies, but they were definitely linked with foreign intelligence services. The main thing, however, is that at the decisive moment they could not be depended on." —Molotov (111)

"'Why don't you see the basic picture? ... What is our duty to the coming world crisis? We must come up to it with as much wheat as possible, as much iron and steel as possible, as many healthy people as possible, and as few wreckers as possible. We are going to do it. ... You are concerned with these people's psychology. To hell with their psychology! Whether it is guilt or exhaustion, fine feelings or high treason, whatever spreads doubt and defeatism among our people must be cleaned out.' — Soviet friend of Anna Louise Strong on the so-called Purge Trials. (112)

In evaluating the Great Terror — the office purge, the purge trials and the forced internal migrations — MIM must point out that despite all these repressive actions that Stalin took, "the total

number of former Soviet citizens who took up arms on the enemy side was approximately one million." (113)

Hitler lost the war because his profound racism prevented him from joining up with right-wing forces in the Soviet Union. Some of his officer corps considered a coup to institute more sensible policies to speed up fascist victory by allying more with a Soviet fifth column. Had more of a fifth column existed for ready exploitation in the Soviet Union — as such fifth columns existed in all other European countries — the officers may have deposed Hitler and history might have been different.

The Nazi officers who tried to recruit right-wing, Soviet defector Boris Bazhanov, among others, would have favored such a move to ally with sympathetic peoples in the Soviet Union, according to Bazhanov himself.

Which of the Bolshevik party members does Bazhanov admire? Trotsky. Bazhanov thought only Lenin and Trotsky were principled, while the rest were lowly practitioners seeking power for themselves. (114) Between Lenin and Trotsky, Bazhanov preferred Trotsky: "Of all the Bolshevik leaders, Trotsky impressed me as the most important and the most talented." (115)

Referring to the Central Committee and Stalin as opportunists, Bazhanov believed Trotsky:

"was a communist of more substance. ... Had he been an unprincipled opportunist and taken the head of this opposition, accepting its rightist policy, he would have had every chance (as was soon apparent) to capture the Party majority and win his victory. But that would have meant a turn to the right, a Thermidor, liquidation of communism. Trotsky was a 100 percent fanatic communist." (116)

To Bazhanov, the defeat of the opposition by Stalin was "tragic." (117) Not surprisingly, the same Bazhanov who supports Trotsky and found it tragic he did not win the power struggle turned around at the end of his book, Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin, and called for a reinforcement of Christianity. Once again, we see the appeal of the ultraleft leading to the right.

Leaders, such as Trotsky, who simplified issues into dogmas similar to Christianity had great appeal for those who would otherwise be on the far-right.

Bazhanov was present when Trotsky gave his famous Clemenceau declaration in 1927. According

to Bazhanov, Trotsky promised to shoot all the leaders there upon taking power, something cut from Deutscher's excerpt of the Clemenceau declaration. Ironically, Western liberals, including Deutscher, have seen in the Clemenceau declaration a favorable reference by Trotsky to parliamentary government that can change governments in the midst of war. What they left out is highly revealing:

"We, in addition, will shoot this band of contemptible bureaucrats who have betrayed the Revolution. Yes, we'll do it. You too, you'd like to shoot us, but you dare not. We dare to do it because it will be an absolutely indispensable condition for winning." (118)

As it was, there was a fifth column in the Soviet Union, albeit a weaker one than in the Western countries. Lieutenant General A. A. Vlasov led the effort rounding up 90 Russian battalions to fight for Hitler by May, 1943. Almost another 90 may have come from various ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, according to a book based on the Vlasov archives. (119) By all accounts though, this fifth column was too little too late to save Hitler. Vlasov was executed in 1946.

The success of Stalin's strategy for dealing with the fifth column generated a lazy kind of opportunism which denied that it was ever reality in Europe. It is not possible to understand what happened in the Soviet Union without understanding what happened throughout Europe. The creation of Nazi-occupied Vichy France was only the culmination of a strategy that had brought many smaller victories to the Nazis before the invasion of France and before the "Great Terror." All the books reviewed here lack a sense of this comparative military situation, even in the broadest sense.

The eradication of the fifth column in the Soviet Union happened in several ways: first, by executing enemies; second, by internally deporting peoples unfavorable to the regime; and third, by successful foreign policy maneuvers that prevented quick victories by Hitler.

If Stalin had not undertaken his policies in the late 1930s, Nazi Germany would have conquered all of Europe. While Britain may have capitulated and the United States may have negotiated, Germany would have grown strong and it would have had a very good chance of defeating both Britain and the United States in the long run. Perhaps there would have been two empires — the U.S. empire and the

German Nazi empire that would have subsequently collided.

According to some, if it were not for the Trials, the Nazis would have won the war. Molotov disagrees and says that it wouldn't have broken the back of the Soviet Union:

"That's an extreme supposition. There would have been more victims. We would have prevailed in any case. But it would have required millions more victims. We would have had to beat back the German invasion and fight the internal enemy at the same time." (120)

Molotov also writes about the circumstances under which an internal power struggle with the Trotskys and Zinovievs would have resulted in making the Soviet Union into a colony of Germany if the purges and other actions had not been carried out. (121)

Pre-scientific moralists assert that their moral principles hold for all times and circumstances. Such moralists like to believe that something like the Bible, the Ten Commandments or the ideas of some moral philosopher or another should be permanent and unbending, especially to avoid the idea that the "ends justifies the means."

In contrast, we oppose moralism because what is right in the fight against fascism is not necessarily right in ordinary times. The Soviet Union could not tolerate any waverings or vacillations in dealing with the Nazis. However, as even Molotov said, "Today such actions would be completely unjustified." (122)

The success and might of the Soviet Union would dictate that it could keep its Zinovievs, Bukharins and other dissidents alive. It would have no exceedingly grave cost the way it did in all of Europe in the 1930s. Today the problem for the Soviet Union (now ex-Soviet Union) is to get back on the socialist road. It does not face outright colonization as it did in the 1930s.

Shota Ivanovich, one of Molotov's supporters right into the 1970s and 1980s, had more than enough reason to begrudge Molotov: the NKVD took away his father when he was a child and they executed him. Yet Ivanovich still concluded: "It was horrible, I don't deny it and I well remember it, but admittedly without the state security agencies there would be no Soviet power today." (123)

Others who also have suffered in the Stalin era nonetheless stood up to Khrushchev and others who

asked them to write material against Stalin! (124) Even the person who lost his father understood the overall horrible situation that the Soviet Union was in — and he blamed imperialism, not Stalin.

In the squeeze between Moscow and Berlin, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania lined up with Berlin. Other peoples in the eastern parts of the Soviet Union also harbored supporters of Hitler. Lately it has become the fashion to write about the period as if everyone were innocent of Nazi sympathies in East Europe. This historical amnesia serves in the condemnation of Stalin and the whitewashing of fascism. It is with disgust that we report that historians like Medvedev write about this as if the fifth columns were not a reality seen in countries as powerful as France but just a "belief" of ignorant peoples duped by Stalin.

MILITARY OFFICER PURGE

Great Britain's Winston Churchill was one of the people who continued to believe, as Stalin did, that there actually was an officers' plot. (125) Others with no love for Stalin who thought the same were the emigre Mensheviks in Paris. In the March 25, 1937 issue of their newspaper, the Socialist Courier, they wrote, "There is no question that the Germans have managed to have their agents in the U.S.S.R. penetrate the most responsible positions." (126)

To this day, some of the people involved in passing information around on the question of Soviet military officers are a mystery. Tucker claims that Stalin forged evidence of a military plot with the willing help of the Gestapo. He claims that the Gestapo was only too willing to oblige Stalin by providing him reasons to execute his military officers and that Stalin took advantage of this.

On the other hand, Tucker admits that he can't be sure whose side Russian emigre General Nikolai Skoblin was playing in the liaison between the German Gestapo and the Soviet Union's NKVD. (127)

MIM believes it is more important to note the general atmosphere in Europe with regard to pro-Nazi military conspiracies than to pinpoint any fact in particular. Many kinds of information were in the air, some false and some true. Overall though, there is no doubt that there was active pro-Nazi activity all over Europe — in militaries, governments and the public at large. The only reason Tucker and some other authors must downplay the facts is that they know the facts vindicate Stalin.

Once again, Stalin correctly saw a connection to Trotskyism. Abroad, Trotsky himself was claiming

that there were military officers "not few in number" wishing to "get rid of Stalin!" as Trotsky requested. (128) There was no need for Stalin to make this up. Trotsky openly voiced his politics.

Medvedev found himself unable to mention in an organized way any of the circumstances that might lead someone to conclude that Stalin knew something that others like Medvedev didn't. If the Czechs, French and British thought something was in the air and advised Stalin to watch for Nazi plots in the military, which there proved to be in other countries, why does Medvedev play the fool? Such criticisms play into naivete, an anarchism critical of all people who have to hold state power, and also oddly enough, a nationalism of the wishful boasting sort that says that Russia should have defeated the Germans easily if it were not for Stalin.

Later Medvedev openly argues for his moralistic approach.

"Socialist doctrine, of which Marxism-Leninism represents certain forms and stages, is not only a system of concepts; it is also a system of convictions and moral principles, which Lenin did not always set forth accurately. As for Stalin, he was totally lacking in such qualities. In fact, Stalin was not so much a participant in the socialist revolution as one of its fellow-travellers." (129)

Medvedev also attempts to paint himself as a Marxist, for which he must be called "revisionist," though today he works politically with social-democrats: "True Marxism must not and cannot take the position that the revolutionary goal justifies in advance any means used to attain it." (130)

Medvedev claims the banner of Marx from time to time. Of course, Marx was not a priest calling for the pursuit of communism at any cost. Instead, he believed great sacrifices should be made to speed up the arrival of an inevitable system, a conclusion he came to only after concrete analysis, not moral deduction.

To Medvedev's credit, he had read Michael Voslensky's book *Nomenklatura*, which is a valiant attempt at a class analysis of the Stalin era. Voslensky points out that there were beneficiaries from the purges. Many honest, hard-working and young people moved up into positions emptied of those people purged. This included many people educated only under the Soviet system, including scientists and engineers who never would have had an education if it were not for the slave-driving pace

of industrialization. (131)

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIALS: SUCCESSFUL CONFESSIONS

One of the great mysteries of the so-called Purge Trials is that the people on trial almost uniformly confessed in spectacular fashion and then made public self-criticism. The first Western reaction is that the confessions resulted from torture. But critics, the foreign press, members of government and the public attended the Trials. At these trials, the accused could have stood up and condemned the torture and exposed the whole farce to the whole world, but they did not.

Some say that Stalin's security agencies perfected torture. (132) In particular, they say that the NKVD threatened the accused's families, so the accused were afraid to tell the world.

On the other hand, some have asked how it was that the same Bolsheviks who went through the tsar's prisons and the civil war now broke down under torture. Certainly there should have been more rebellion from such people against torture!

According to Adam Ulam, having used torture to obtain signatures to whatever he wanted, Stalin just snowed everyone with invented detail:

"People are often willing to believe the most thinly established slander when it comes to human motivations, but when it comes to actual plots, credulity and interest grow in proportion to the richness of detail." (133)

We believe that a combination of Arthur Koestler's and Molotov's explanation is correct. According to Koestler's fictional representation of the Trials in *Darkness at Noon*, the typical Trial victim confessed in order to serve the party. They had decided that if they must die, they should die for terrible deeds against the Soviet Union and thus serve as an example to the people of what is right and wrong. (134)

According to Molotov, the party members confessed to terrible deeds, 90% of the time because they were true, and 10% of the time in order to make the party look foolish. By confessing to truly absurd crimes, they hoped to discredit the party in some instances. (135) Either way, with Koestler's approach or Molotov's, there is a kind of political struggle of symbolism occurring. The accused at the Trial did not look at the matters the way that Westerners would. They were struggling within a

party for differing interpretations of what is criminal and what is not in the service of the people.

All sides realized that there was no prior precedent in bourgeois judicial history for what was right or wrong. For example, creating party factions was considered wrong by almost all the accused. This would not be illegal in a bourgeois political party. More importantly, the communists would also tend to accept that the creation of a certain political climate had very real world consequences, and that politics could easily entail committing crimes against the people. This point of view is not understood by Western writers or by contemporary Russians far removed from the earlier decades of the revolution.

Stalin and Molotov themselves made a number of concessions on the question of the repressions. First they admitted they killed too many people. Molotov estimates one or two out of 10 did not deserve their fate. (136) We believe the following quote from NKVD leader Yezhov is typical for the time: "There will be some innocent victims in this fight against fascist agents. . . . Better that ten innocent people should suffer than one spy get away." (137)

A crucial issue of the Stalin era is the notion of law and the definition of enemy of the people. The biographers reviewed here, with the exception of Molotov, all argue that Zinoviev, Bukharin, etc. were not enemies of the people. Tucker said they just disagreed with Stalin — a typical liberal criticism of Stalin. (138)

Tucker does not address the fact that his definition of enemy of the people is not applicable to the Soviet Union. He did not agree with Stalin's definition of "enemy" and he did not agree with Soviet laws. This fundamental difference in world views is the crux of the matter for most of the biographers, though they are generally too moralistic to realize it.

Today's biographers write as if no one opposed the line of the party, least of all people within the party. They argue as lawyers in court who disagree with the laws and lie about their clients to get them off. However, at the time, people inside the party and out knew what was permissible and what was not permissible. Many intellectuals chose to make themselves useless to the Revolution by opposing Stalin's line, and they were not surprised suddenly with Stalin's iron hand. That is why so many people, even Westerners in the Soviet Union, could understand what was happening, whereas biographers today pretend they do not.

Even a famous criticism of Stalin printed by the Menshevik press in exile could see very clearly what it was that Stalin required. There was no mystery to the "Old Bolshevik," who the Mensheviks claimed was Bukharin speaking under a pseudonym:

"In short, we are all critics, destructionists — not builders. This was all to the good — in the past; but now, when we must occupy ourselves with constructive building, it is all hopelessly bad. It is impossible to build anything enduring with such human materials, composed of skeptics and critics. What must be considered now, first and foremost, is the necessity of enduring construction, particularly because Soviet Russia facing tremendous perturbations, such as will arise inevitably with the coming of war. It was thus that Stalin reasoned." (139)

Thus, the critics knew what Stalin wanted, had a long time to learn it in "doses," and they also realized the popularity of what Stalin was saying, but still they continued to act like people out of power and unaccustomed to wielding it.

Joseph E. Davies, former prosecutor and then current U.S. ambassador, believed the Purge Trials proved the guilt of the accused. Another person who witnessed actions of the "wreckers" to which the show trials referred was an anti-communist engineer named John Littlepage, quoted in U.S. professor Bruce Franklin's introduction to a collection of Stalin's writings called *The Essential Stalin*.

There were numerous engineers from the West in the Soviet Union in the 1930s who saw wrecking with their own eyes and attested to it. (140)

Stalin explained his line in Congress after Congress and he got majority support for the things he did. (141) The laws were not American laws, but Soviet laws. People like Bukharin knew in advance what the penalties for factional activity were. For example, Bukharin knew very well that his meeting with Kamenev was off-limits. Volkogonov was honest enough to say exactly how Bukharin met Kamenev and the fact that the kind of meeting Bukharin had with Kamenev was illegal.

Furthermore, Trotsky's supporters got involved after Kamenev and Bukharin met — to recirculate what Bukharin said. This much Volkogonov was honest enough to admit while the others imply that Stalin made all this up. (142) Wrecking was another reality of Trotskyism, with Trotsky's slogan "Sensitive blows must be delivered to sensitive places." (143) The other biographers' attempts to

paint the victims of Stalin's repression as completely unaware are either naive or straightforward anti-Stalin propaganda.

Tucker disagrees with the concept of democratic centralism in a party or a whole society. He also shares the liberal assumption that intelligent discussion is a panacea for society, instead of a waste of time or a potentially destabilizing factor — as Stalin believed in his circumstances. Stalin and the Communist Party disagreed with Tucker. That does not give biographers like Tucker the right to say Stalin fabricated his cases.

"A KGB report issued on February 13, 1990, acknowledges that 786,000 people were shot to death as enemies of the people in the Soviet Union from 1930 to 1953. During this period 3,778,234 people were sentenced for counterrevolutionary activity or crimes against the state. The cases of more than 850,000 people were posthumously reconsidered by the KGB and the prosecutor's office from 1988 to 1990, and all but 12,000 of them were cleared." (147)

The Gorbachev KGB cited here may be correct or perhaps Antonov-Ovseyenko is correct with his figure nearly 10 times that high for prison shootings. Either way it's not likely Stalin had that many personal enemies. The critics who write that way about the 1930s only cheapen the whole subject. MIM advises them to take up jobs writing for grocery-store tabloids, soap operas or legal settlements in family law.

Stalin himself was the ultimate authority as to whether someone violated Soviet law. (We would argue that such a role is also played by various individuals in the capitalist societies as well.) It is also true that Stalin led a dictatorship in which disagreeing with a certain set of views often lead to execution. Some have tried to say that Stalin didn't know about all the crimes committed in his name. In a literal sense this has to be true, because Stalin did not and could not have remembered millions of people much less intervened in millions of cases. (144)

However, Stalin must bear responsibility for the system established. But there was still no better option than Stalin for the Soviet Union. Claiming that there was, or that Stalin simply craved power "for its own sake," is just the naivete of the stateless or the carping of the pre-scientific intelligentsia.

The pre-scientific liberal intellectuals always make the leap from the above admissions or characteristics regarding the Stalin era to saying people were executed for disagreeing with Stalin, as if it

were just a personality conflict of some sort. But Stalin and his authority were defined politically. The fact that in any system of justice someone has authority is confused by the liberals with the substance of that justice itself. Having a personal conflict with Stalin was not what got people executed, except in the minds of people who cannot envision conflicts greater than pre-political personal conflicts.

TROTSKY'S ASSASSINATION

While it is true Stalin had ultimate authority and hence ultimate responsibility, he could only accomplish what he did by being in line with requirements of the times. For example, Laquer points to a Spaniard who felt Trotsky's assassin actually had his own motivations for killing Trotsky, and that Stalin's hiring of him was secondary.

Jacson-Mornard Mercader had been a lieutenant and political commissar in the Spanish Republican army that lost in its civil war with Franco. According to Juan Kobo, Mercader blamed the anarchists for setting back the anti-fascist cause and he blamed Trotsky for supporting them. (145)

Mercader himself insisted for 20 years in prison he had come up with the idea himself of killing Trotsky in Mexico. Despite having been a follower of Trotsky's, he believed that Trotsky was "'conspiring with the leaders of capitalist countries'" against the Soviet Union, a charge easily verified by Trotsky's speeches. (146)

There is entirely too much mystery attached to Trotsky's assassination. Certainly Stalin and the NKVD favored Trotsky's assassination. The political atmosphere from Moscow and Spain backed that call, but Mercader himself had to have strong motivation to undertake the risky assignment and spend 20 years in prison.

The anarchists were very strong in Spain and there is also evidence that Trotsky had some influence in those circles and organizations, one place in history where we can speak concretely of a relatively large — and failed — "Trotarchist" practice. The usual drivel we hear about Spain is that Stalin somehow repressed the revolution there in the 1930s all the way from Moscow, when in fact, the Soviet Union was the only country in the world to provide arms to the anti-fascist forces there.

KATYN MASSACRE AND THE CONTEXT OF VACILLATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

In either 1940 or 1941, Stalin ordered the execution of a large group of Polish military officers. He

later blamed the Nazis for the mass executions. (148) Asked about the massacre, Molotov said, significantly, "The Poles, the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Rumanians — they are all the most awful nationalists. They would do anything." (149)

Stalin had more than enough reasons to have the Polish military officers executed. First, the British, French and Czech governments at the time all believed that Hitler had established connections with military officers in countries that he had designs on. These other countries' leaders found it reasonable that Stalin could be suspicious of his officers.

In fact, before the massacre in Katyn, the Polish government itself had vacillated considerably, and had foolishly leaned to the German side in the German-Soviet conflict. Furthermore, as admitted by Adam Ulam, Robert Tucker and others, Poland would not allow the Soviet Union to assist Czechoslovakia by sending troops through Poland to fight Hitler in Czechoslovakia, precisely because Poland wanted and eventually obtained from Hitler a "slice" of Czechoslovakia itself. (150)

Polish nationalists and anti-communist propagandists want to ignore this history now. The truth is painful. Living in North America, where there is equally wretched or more wretched nationalism, MIM has perceptual knowledge of this kind of nationalism. The Polish people are not entirely to blame for the vacillations of their government, but they cannot blame the communists for seeing to the fight against fascism. The same is true of other neighbors of the Soviet Union (151)

On this point, again, even Khrushchev can serve as an historical reminder. Here's what he had to say about the Poles before Hitler made his moves in Eastern Europe:

"We also talked to the Poles about aiding Czechoslovakia, but they refused to permit our troops to pass through their territory. What was worse, the Poles refused to participate in any kind of joint effort against the aggression that was rising against Poland from Germany. On the contrary, there was an exchange of pleasantries between the Polish and the German governments. The Polish foreign minister, Jozef Beck, went to Berlin on Poland's behalf and a fascist leader came to Poland from Berlin. That's how the two countries demonstrated their friendship." (152)

Actually, the issue went further than "pleas-

antries," though such "pleasantries" were uncalled for in the context of Hitler's invasion of Eastern Europe. Anna Louise Strong does an excellent job in describing the context at the time in Poland and the Baltic states. Today's biographers would do well to go back and read her work to understand the complicated international situation at the time. Though Strong knew nothing of the Katyn massacre, and hence cannot be accused of apologizing for it in 1941, she had numerous impressions of the Polish military at that time. Not all collaborated with the Nazis and some eventually took an active role with the Red Army and other pro-independence organizations.

For example, the Lvov garrison fought the Nazis. However, in her 1941 book *The Soviets Expected It*, Strong quoted a Polish general about the approach of war. He said that Poland was ready to fight the Soviet Union, but not Germany. (153) Most people forget that Poland signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler before Stalin did.

On January 26, 1934, Marshall Pilsudski signed the pact with Hitler and hastened to tell Stalin that he meant no anti-Soviet harm, though it was clear even to Tucker that there was harm in the treaty. (154) Little wonder, then, that one irony of history finds Poland actually hailing the Hitler-Stalin Non-Aggression Pact when it happened. As it turns out, the Soviet Union was the last to make a treaty. The Italians, Japanese, Poles, British and French had already made their deals with Hitler when Stalin finally made his.

A Polish Colonel and head of the Foreign Ministry supported the German-Soviet pact of 1939. "'Poland never expected any military aid from Russia and did not want any,'" Colonel Beck made a point of saying. (155) Once the Germans invaded Poland, Strong had this first-hand impression of the Polish military: "Demoralized bands of Polish soldiers killed Jews and Ukrainians." (156) Furthermore:

"Deputies from Grodno told how the Jewish and Byelo-Russian workers of the city had organized their own militia before the Red Army came and had rushed out and helped build a bridge for it into the city under the fire of Polish officers." (157)

She recounts several such incidents, in which it must be pointed out that although defeated by the Nazis and without the Polish government, which had fled, the Polish military officers could cause

plenty of trouble for national minorities in Poland. It is criminal amnesia regarding fascism and its social support that the New York Times and other papers found it unfit to print any mention of this war context in their bile against the Katyn massacre.

One of the things that Stalin and Molotov saw to in their Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler was to assuage Polish national feelings as much as possible, while letting Hitler offend the Poles in any way he could. One of the keys to this maneuver was to occupy only those parts of Poland that had a majority of ethnic Ukrainians and Belorussians. This assured the most favorable possible response to the Red Army occupation. (158) Many Poles welcomed the Red Army as liberators, but a minority opposed it in the section the Soviet Union occupied.

Something that the anti-communist propagandists and Cold Warriors of many decades had to drum into the heads of the public is that the Soviet Union is imperialist in Eastern Europe and hence communism is bad. For this reason, the Cold Warriors had to overlook the history of fascism in Eastern Europe.

This history accounts for the fascist victory in the Italian national elections in 1934; the ultrarightist Zhironovsky's victory in Russia and fascist violence on the rise in Germany. The same middle-class forces muddled by fascism in the pre-war context now find themselves surprised at the anti-communist harvest of fascism they reap today.

We must struggle to recall the general infection of Europe by Nazism during World War II. The Nazis took over Romania and then Romania's army divisions marched on the Soviet Union. The Romanians fought with the Nazis against the Soviet Union until August, 1944. (159) Reactionary governments of Bulgaria and Hungary also joined in with the Nazis. The Soviet Union would later have to face the army divisions of these countries in addition to Finland.

"One hundred seventy-nine German divisions, twenty-two Romanian divisions, fourteen Finnish divisions, thirteen Hungarian divisions, ten Italian divisions, one Slovak division, and one Spanish division, a total of well over three million troops, the best armed and most experienced in the world, attacked along a 2,000-mile front." (160)

Understanding this history is crucial to understanding why Stalin set up pro-Soviet governments there after the war. Contrary to impressions left by historical amnesia and anti-communism, the Soviet

Union had no occupying troops in any Eastern European country that had not been an enemy during World War II.

Having suffered at least 20 million dead fighting a Germany that obtained easy passage through Eastern Europe, MIM doesn't think what Stalin did in Eastern Europe after the war was unreasonable. He was right not to let another 1938 situation develop ever again.

One myth that still gets in the way of fighting fascism is that the countries wedged between Germany and Russia ever had independent foreign policies before World War II. Sometimes they tried to waffle and waver under pressure, but even when they did that, it was then only a question of which side would twist their arms further.

In this game Nazi Germany surpassed the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe fell into the Nazi sphere of influence and then occupation. In the midst of World War II, Stalin rightly made a deal with Roosevelt and Churchill that the Soviet sphere of influence would extend into Eastern Europe. No longer would these countries be able to adopt anti-Soviet foreign policies. The issue would be settled and there would be no more diplomatic or military maneuvering.

As Anna Louise Strong demonstrated, as early as 1939 and 1940 the Baltic peoples understood the contending arguments and they believed that the Soviet Union would at least treat its peoples as equal to its own. There was a lot of support in the Baltic states for joining the Soviet Union.

When Paris fell in June, 1940, Stalin saw added urgency in preparing for Hitler's inevitable strike eastward. (161) In this context, Stalin had some support when he pushed Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to accept Soviet troop reinforcements in June, 1940.

According to Volkogonov, a majority of the Baltic peoples could see the writing on the wall and favored joining the Soviet Union. (162) It was a wise choice because the memorandum of a high-ranking Nazi official in 1940 included a plan to incorporate as Germans some of the population while liquidating the rest of the Baltic peoples. The military reinforcement of the Baltic states in 1940 was one of the substantial things Stalin did.

Stalin managed to stop the fifth column in his own country and split Poland with Hitler once the Polish showed only a scattered desire to fight Hitler themselves. Stalin's crypto-fascist critics thought Stalin's action in Poland were monstrous — "splitting Poland" — but MIM wishes Stalin could have

gone further and could have stopped what happened in Romania. More anti-fascist lives would have been spared if Stalin had done to Romania what he did in his own country and in Poland. MIM is sympathetic to the nationalism of the oppressed nations, but not with the nationalism of countries allied with Nazis invading the Soviet Union.

Why did Stalin cover up and lie about the Katyn massacre to the public? Why did he say that the Nazis killed the Polish officers? While it is true that if it were not for Hitler's invasion of Eastern Europe these officers would not have died, the reason that Stalin did not say anything had to do with building public opinion in Britain and the United States, where there were six or seven million Polish-Americans. As late as December, 1943, Roosevelt told Stalin he could not negotiate with Stalin over Poland despite the realities of the war, because he needed Polish-American support for his re-election and for the war. (163)

Stalin knew that some narrow-minded nationalists would side with the German Nazis if he publicized his massacre of the Polish military officers, and so in the midst of the war he lied and covered up the Katyn massacre. Stalin was correct to lie to the people of the United States and Britain and most especially to the Poles abroad.

The people of the United States and Britain had already demonstrated their lack of commitment to anti-fascism. If the United States had not been so neutral in the war until Pearl Harbor and if instead the United States had accepted its fair share of the burden of defeating fascism from the beginning, there may never have been a Katyn massacre. On the other hand, if war with Germany had broken out and Stalin had U.S. support from the beginning, Stalin could have deported the officers to the United States and let Roosevelt decide what to do with them.

Context is crucial. Countries that did not take a staunch stand against fascism from the beginning cannot now criticize Stalin for what he did with the Polish military officers. If Stalin had turned these men over to Hitler or just set them free, they would have organized to fight with Hitler like the Romanians did. Stalin was right not to take chances with this problem in the midst of war. (164)

BEGINNING OF WWII

"Mssrs. Daladier and Chamberlain seemed almost determined to provide future Soviet historians and propagandists with abundant material to

justify the charge that the Western powers acted in bad faith and that Russia hence had no option but to sign with Germany." (165)

World War II started in the early 1930s with Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, Japan's invasion of China and the war by proxy of the Soviet Union and Germany in Spain. Before any British or French involvement, Japan attacked the Soviet Union in May 1939. Japanese troops had already clashed with Soviets in July 1938. (166) As Ulam notes above, because of the "appeasement" policy of Britain and France, Germany marched into Eastern Europe unopposed until 1939. It wasn't until December 1941 that the Japanese attacked the United States, which is why the United States views the war as shorter than it actually was.

Despite the claims of Trotskyists, anarchists and most bourgeois scholars, Adam Ulam has the integrity to admit that Stalin knew what was going on in Spain:

"In Western liberal and progressive circles the Spanish Civil War tended to blunt much of the criticism of the Moscow trials. The Soviets were being unreasonable and uncivilized in dealing with their political opposition, but Stalin's Russia was the only country to provide real help to Republican Spain. This contrasted with Britain's and France's pusillanimity." (167)

As for Volkogonov, second to Molotov he filled in the details on the diplomatic and political-military situation that did not paint the West very favorably. We should not be surprised that a Russian military officer still doesn't see eye-to-eye with the Western imperialists to this day, if only because Volkogonov himself is a social-imperialist era military officer. Nonetheless, he does throw one bone to the West: "Stalin's mistake was to exaggerate the possibility that England and France would form a bloc with Nazi Germany." (168)

"Exaggerated" implies that there was still the possibility of England and France's outright collaboration with the Nazis. This is something that needs to be understood from the perspective of the 1930s and early 1940s, not now that the war is over. According to Anna Louise Strong, writing in 1941, the Soviet Union noticed the opposition it received for its war with Finland prior to hostilities with Hitler. She said that some British newspapers were calling for a British invasion of Finland to attack the

Soviet Union and give Hitler an ideal opportunity to attack the Soviet Union next. Volkogonov points out that in addition, Poland signed its own Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler and that Britain and France were holding secret talks with Hitler in the summer of 1939 in order to form an anti-Soviet alliance. Even the French ambassador to the Soviet Union at the time could see what was going on as early 1938: "'After the neutralization of Czechoslovakia, Germany will open the way to the east.'" (169)

As it turns out, French official documents indicated that the British and French were indeed planning military action against the Soviet Union to support Finland. The Anglo-French alliance also had plans to bring Belgium and the Netherlands into the war against the Soviet Union. (170)

Thus, the possibility of joint Anglo-French-German action against the Soviet Union very nearly became reality. At several points the alliance had a chance against the Soviet Union, but it fell apart, mainly because there was little to squeeze out of the Soviet Union for the price paid. Hitler offered an alliance with the British and French, if they returned the colonies Germany relinquished in Africa after World War I and the 1919 Versailles Treaty. The British refused and hence the possibility of German alliance with the British had the inherent weakness of inter-imperialist rivalry. Realizing that Germany would bear the brunt of the fighting, Hitler wanted to seize some territory and resources before fighting the Soviet Union, but the British would not go along, so Hitler went his own way.

On the subject of the fall of France, critics such as Tucker claim that Stalin miscalculated the resistance France would give and the time it would buy for the Soviet Union. (171) In an absolute sense, this is true: Stalin did not realize France would fall to Germany in two weeks. In a materialist sense, this is an opportunist cheap-shot at Stalin, because no one predicted that supposedly formidable France would fall so quickly. (To this day, the difference between French resistance to Nazi invasion and Soviet resistance should be a source of embarrassment to critics of Stalin and those French, including revisionists, who have not understood why Vichy France came about. We will return to the causes of that in the article on the strategy of united front.)

It will not be possible for the critics to find anyone at the time who thought Germany would win so easily. As Adam Ulam notes, "What seemed inconceivable to practically everybody in Europe became,

on June 23, a fact: France capitulated." (172)

And while the critics like to point out a mistake that Stalin made just like everyone else, they don't like to point out that the fall of France in two weeks is also a vindication of Stalin, who argued that the Great Terror was necessary to prepare for World War II. The French had a substantial fifth column of Nazi supporters and a confused communist movement. Nothing like that happened in the Soviet Union, even though in World War I, Russia was the "weak man" of Europe and France was regarded as tougher in a military sense.

THE HITLER-STALIN PACT AND THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE USSR

Nikita Khrushchev exceeded many other bourgeois critics in his criticisms of Stalin generally. However, consider his statement about the Hitler-Stalin pact:

"To argue that we did not expect a German attack is just plain stupid, particularly coming from military people who were close to the general staff. No one with an ounce of political sense should buy the idea that we were fooled, that we were caught flat-footed by a treacherous surprise assault." (173)

Khrushchev went on to say that Stalin thought he had fooled the Germans, instead of the other way around. In fact, Stalin made use of the time between his pact with Hitler and the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union to double the size of the army, which already had been built steadily through the 1930s. Despite claims to the contrary, he also reintroduced anti-fascist campaigning in public months before the invasion. (174)

There are several examples of naive intellectualism on this subject. (175) These intellectual nihilists and bourgeois propagandists try to say Stalin ignored the evidence that Hitler was going to attack on June 22, 1941. Even Hitler disagreed. In his Will/Testament of February, 14, 1945, he wrote:

"Russians with their huge spaces can afford the luxury of time. Time works in their favor and against us ...

"Why just 1941? Because, considering the constantly growing power of our western enemies, if we were destined to take action at all, we should have done it with minimal delay. And note: Stalin wasn't idly sitting by, hands folded.

"Time was against us on both fronts. Actually

the question was not why June 22, 1941, but why not earlier? ...

"Our main problem became how to delay Russia from attacking us as long as possible. I had a never-ending nightmare that Stalin could take the initiative earlier than I." (176)

The critics of Stalin on this question did not reckon with what Hitler and Khrushchev had to say. They know enough not to engage in comparative military or economic analysis, because that is beyond them. They try to make a simple blow-by-blow politico-historical argument with many facts conveniently omitted.

These critics have to hinge their argument on a straw-man. They shoot down Stalin as if he were God. Khrushchev criticizes Stalin for not evaluating intelligence correctly in one battle in the war that Khrushchev made a suggestion on! He doesn't tell us how many times Stalin rejected Khrushchev's advice and turned out correct. In any case, the leading military commander of the war, Zhukov, who helped Khrushchev into power and lived to regret it, refuted Khrushchev and said the General Staff and Stalin were more aware of the dangers at Khrushchev's front than Khrushchev was— even in this one instance that Khrushchev complained about. (177)

Regardless of Khrushchev's own agenda of self-aggrandizement, at least Khrushchev admits that the issue of military intelligence is not an easy one because the enemy is always sending false signals with the hope of making you guess the wrong place for the attack. (178) Perhaps being in power is something that helped Khrushchev see the opportunism in this sort of argument against Stalin, and maybe he realized it could be used against him or anyone in power who ever showed less than omniscience.

On this question, most of the critics aren't even as intelligent as Khrushchev. Many critics talk as if Stalin didn't know a German attack was coming because he didn't prepare an exact defense and counterattack at the exact time and place the enemy struck. They also say how he supposedly ignored intelligence reports on the impending attack.

What these nihilists don't point out is the number of times that intelligence had warned Stalin of impending attack. The last case of such a prediction from Soviet intelligence before June 22, 1941 came for May 15, 1941 and there were 13 other predicted dates before that. (179)

Moreover, from the beginning of 1941, German planes flew into Soviet airspace repeatedly. In one

case, the Soviets even shot one down, killing two Germans. (180) If Stalin had prepared a massive attack every time intelligence warned him or every time there was a skirmish or German defector at the front, war would have started much earlier! The critics show no understanding of the scale of this kind of war and preparation for war — as if warnings from defecting infantry soldiers were unique. They don't realize that naturally the Germans bluffed before their attacks so the opponents would not know where or when the Germans were going to strike.

The same exact sequence of events happened in France. France and Germany declared war on each other in September 1939, but the German invasion of France did not come until May 1940. In the meantime, there was nothing but rumors. The question was where and when the would Germans strike. By comparative standards, France's leadership did not do as well as Stalin. When events went in reverse it was Germany that had to guess when and where the Allied invasion of France would land. In that case as well the Allies feinted in one direction and landed in another.

For political reasons, Stalin made absolutely sure that it was clear that Germany started the aggression and broke the Soviet-German peace pact. He knew that would bring many political returns and aid his peace effort more than shuffling troops around at the front every time a new war rumor came to his ears. Furthermore, he didn't want to give Hitler any chance to take pictures of his troops shuffling around at the front, because he knew Hitler would use such pictures to pretend that the Soviet Union was attacking Germany and thus rile up the German people. Stalin wanted the German soldiers to know they were fighting an aggressive war on some other country's soil and he succeeded in this. Thanks to Stalin's handling of military intelligence there was no doubt that Hitler was the aggressor in 1941.

It is true that Stalin did not guess the exact time and place for an attack and prepare an immediate counter-blow, though he did order one. Starting hostilities immediately wasn't part of his strategy. If the naive intellectuals want to blame him for guessing the first battle wrong, then they should also credit him for each time that he ignored intelligence between 1939 and 1941 and kept the Soviet Union out of war with Germany. Stalin understood politics, economics, comparative military power and probabilities. He did not have to read Hitler's mind for the

first battle in order to win the war.

An example of the lack of comparative economic analysis shines through in Medvedev's assessment:

"It is certain that the Soviet-German nonaggression pact delayed the Soviet Union's entry into the war by two years. But it is equally certain that the delay was used more effectively by Germany than by the Soviet Union." (181)

Hitler for one did not agree and saw time on the Soviets' side, as did Stalin, who thankfully did not have Medvedev as a chief of staff.

WORLD WAR II AND THE REDIVISION OF THE WORLD

"Stalin looked at it this way: World War I has wrested one country from capitalist slavery; World War II has created a socialist system; and the third will finish off imperialism forever." (182)

"The war shall soon be over. We shall recover in fifteen or twenty years, and then we'll have another go at it." (183)

The Soviet Union won the war, at a cost of more than 20 million dead. Volkogonov estimates 3.2 Soviet people died for every German. He admits the reason for that is because the majority of deaths were of civilians, though he blames Stalin's inefficiencies for the rest. The Nazis exterminated Jews, Roma (Gypsies), Slavs and other national groups. They also destroyed 30% of Soviet wealth. (184) Despite being in abominable condition, the Soviet Union emerged as a superpower. It had the most powerful military machine of Europe and Asia, and even U.S. troops could not move very quickly into position in those geographic zones where the Red Army was to be found.

Where the Red Army went, Nazi governments fell and pro-Soviet governments usually but not always arose. For example, the Soviet Union drove the Germans out of Austria and saw to the establishment of democracy there, but the Red Army did not stay. Also, the Red Army only took one-third of Germany for East Germany, though the Soviet Union did much more than one-third of the fighting.

The basic rule was that where an army did the fighting, it would have political influence. The Anglo-American imperialists did some fighting in France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Africa, and

Stalin did not oppose their claims there. The Anglo-American imperialists did make claims for an independent pre-war Poland, but Stalin stood his ground and insisted that Eastern Europe would have pro-Soviet foreign policies. He even distinguished this from the national question to an extent by agreeing to Poland's border claims. The point was not the land but the political atmosphere in Eastern Europe and the Red Army was very influential in the political atmosphere.

Apart from the Red Army, we must not forget the independent struggles of the masses in Yugoslavia and Albania. In those countries governments came to power that made it on their own, though they benefitted greatly from the Red Army's onslaught against their German occupiers. We should not lump Yugoslavia and Albania into the picture of Russian hegemony established by Stalin. Likewise, what Stalin did was well supported in Czechoslovakia, probably because the people in Czechoslovakia considered the Soviet Union very friendly. After all, the West had sold Czechoslovakia down the river to the Nazis and Poland stole a slice of Czechoslovakia in cooperation with the Nazis. Not surprisingly then, Marxists won free elections in Czechoslovakia with 38% of the vote, according to Geoffrey Hosking, in his book *The First Socialist Society*. It is in the cases of Poland and Hungary where the issue of Russian hegemony is most severe. Not all of Eastern Europe faced a Poland-type situation.

Apart from the spheres of influence of the victors is the shape of defeat. How the course of World War II divided the far right internationally is crucial and very relevant in 1994. Hitler's invasion of countries pitted part of the far right of those countries against Hitler. Likewise, Hitler's pact with Stalin alienated true Hitler believers around the world. But the most important contemporary fact about World War II was the division of the ultraright in Russia and Eastern Europe from the German Nazi ultraright.

The fact that Hitler was for the subjugation and elimination of the Slavs as peoples left the far right in Eastern Europe and Russia nowhere to go. People like Bazhanov sat on their hands during the war. It is only today that we are starting to see this division of the international far right breaking down, most notably in Europe — though the former Yugoslavia is as yet an exception. The trend toward fascist unity is seen in Italy, Russia and Germany. Some far-right circles in Russia and Germany would

like to unite this time around in inter-imperialist war. Where that leaves Eastern Europe in the picture is still not entirely clear, though a redivision of Poland has already been discussed by the Russian fascist Zhironovsky and his friends in German politics.

Tucker and Laquer are the most useful on this question. Indeed, Tucker hinges his whole analysis of Stalin in power on the assertion that Stalin was the primal leader of the Russian ultraright — "a Bolshevik of the radical right, who blended his version of Leninist revolutionism with Great Russian nationalism." (185) Tucker argues that the Russian ultraright was foreshadowed by a certain current within Nazism in Germany that admired the Bolsheviks, especially Stalin, who seemed to have won a struggle against the Jew Trotsky. (186) This sort of current did not get anywhere at the time, but today the prospect of German-Soviet ultraright unity is more realistic.

To prove his point, Tucker showed how Stalin unleashed nationalism to support Soviet power. In fact, according to Tucker, the Soviet Union of the 1930s was a variety of fascism. Rather than question Stalin's judgement or version of facts, Tucker quotes extensively from Stalin and argues that Stalin meant what he said. His arguments pertaining to history were not at all fabricated: Stalin sought to recast Russian history to the advantage of the Soviet Union.

Tucker quoted Stalin at length from his most famous 1931 speech in which he accurately forecast the next decade:

"To reduce the tempo is to lag behind. And laggards are beaten. But we don't want to be beaten. No, we don't want that! The history of old Russia consisted, among other things, in continual beatings for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongolian khans. Beaten by the Swedish feudals. Beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian nobles. Beaten by the Anglo-French capitalists. Beaten by all of them — for backwardness. For military backwardness, cultural backwardness, governmental backwardness, industrial backwardness, agricultural backwardness. Beaten because it was profitable and done with impunity. ... They beat her saying 'Thou art poor, powerless, so we can beat and rob thee with impunity.' That's the law of the exploiters. The wolves' law of capitalism. Thou hast lagged behind, thou art weak, so thou art not in the right, hence one may beat and enslave thee. ... We have lagged

behind the advanced countries by fifty to a hundred years. We must cover that distance in ten years. Either we'll do it or they will crush us." (187)

Tucker is correct that any alert nationalist would notice that Stalin's socialism and nationalism mix together here. Tucker is against this ideology, while MIM agrees with what Stalin did. That constitutes our difference with Tucker. Tucker understood the ideology of Soviet Marxism-Leninism better than the other critics, but we disagree with Tucker that the result was negative.

Tucker also put forth several quotes from Pravda and Stalin to the effect that Russia was the leader of world revolution, that revolution was most advanced there amongst the nations of the U.S.S.R. (188) This indeed may be going too far and it backs Tucker's assertion that Stalin was too nationalist (though Georgian himself!) to be a Bolshevik.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that MIM would refer to China as the beacon of world revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Today that role may be played in Peru or the Philippines. In other words, it is an unavoidable truth that revolution is going better in some places than in others — the law of uneven development.

Failure to acknowledge the most advanced in everything is only an opening to reaction. For the same reason that people said Lenin embodied the spirit of the vanguard party because revolutionary science develops unevenly in individuals, Stalin might have been right that Russia did have the most revolutionary people in the world at that time. It is a question that must be settled with analysis and not moralizing about all nations being equal in revolutionary spirit.

Trotsky was not equal to Lenin and Bukharin was not equal to Stalin. In the same manner, the concrete question of which country was playing the most advanced role in the world cannot be easily dismissed. Tucker would like to avoid such comparative questions, because he seeks to lead the reader to idealist-moralizing Marxist humanism. On the other hand, he may happen to be right on this one question while being wrong on all the others.

Tucker's analysis has a very contemporary ring to it because the confusion of the ultraright since World War II comes right down to what Tucker put his finger on. It was a communist who led the Soviet Union to national salvation, against a brutal occupier. It was the communists who thus gained them-

selves laurels traditionally reserved for conservative patriots. (Something similar happened to lesser degrees elsewhere, including France.) This thoroughly confused the far right.

So it is in Russia today, Zhironovsky refers to the supposed communists in Parliament as part of the "patriotic forces." He ordered his party to vote for a so-called communist to head the Russian legislature once his own party failed to garner the votes. Though they be more openly capitalist-minded, the pro-Western "reformers" divide the far right. The far right wants Russia to be imperialist in its own right and not a junior partner or puppet of Amerikan imperialism. That Stalin stood toe-to-toe with Hitler, Roosevelt and Churchill thrilled the far right in Russia and cannot be denied by it to this day.

Of course, the overall result was the creation of a bipolar world. While Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* had predicted that the Stalin-led Soviet Union would be defeated by the Germans, Stalin got it right much earlier in 1931. In fact, Stalin got it right in 1925:

"In the further course of development of the international revolution and international reaction, two centers will take shape on a world scale: a socialist center attracting to itself the countries gravitating to socialism and a capitalist center attracting to itself the countries gravitating to capitalism." (189)

It was Stalin who best understood the lessons of World War I for the international communist movement. He saw that the imperialists would fight each other to the point of weakening their own states, and socialism would sprout in the cracks. The logic of such battle is not simultaneous international class struggle for the same objective. It is a matter of taking advantage of opportunities when the imperialists fight, in the ideal situation; and siding with one imperialist bloc against the other when necessary to defend socialist gains, in the less than ideal situation. This is at the heart of the question of the united front.

As a result of the war, certain countries with "bourgeois-landowner" governments fell to revolution just as Stalin predicted at a party congress in 1934. Among the obvious were Poland, the Baltic states and China. (190)

That is how the redivision of the world, in particular the political contours of the defeat in World War II influenced the course of history since that

time. To return to the subject of the nitty-gritty of World War II, Khrushchev held a fairly realistic view of the strategic situation. That's something that can't be said for most of the Stalin-era biographers with the exception of Molotov and Volkogonov. Then again this is not surprising, as Khrushchev actually took a leading role in fighting that war.

While condemning Stalin's crimes as supposedly exceeding the Tzars' crimes, Khrushchev nonetheless did not count the Stalin-Hitler Non-Aggression Pact as a crime the way naive intellectuals do today. Instead he saw it as beneficial:

"I believe Hitler also hoped the treaty would sober and subdue politicians in the West, particularly in England and France, forcing them to accept the aggressive policy of German imperialism. Hitler also probably hoped that France and England would write off Poland. France and England had treaties with Poland obligating them to come to her assistance in case of attack. Perhaps those treaties would be consigned to oblivion, freeing Hitler's hands to direct his efforts against the USSR. He considered his main enemies to be communism, the USSR, and the Slavic people. He wanted to come to terms with the West and then to redraw the map of the world, reclaiming Africa and other territories that Germany lost as a result of World War I. . . .

"Stalin understood correctly what Hitler was up to, but he thought he could deflect the flow of the German army away from the USSR and direct it at the West, and in that way buy time. Of course, the West, meanwhile, did everything it could to turn Hitler against the East." (191)

TOTAL DEATH TOLL

Millions of people died in the strife of the 1930s, through the collectivization of agriculture and the internal deportation of nationalities. The estimates of deaths for which Stalin is responsible from 1929-1953 range from 600,000 to 22 million. (192) The lowest estimate for numbers shot in prison in the peak period from 1935-1940 are in the tens of thousands. (193)

These estimates come from the ruthless statistical methods that anti-communist critics apply to the Soviet Union and China in order to determine the death tolls in these countries. MIM only asks that these critics turn around and apply those same methods to the capitalist countries.

For the Great Leap Forward in China (1958-1960), the most widely bandied about estimates of

the number of deaths come from an examination of highly flawed census data, which include the assumption of a set number of births per year in a non-famine year. In other words, during the Great Leap, there were famines, natural disasters, and mass deportations, and less babies were born in these years. But the death toll statistics assume that the birth rate was constant. This also applies to Stalin's collectivization of agriculture.

There is not one Stalin biographer who applies even-handed statistical methods to capitalist countries. (In contrast, see MIM Theory 4 and other articles in this issue on this comparative subject.) As we know, Stalin himself, who had much less time for academic writing, nonetheless managed to report more comparative data than all his critics reviewed here combined.

The famine figures and others after 1930 depend on the assumption that the birth rate kept the population growing at the same pace. None of the critics take into account the pattern of declining birth rates seen in all industrializing countries. Simply put, peasants have fewer babies the more the standard of living and social security is guaranteed. By comparison of two census figures, the critics conclude that more than 20 million died, even though the net gain of population was more than 7 million. The reason is that they assumed there should be a standard birth rate and growth rate for the population. (194)

The highest death toll figures (100 million) (195) come from Antonov-Ovseyenko, who counts any death that occurred while Stalin was in power as a death caused by Stalin. According to Antonov-Ovseyenko, Stalin was already to blame for 20 million deaths by the end of 1934. (196) He writes, "No other tyrant, from Nero to Hitler, compares with Stalin in numbers killed." (197)

While Antonov-Ovseyenko believed that Stalin had a murderous personality, he and all the other critics continue to express bafflement at why Stalin killed the people he did, and more importantly, why he spared some. For example, against the "personal grudges" pseudo-theory of many, Stalin let live precisely the person who slapped him in the face once in exile — Grigory Petrovsky — (198) and he also brought down repression on his own family, as we have already seen.

A number of authors point out cases in which Stalin realized people in prison had special technical skills and got them out, but on the whole the critics contradict themselves in explaining Stalin: "So any

search for a political principle in the campaign of mass terror is a vain effort. Stalin's aim was simply to intimidate and crush. But a useful person could be left to live on." (199)

As even bourgeois comparative demographers and epidemiologists will sometimes admit in honest moments, predominantly peasant but capitalist and even parliamentary democratic countries like India and Bangladesh suffer the equivalent of a Great Leap death toll every few years. In fairness, India has about three times the Soviet population, but it suffers the kind of death tolls attributed to Stalin's collectivization every year to this day.

Stalin and Soviet economic planners simply admitted to themselves in the beginning of the 1930s that millions would die and the savings in grain and other resources would fuel industrialization. That this is almost apparent is only a result of the fact that such procedures occur politically and in the open in the communist countries, and not behind corporate boardroom doors as they always have in the capitalist countries. The fact remains that no country has industrialized without tremendous sacrifices. It is only in the case of Stalin that blame is easy to lay at the feet of one person, and so he gets it whereas in other countries the political system requires that blame's being put at the feet of a whole class.

ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

"Anti-Semitism is dangerous for the workers as a false path, leading them off the correct road and taking them into the jungle. Therefore Communists, as consistent internationalists, cannot but be consistent and sworn enemies of anti-Semitism." —Joseph Stalin (200)

"Everyone objected [to recognizing the State of Israel] but us — me and Stalin. Some asked me why we favored it. We are supporters of international freedom. Why should we be opposed if, strictly speaking, that meant pursuing a hostile nationalist policy? In our time, it's true, the Bolsheviks were and remained anti-Zionist ... Yet it's one thing to be anti-Zionist and anti-bourgeois, and quite another to be against the Jewish people. We proposed, however, an Arab-Israeli union, for both nations to live there together. We would have supported this version if it could have been arranged. Otherwise we favored a separate Israeli state. ... Israel has turned out badly. But Lord Almighty! That's American imperialism for you." —Molotov (201)

Many of Stalin's critics have charged him with anti-Semitism. (202) Today, 40 years after his death, the Western press has blamed Stalin for right-wing anti-Semitism in the ex-Soviet Union today.

Originally there were many highly visible Jewish leaders of the Bolshevik Party. This has caused some exaggerated conspiracy theory by the far-right:

"The proceedings of the 439th and 469th sessions of the U.S. Senate contain the assertion that 'in 1918 the government in Petrograd consisted of 16 Russians and 371 Jews, with 265 of those Jews having come from New York.' This story is still being told in many Russian emigre publications, though not in such fantastic form." (203)

The far-right gave Stalin some credit because under his rule the role of famous Jewish leaders such as Trotsky and Zinoviev declined. In contrast with people who thought maybe Stalin was a closet anti-Semite, Laquer thought Stalin just treated Jews as badly as he treated everyone:

"However, it is also true that Stalin hated and despised people in general, that almost every nationality in the Soviet Union suffered to some degree, that a handful of Jews remained in his entourage all along, that a few received Stalin Prizes and similar distinctions even at the time of the worst anti-Semitic outrages. If he was an anti-Semite, his anti-Semitism was not so much 'biological-scientific' as Hitler's but, rather, political-psychological and instinctive. However, the whole issue is not of central importance with regard to an understanding of the Stalin phenomenon. Jews neither 'made' Stalin, nor were they his main target." (204)

Laquer's approach has the advantage of bringing forward the standard for deciding if Stalin was anti-Semitic; however, it has the disadvantage in that Laquer replaces one dogma for another where specific assessments regarding social context are necessary.

There are too many contradictory facts to account for if one were to try and paint Stalin as an anti-Semite. At the same time Stalin sarcastically noted that there were no Jews remaining on the Soviet Central Committee, he also lauded the Hungarian Politburo for being almost all Jews. It is also safe to say Hungary could not have had such a

Politburo without Stalin's approval. (205)

Djilas himself interprets this as Stalin's finding Jews more easily manipulated because they are "rootless." This instinctive blame-Stalin-the-power-monger approach is itself anti-Semitic, but it is also contradictory. If Jews were just generally more easy to control than other nationalities, then why didn't Stalin put Jews everywhere in charge of the Soviet Union's various republics and administrations? Against pressure from other party officials, Stalin himself had to campaign against anti-Semitism to keep Kaganovich in a high-ranking position.

According to Medvedev, Kaganovich was Stalin's closest comrade-in-arms for 25 years. Stalin believed that Jews in Hungary and Poland (not to mention Germany) tended to be progressive, but within the Soviet Union they tended toward oppositional sentiments. It had nothing to do with anti-Semitism and everything to do with specific political contexts. Overall MIM concludes that Stalin was continuously using the national question in the struggle for progress by building proletarian dictatorship based on the actual balance of forces, rather than a racist dogma.

When he could prepare the situation against German invasion, Stalin took a hard line and shipped away peoples who would be inclined toward causing trouble for Soviet power. At the same time, Stalin also made use of old and conservative ideas on the national struggle that happened to aid the Soviet cause.

For instance, during World War II, the old Orthodox Church went into action to propagandize against the invaders in their own reactionary language. Another example is the setting up of the Pan-Slavic Bureau during the war to take advantage of old national ties between the peoples of the Balkans and the Russians. Stalin thought this was fine then. Yet, after the war, when he was in a position to do so, Stalin yet again shuffled and merged peoples where he thought it would be progressive. It all depended on what the principal contradiction was.

Those expecting to understand Stalin with reference to eternal verities become dizzy with Stalin's interventions because they make no sense to those not used to calculating the changing social balance of forces. The more science Stalin applied to making revolution, the less accessible that revolution became to the pre-scientific intelligentsia and others who just wanted easy-to-memorize principles set in stone. As a result, some of Stalin's critics will note

one instance of action that appears anti-Semitic and conclude that Stalin has adopted an anti-Semitic position as a dogma, only because they can't imagine that Stalin himself was not tied down to dogma.

The better critics of Stalin could see something more complicated than racism was going on. Ulam noticed that Jews could be found very close to Stalin and in high ranks of government. Ulam concluded that Stalin was not a "classic" anti-Semite, because like Laquer, Ulam noticed that Stalin did not put forward any biological pseudo-science about Jews being inferior. (206)

Finally, Stalin has been criticized for his recognition of Israel. There is a limit to what the revolutionary forces are capable of. In the case of the existence of Israel, the progressive forces were not able to stop its creation as a separate, exclusive state. Once created, the question became whether or not to recognize it. From Molotov's quote above, it is clear that Stalin would not recognize the right to self-determination of only those nations with progressive impact, and that he and Molotov thought that not recognizing Israel would have been "against the Jewish people." They believed they should not oppose the fait-accompli in Israel, though they would have preferred a different outcome.

As was the case in Greece during World War II — when Stalin made a deal with the Anglo-American imperialists about spheres of influence — some could argue that Stalin should have held out in the Middle East and gone to bat against Anglo-American imperialism there instead of recognizing Israel. MIM believes that the principal responsibility for a revolution resides with the forces within a country. It would not be taking account of the balance of forces simply to have the Soviet Union intervene in every situation. It would mean always going on the offensive as a matter of principle. That would be fatal dogmatism of the sort that explains why Trotskyists have never led a successful revolution. Of course, when the view of the national question depends on the balance of forces and strategic considerations, there are going to be mistakes all the time by even the most genuine comrades. It's not easy weighing all the factors that go into war and revolution.

STALIN'S SUCCESSORS

The biographers reviewed in this issue of MIM Theory don't agree if Stalin picked successors or not. According to Khrushchev, Stalin picked Bulganin as his successor, but according to Laquer, Stalin

picked no one. (208) According to Molotov:

"Khrushchev sat on the Politburo under Stalin throughout the 1940s and the early 1950s. And Mikoyan, too. We purged and we purged, yet it turns out that rightists still sat in the Politburo! Look how complicated all this is!" (209)

Stalin saw an ever-more ferocious struggle of the enemies against socialism. They may not have had much success but they tried ever more desperately, according to Stalin. He and Molotov both viewed purging the party of enemies as essential and did not believe it was possible to succeed completely in catching them all.

According to Stalin, he did not catch all the enemies of socialism inside the party. It was possible to see the proof of this later. In the case of one Czech communist who was very pro-Stalin, Stalin had this to say in criticism: "Gottwald, what does he know? He argues that there are no enemies inside his party. That cannot be!" (210)

Given these comments from Khrushchev and Molotov about how Stalin viewed the class struggle, it is safe to say that Mao and the Shanghai school of political economy only took what Stalin said and put it on a more secure basis, because Stalin mistakenly said that the bourgeoisie had been eliminated under socialism.

The Chinese communists said that a new bourgeoisie arose under socialism and could be found in the communist party, attempting to gain access to the means of production through the state. The notion that the enemies of socialism are in the party and cannot be eliminated until imperialism is eradicated originates not with Mao but with Stalin.

THE CASE FOR CENSORSHIP

The massive scribbles of these intellectuals, repeated in simplified forms in the bourgeois media, present an excellent case for censorship of the media and books. The more the material veers into National Enquirer mode, the better censorship looks for the progress of humanity's mental faculties. The masses deserve better entertainment and education than what sells on the grocery stands.

Even the capitalists now accept that drugs, meat and groceries must be regulated. People don't want to spend time educating themselves on the harmful effects of various chemicals that are put in meat, drugs or groceries. The masses want to trust the government to do that in the public interest.

The free market approach is too costly and time-consuming, but MIM supports it in the sense that all consumers should get a chance to digest their own politics. Clearly, the Soviet Revolution's archives should be open to the people to study directly themselves.

Rather than argue censorship of the Stalin biographers, MIM will argue economic priorities. After the revolution against imperialism, there won't be entire bourgeois academic institutes dedicated to defaming Stalin. Like the pornographers, the Bazhanovs and Ulams won't be banned but they will have to make an honest living. They can defame Stalin in their spare time and the government will hire people to rebut them with professional scientific answers in the open, just as the proletarian government will not shirk its responsibilities to provide all kinds of scientific education in general. This will serve to advance the scientific level of the masses until that day when the old humanities intelligentsia's desperate resistance against scientific method is extinct.

CONCLUSIVENESS

"The longer Stalin ruled the Soviet Union, cold-bloodedly destroying millions of people, the greater seems to have been the dedication to him, even the love, of the majority of the people. When he died in March 1953 the grief of hundreds of millions, both in the Soviet Union and around the world, was quite sincere." (211)

"Could we have launched the first satellite in the world in 1957 and the first man in space in 1961 if we hadn't started on this much earlier?" (212)

Starting with the First Five Year Plan and by 1939, it was clear that Stalin had led the Soviet Union on a successful plan of economic development. If it were not for the war, the Soviet Union under Stalin would have surpassed all the Western countries in economic production. It was already on a trajectory to do so when World War II started.

The peoples of the Soviet Union lost at least 20 million of their best people fighting the Nazis, about 10% of the population, as well as one-third of their wealth, from burned villages, blown-up hydro plants and other damages of war on Soviet territory. The war was the main reason the Soviet Union did not immediately surpass the West in every domain.

As Molotov points out with references to the Sputnik, for a few years after Stalin's death, projects

initiated under Stalin still continued to bear fruit. Then the momentum stopped and the Soviet Union started losing ground to the West. The reason for that loss of momentum was the death of Stalin and the restoration of capitalism.

There are now books on Stalin on the market titled "new," "conclusive," "from the inside," based on "secret archives," etc. They also claim that now is the "time for judgement" on Stalin. This is a good way to sell books, but the contradictions among the scholars who oppose Stalin on all the important issues demonstrate that history is far from speaking a conclusive word on Stalin. At the very least, many people from diverse countries must spend time in the opened archives related to Stalin before Stalin can be completely summed up.

Though their publishers did not stress this on the book jackets, the Stalin scholars themselves recognize that the verdict on Stalin is not in yet. According to Ulam:

"In the playwright's words, Stalin refuses to go away. Is the reason, perhaps, that while we have heard a great deal in the last three years in the way of condemnations, we have had but little that is new in the way of explanation? Questions that have been raised in this book still remain unresolved in view of scant new information, even under glasnost." (213)

On the last page of his book Ulam says, "Not only is this evil, it does not make any sense." Walter Laquer, who spent more time with the glasnost materials than Ulam did, also concluded that:

"Stalin's personality and policies will be discussed for many years to come, and it is fruitless even to dream of a definitive assessment of them that is universally agreed upon. History is written and rewritten until a certain period ceases to command interest, which is unlikely to be the case for a long time in the case of Stalin." (214)

Notes:

1. Ulam, Adam B. *Stalin: The Man and His Era*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 760pp. p. xviii.
2. See for example, Tucker, Robert C. *Stalin as Revolutionary*. New York, 1972. pp. 520-3.
3. Volkogonov, Dmitri. *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*. Harold Shukman trans. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991, 642pp. p. 31, xxiii, 57.
4. Volkogonov, p. xxiii.
5. Volkogonov, p. xxvii.

6. Volkogonov, p. 7.
7. Tucker, p. 88.
8. Djilas, Milovan. *Conversations with Stalin*. NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962, 211pp. p. 187.
9. Djilas, p. 57.
10. Djilas, p. 92; also Tito: "I don't know what the devil is wrong with these Russians that they drink so much—plain decadence!" in Djilas, p. 115.
11. Djilas, p. 22.
12. Djilas, p. 22.
13. Djilas, p. 51; same thing, new day, p. 77; p. 151.
14. Milovan Djilas, preface to *Nomenklatura* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1984), p. xvii.
15. Deutscher, Isaac. *Stalin: A Political Biography*. NY: Vintage Books, 1960, 600pp. p. 61; see also Volkogonov, p. 3 for similar; for the original that everyone copied with almost the exact same words, see Trotsky, in Volkogonov, p. 57.
16. Deutscher, p. 200.
17. Medvedev, Roy. *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*. George Shriver, ed. and trans. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, 903pp. p. 673.
18. Antonov-Ovseyenko, *The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyranny*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981, 374pp. p. 31.
19. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 102.
20. Tucker, p. 33.
21. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 288.
22. Boris Bazhanov, *Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin*. David W. Doyle, trans. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990, 285pp. p. 222.
23. Deutscher, pp. 368-9; for more of Deutscher's racist foaming at the mouth see pages 207-9, 229-230, 387-88.
24. Deutscher, p. 230.
25. Deutscher, p. 363.
26. Volkogonov, p. 88.
27. Volkogonov, p. 140.
28. Volkogonov, p. 181, 196.
29. Tucker, p. 412.
30. Ulam to his credit rejected it, p. 260; Antonov-Ovseyenko supported it, pp. 41-2; Trotsky supported it, Deutscher, p. 306; Anna Larina found it improbable, p. 234; despite his reliance on "oral history"—rumors from "Old Bolsheviks," Medvedev waffled, pp. 155-159; Volkogonov waffled, p. 65; Bazhanov accepted it, p. 101.
31. e.g. Tucker, pp. 3, 146-7 for Stalin's "craving" for recognition.
32. Ulam, p. 288.
33. Molotov, V. M. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics*. Compiled by Felix Chuev. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993, 438pp. p. 176; for more examples of Stalin's destruction of the personality cult, his glorification of the masses and his attack on excessive commemoration, see Ulam, p. 390; Medvedev, p. 818, 850; Volkogonov, p. 201, 241; Tucker, pp. 146-7; Rancour-Lafferiere, Daniel. *The Mind of Stalin*. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1988, 161pp. p. 44.
34. Volkogonov, p. 241.
35. Volkogonov, pp. 525-6.
36. Ulam, pp. 318-19.
37. Pomper, Philip. *Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin: The Intelligentsia and Power*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 446pp. p. 344; also Medvedev on Stalin's exaggerating Trotsky's role, p. 103.
38. Pomper, p. 344.
39. Pomper, p. 171.
40. Ibid. In MIM Theory 2/3, we discussed how psychology func-
- tions as a barrier to genuine feminism. The ease with which Pomper gets sidetracked with Stalin's "sincerity" at a funeral is an example.
41. Volkogonov, p. 102.
42. Volkogonov, p. 146.
43. Ulam, p. 462, 673, 676; see also Volkogonov, p. 155, pp. 339-40 for more than 10 Stalin relatives who suffered.
44. Volkogonov, p. 152.
45. Volkogonov, p. 155.
46. Pomper, p. 337.
47. Ulam, p. 33.
48. Medvedev, pp. 576-7.
49. Rancour-Lafferiere, p. 8.
50. Volkogonov, p. 30.
51. Not that a few years of corporate spin couldn't make Trotsky a more popular person in Russia some day. If his writings were recorded in the U.S. Congress, spread by U.S. newspapers and taught to U.S. high school students to the present day, then surely there is business potential for Trotsky yet in Russia.
52. Volkogonov, p. 401.
53. Ulam, p. 81.
54. Ulam, p. 93; see also, p. 159 on the role of practitioners. MIM should point out that the tsar's government was very weak and easily bribed at very high levels to look the other way at the time the party took to this armed struggle for money.
55. Ulam, p. 106.
56. Medvedev, p. 79.
57. Volkogonov, p. 139.
58. Volkogonov, p. 70.
59. See for example, Ulam, p. 171; also p. 173 for how Trotsky may have exceeded Stalin in the use of repressive violence during the war and how it was Trotsky who first executed Bolsheviks; Medvedev, p. 60 on Lenin's opposing the guerrilla mentality Stalin supported; Volkogonov, p. 40.
60. Tucker, p. 320.
61. Ulam, p. 147.
62. Ulam, p. 150.
63. Ulam, p. 154. Such complicated nuts-and-bolts realities of movements render public sources such as newspaper headlines problematic.
64. Ulam, p. 167.
65. Ulam, p. 170.
66. Ulam, p. 239.
67. Volkogonov, p. 94.
68. Ulam, p. 734.
69. Medvedev, p. 93.
70. Medvedev, p. 93.
71. Ulam, p. 246.
72. Ulam, p. 269.
73. Volkogonov, p. 87.
74. See Antonov-Ovseyenko, pp. 36-7.
75. Medvedev, p. 390.
76. Tucker, p. 195.
77. Ulam, p. 258.
78. Ulam, p. 307.
79. Medvedev, p. 321.
80. Volkogonov says something similar to Trotsky, on wanting something between Bukharin and Stalin, p. 179.
81. Volkogonov, p. 170.
82. Tucker, pp. 189-90.
83. Medvedev, p. 238.
84. Volkogonov, p. 110.

85. Tucker, p. 182.
86. Tucker, p. 182.
87. Tucker, p. 251.
88. See Rancour-Laffiere, p. 96.
89. Rancour-Laffiere, p. 105.
90. Rancour-Laffiere, pp. 109-110.
91. Khrushchev, N. Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes. Jerrold L. Schecter with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov trans. and ed. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1990, 219pp. p. 24; also Volkogonov could find nothing in the archives to back Khrushchev but backs him anyway, p. 208; Tucker waffled on many details but quoted Khrushchev favorably, pp. 288-96.
92. see Deutscher, p. 357.
93. Molotov, p. 221.
94. Molotov, p. 353.
95. Ulam, pp. 384-5.
96. Ulam, p. 385.
97. Ulam, p. 433.
98. Also dismissing "paranoia" and "insanity" charges, see Medvedev, p. 543.
99. Ulam, p. 369.
100. Molotov, p. 219.
101. Tucker, pp. 283-4.
102. Tucker, pp. 258-9.
103. Tucker, pp. 304, 318.
104. Molotov, p. 221.
105. Molotov, p. 220.
106. See MIM Theory 2/3.
107. See Tucker for Stalin "not yet a dictator" by the 1930s, p. 120; repression "let-up" afterwards, p. 545; see Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 23 for how Stalin was not a "dictator" in the 1920s.
108. Medvedev, p. 455.
109. Medvedev, p. 585.
110. Medvedev, pp. 587-88; compare this formulation with one contradicting it on p. 93.
111. Molotov, p. 254.
112. Anna Louise Strong, *The Soviets Expected It*; New York: Dial Press, 1941. pp. 140-1.
113. Medvedev, p. 775.
114. Bazhanov, p. 83.
115. Bazhanov, p. 114.
116. Bazhanov, p. 55.
117. Bazhanov, p. 56.
118. Bazhanov, p. 115.
119. Volkogonov, p. 445.
120. Molotov, pp. 268-9.
121. Molotov, p. 276.
122. Molotov, p. 275.
123. Molotov, p. 261.
124. See Molotov's book for more examples, e.g., p. 290.
125. Laquer, p. 86.
126. Ulam, p. 446.
127. Tucker, p. 382.
128. Volkogonov, p. 326.
129. Medvedev, p. 596.
130. Medvedev, p. 661.
131. See Medvedev's comments, pp. 552-555.
132. Ulam, p. 410-11.
133. Ulam, p. 424.
134. See Volkogonov, p. 220-1 to the effect that party members obediently concurred with Stalin even when they were sure they were going to be executed; p. 304 for role of torture and threats to

families.

135. Molotov, p. 264.
136. Molotov, p. 257.
137. Medvedev, p. 603.
138. e.g. Tucker, p. 549.
139. Tucker, p. 266.
140. For the opposite view of wrecking charges as "baseless," see Tucker, p. 77.
141. Even Antonov-Ovseyenko admits this, p. 41.
142. Volkogonov, pp. 181-2.
143. Volkogonov, p. 282.
144. See how Stalin opposed some cases of NKVD repression he was unaware of, Medvedev, p. 526.
145. Laquer, p. 57.
146. Volkogonov, p. 383.
147. Khrushchev, footnote by Schecter, p. 40.
148. Laquer, p. 115.
149. Molotov, p. 54.
150. Ulam, p. 496.
151. see Volkogonov, p. 350 for the tilt of the other countries.
152. Khrushchev, p. 129.
153. Strong, pp. 218-9.
154. Tucker, pp. 341-2.
155. Strong, 1941, p. 159.
156. Strong, p. 166.
157. Strong, p. 169.
158. Volkogonov, p. 361.
159. Khrushchev, p. 108.
160. Bruce Franklin in his introduction to his book *The Essential Stalin*. Yugoslavia's government tried to join the Nazis as well, but the result was a civil war in Yugoslavia that overthrew the treacherous government before Hitler marched in; Medvedev, p. 740.
161. Volkogonov, p. 362.
162. Volkogonov, p. 363.
163. Volkogonov, p. 488.
164. See also Ulam, p. 583 on; Antonov-Ovseyenko, pp. 262-3.
165. Ulam commenting on the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1939, p. 510.
166. Volkogonov, p. 586.
167. Ulam, p. 426; see also how the British and French diplomats "prattled," p. 427. Tucker had to ignore this in his whole book despite hundreds of pages on Soviet-German relations, because he sought to prove that Stalin always sought a pro-German tilt, partly to lend some moralizing humph to his argument that Stalinism is a variety of fascism, a national Bolshevism.
168. Volkogonov, p. 353.
169. Volkogonov, pp. 356-7.
170. Tucker, p. 613.
171. e.g., Tucker p. 619.
172. Ulam, p. 524.
173. Khrushchev, p. 49.
174. Ulam, pp. 531-3.
175. See for example, Ulam, p. xiv; Pomper, p. 345.
176. Molotov, pp. 32-3.
177. Volkogonov, p. 432. We did not review Zhukov's memoirs here because most of the criticisms of Stalin are not in connection to World War II.
178. Khrushchev, p. 57.
179. Molotov, p. 5; Chuev in Molotov, p. 22.
180. Volkogonov, p. 389.
181. Medvedev, p. 731.

182. Molotov, p. 63.
183. Stalin quoted in Djilas, pp. 114-115.
184. Volkogonov, pp. 504-5.
185. Tucker, p. xv.
186. Tucker, p. 235.
187. Tucker, p. 9.
188. e.g., p. 568.
189. Tucker, p. 47.
190. Tucker, p. 256.
191. Khrushchev, pp. 50-1; for Khrushchev's opinions on China, Korea and Vietnam, see pp. 142-160.
192. Volkogonov, p. 524 says 19.52 to 22 million.
193. Rancour-Laffiere, p. 71.
194. e.g., Tucker, p. 588.
195. Tucker, p. 307.
196. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 104.
197. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 167.
198. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 200.
199. Antonov-Ovseyenko, p. 205.
200. Quoted in Medvedev, p. 803.
201. Molotov, p. 66.
202. Djilas, p. 170; Khrushchev, p. 27; Rancour-Laffiere, p. 19; Bazhanov, p. 58.
203. Medvedev, p. 560.
204. Laquer, p. 252.
205. Djilas, p. 170.
206. Ulam, p. 676-9.
207. Djilas, p. 182.
208. Khrushchev, pp. 38-9; Laquer, p. 11.
209. Molotov, p. 314; see also p. 317.
210. Khrushchev, p. 132.
211. Medvedev, p. 617.
212. Molotov, p. 57.
213. Ulam, p. xxv.
214. Laquer, p. 4.

Anna Larina

This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow

(NY: W.W. Norton, 1993), 384 pp.

by MC5
March, 1994

- I. What was Bukharin's line?
- II. Biography
- III. The question of the Gulag and repression
- IV. Resting on one's laurels and bourgeois ethics
- V. Stalin's "pathological suspiciousness"
- VI. The Nazi connection
- VII. The real issues

This *I Cannot Forget* is the wrenching autobiography of Anna Larina, the wife of a man who may have been the most feasible alternative to Stalin as

the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) upon Lenin's death in 1924. Like anti-communist Arthur Koestler's novel, *Darkness at Noon*, Anna Larina's book can offer some lessons to the communist movement. Unlike the anti-communist Koestler though, Anna Larina insists that the Bukharin she champions was a real communist — and that Bukharin himself maintained that identity even as he was executed under Stalin's orders in 1938.

Since Bukharin and his widow claim to be communist we will treat their memoirs separately from those of the bourgeois writers. This distinction is necessary because communist critics claim the same goals as Stalin while having a better way forward. For example, our communist critics will claim they would not support a German imperialist invasion of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, former U.S. foreign service officer David W. Doyle wonders out loud why anti-communist critic Boris Bazhanov did not work with Hitler to achieve his goals. The criticisms of Stalin by the Bazhanovs of the world really should not occupy thousands of pages. They can be boiled down to one of two sentences: "I don't agree with your goals" or "Your goals cannot be achieved and are self-defeating." In contrast, the communists of the world have more to talk about.

BUKHARIN'S LINE

As of yet, even though the state capitalist class in the Soviet Union rehabilitated Bukharin just before the Soviet Union fell apart and became an outright bourgeois republic, there is no worked out Bukharinist line or political practice in the international communist movement yet. While there is a recognizable (albeit sterile) ideology called "Trotskyism," the fate of Bukharinism is to serve as a reservoir of hope for those who wish that the Soviet Union did not have to endure the tragedies that it did in the 1920 and 1930s. (1)

With regard to World War I, some have seen Bukharin as foreshadowing Mao Zedong, Tito and Ho Chi Minh. Bukharin said:

"Comrade Lenin has chosen to define revolutionary war exclusively as a war of large armies with defeats in accordance with all the rules of military science. We propose that war from our side — at least to start with — will inevitably be a partisan war of flying detachments. ... In the very process of the struggle. ... more and more of the masses will gradually be drawn over to our side, while in the

imperialist camp, on the contrary, there will be ever increasing elements of disintegration. The peasants will be drawn into the struggle when they hear, see and know that their land, boots and grain are being taken from them." (2)

Bukharin took an ultraleft position on World War I and thus opposed Soviet withdrawal — the same way Trotskyists today talk about how the Soviets should have made war on Germany, Poland and other countries to give the communists within those nations a chance to seize power. Furthermore, Bukharin initially opposed Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), again from the ultraleft. But he later abandoned those ultraleft positions and fully admitted Lenin's correctness in these questions. Indeed, Bukharin became the most steadfast supporter of the NEP in the party. However, Stalin was the second-most ardent defender of the NEP. Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev all attacked the NEP before its time was up. For this reason, through the 1920s until the very end of the decade, there can't be said to be have been much difference between Stalin and Bukharin. For this alone we must give Bukharin credit and take his ideas more seriously than we take Trotsky's.

Crucially, Bukharin took the correct side in two key two-line struggles in the party. First, partly in reference to the NEP, Bukharin opposed Trotsky. Second, when Zinoviev and Kamenev first attacked Trotsky and defended the NEP and then switched positions to defend Trotsky, Bukharin held steady. (3)

Bukharin and Stalin held very similar lines until 1928 and the grain procurement crisis. The decline in grain production available to the cities that year convinced Stalin that the NEP had outlived its usefulness and that capitalism was holding back production in the countryside. Stalin also pointed to the utilization of industrial capacity and argued it was time to expand industrial capacity at the expense of the peasants, though it has been calculated that the peasants enjoyed ever more favorable price ratios under Stalin's Five Year Plans. Bukharin continued to hold that the NEP should be continued and peasants should collectivize agriculture only on a voluntary basis. His most famous slogan (later recanted) was "peasants: enrich yourselves." He told his wife: "Don't you feel sorry for me, Larochka. Feel sorry for the muzhik peasants." (4) His second-most famous statement (because Trotsky repeated it so often in order to criticize it) was that the Soviet

Union would build socialism in one country, even if at "a tortoise's pace."

The notion of a more or less permanent NEP that dissolves itself voluntarily has gained support around the world. After the death of Mao Zedong in China, the revisionists in power under Deng Xiaoping's leadership adopted Bukharin's positions on the need for a relatively permanent NEP for China. They anxiously set out to learn of his views and to review the decisions of the Soviet Union from the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The Chinese revisionists were probably happy to discover that Bukharin shared their views of class struggle under socialism. In April, 1929, Bukharin said the following in a party speech:

"This strange theory of Stalin's ... raises the actuality of our current intensification of class warfare to something like an inevitable law for our development. It turns out now, we are told, that the farther we advance toward socialism, the more difficulties accumulate, the more class warfare intensifies — and finally, at the very gates of socialism, we shall either have to start a civil war or waste away from hunger and drop dead!" (5)

Larina reports that "At this, Stalin began raving and ranting. History will decide who was right!" Yes, indeed, history has proved that class warfare intensifies and indeed, no socialist experiment has yet ended without capitalist restoration. Stalin has been vindicated on this point.

In this regard, MIM disagrees with Bukharin. Nonetheless, the mistakes of any communist leader in the Soviet Union of the 1920s should not count as much as holding to those mistaken views decades later when history has proved them worthless. The Revolution in the 1920s was new. It is only by the late 1950s that the international communist movement noticed its own internal differences on these points. What Bukharin thought in 1929 was word for word what the revisionists of later years thought, but Bukharin's circumstances were much more mitigating. In the same way we could forgive Trotsky's views of Germany and international class struggle in 1923, but after decades of the failure of the same Trotskyist line, we must conclude that Trotskyism is nothing less than bourgeois escapism (similar to pacifism) which diverts proletarians from the communist movement.

We should credit Bukharin for noticing that Stalin's formulation of class struggle was contradic-

tory. On the one hand according to Stalin, the bourgeoisie had been smashed (especially within the party and the Soviet Union), but on the other hand class struggle was intensifying. Because the opposition to Stalin by Bukharin on this point was fairly worked out, later theorists were able to advance revolutionary theory. In some sense, no thinker can be too far ahead of his or her contemporaries, because all are limited by their circumstances. Luckily for the world, Stalin did not have a coherent theory of class struggle, but he did know what to do in practice about preparing for World War II. Bukharin did not approach class struggle domestically and with regard to future enemies with the same urgency as did Stalin.

Later Mao summed up Soviet history and concluded that Stalin was correct in his struggles against his opponents who denied class struggle, but Mao took the extra step and developed Leninism into Maoism by showing the basis for the creation of a new bourgeoisie under socialism. Unlike the Maoist movements, all those movements informed by Bukharin's and Stalin's ideas of class struggle under socialism have ended up in contradiction. The bourgeoisie within communist parties in the Soviet Union, China, Albania, Vietnam and others have restored capitalism in their countries while claiming to be socialist proletarians themselves. Of the socialist country leaders, only Mao saw the potential for capitalist restoration clearly. With only 10 years left in life, Mao undertook to lead a revolutionary movement — the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution — against China's new bourgeoisie.

At the time of the Bukharin-Stalin split, Trotsky predicted that Stalin (or at least his line) would be swept out by the Bukharin rightist current. (6) He believed that Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov would carry the day, because in Trotsky's own detachment from reality, he believed that the NEP had not been progressive for quite some years by 1928. He thought that the rich peasants or "kulaks" and "NEPmen" had already established formidable positions for themselves, with connections to international imperialism. According to Trotsky, Stalin and the "centrists" were oblivious to all this and due for a rude awakening. Trotsky appealed to those who followed the Stalinist "centrist" line to break with Stalin and not do things in a half-way manner because the rightist elements in the party were about to put the idea of collectivization on the scrapheap of history and turn the Soviet Union into an open bourgeois republic.

Trotsky attacked Stalin for "empiricism" — paying too close attention to the facts and not enough attention to theory. As a result of not giving theory its due, Stalin adopted a "zig-zag" policy according to Trotsky, one time defending the NEP and another time abandoning it with rhetoric similar to Trotsky's. For his part, Stalin could obviously point to Lenin who explicitly said such "zig-zag" was necessary. Hence, we can see that in the CPSU, there were those who thought that the NEP was evil from a theory standpoint (Trotsky) and there were those who thought it should be permanent (Bukharin). In between was Stalin, who believed that modes of production outgrow their usefulness at some point, and need to be destroyed by force when they hold back production.

BIOGRAPHY OF BUKHARIN

"Don't feel malice about anything. Remember that the great cause of the USSR lives on, and this is the most important thing. Personal fates are transitory and wretched by comparison." — Among Bukharin's last words to Anna Larina (7)

While the substance of Bukharinism is the advocacy of a permanent NEP for dealing with pre-capitalist modes of production, the substance of Anna Larina's memoirs is her lifelong struggle to stand by her husband and his ideas. Her work focuses on the personal lives of the Bukharin family and similar families at the time of Stalin's "Purge Trials," from 1936 to 1938, which Western anti-communist anti-"totalitarian" ideologues refer to as the height of totalitarianism in the Soviet Union.

Anna Larina was born into a communist leader's family in 1914. Her parents trained her to give her blood for the cause when it became necessary. (8) Bukharin watched Anna Larina grow up because he was a friend of the father who adopted her. At age 10, she sent Bukharin something of a love letter, delivered by Stalin. At ages 14, 15 and 16 Anna Larina had strong feelings for Bukharin and in fact it appears that Bukharin would have married her around age 16 or 17, but she was unable to come to a decision. When she married Bukharin in 1934, she was 20 and he was 45.

As he lay dying of some undiagnosed lung and nervous disorder, Anna Larina's father asked her about Bukharin. He replied to her profession of loyalty to Bukharin by saying that 10 years with Bukharin would be more interesting than a lifetime with someone else. (9) Within this context of being

borne into a revolutionary intellectual family in a society of inequalities, we easily see that Bukharin was more "interesting" than other men to Anna Larina; even though, Anna Larina knew when she married Bukharin that he was already in a position of semi-disgrace within the CPSU.

The Russian Revolution did not instantly eradicate inequalities left over from previous society, including inequalities of gender. After reading these memoirs, we have no doubt that Anna Larina's love for Bukharin was much greater than that found in the average romance of supposedly greater equality but usually greater brittleness. Anna Larina's identification with her husband was so complete that she spent her life in prison for it and emerged unrepentant.

Throughout the book Anna Larina tells of her struggles to defend Bukharin, especially after Stalin had him executed. Politically, it mostly consists of being willing to stand up to what she perceived as unjust insults that Bukharin was a "traitor," "terrorist," "wrecker" and "conspirator." It is quite clear from Anna Larina's own book, most of the Soviet masses hated Bukharin and his wife at the time of the Purge Trials.

THE GULAG AND REPRESSION

Anna Larina spent her life in disgrace, living in internal exile and various prisons. She almost had herself executed as well. Only now as an 80-year-old does she speak freely and agitate with great success. There is no doubt that what happened to Bukharin and Anna Larina was a tragedy. They represent the old revolutionary intelligentsia generally and the sacrifices it made.

Had Bukharin been 15 years younger and a political leader in confrontation with Stalin after 1945 or Mao after 1949, we don't think Bukharin would have been considered a "traitor" and his merits would have outweighed his demerits. We have every reason to believe Bukharin would have made great and relatively unblemished contributions to the revolution.

It is indeed significant that Bukharin lived until 1938. Anna Larina says Stalin toyed with Bukharin for a long time before killing him. However, it can be fairly said that there were no major differences between Stalin and Bukharin until three conditions of extreme urgency changed. 1) The grain procurement crisis of 1928 demonstrated that NEP might be running out of steam. 2) The Great Depression of 1929 which impelled the imperialists toward World

War II with greater urgency. 3) The rise to power of fascism in the 1920s (Italy) and the early 1930s (Germany and Spain). With these three major historical events we can say that what was good enough before was no longer good enough anymore. What Trotsky calls a "zig-zag" and what Anna Larina seems to label as pure disloyalty was in fact a change in historical conditions that Stalin accurately gauged.

Bukharin himself noted these changes in historical conditions, as did almost all Soviet citizens, who knew years in advance that the Nazis would invade sooner or later. Five years before the Nazi invasion, in Paris in 1936, Bukharin said, "I certainly do not rule out an attack by Hitler on the Soviet Union. I think a military conflict with Germany is unavoidable." (10) Thus having gone through disgrace and argument with Stalin, Bukharin (like everyone else) knew that the Germans were coming. It was just a question of when.

Bukharin also offered a fairly sensible view to the Mensheviks in 1936, but he broke centralism in attacking the Soviet media. This again underscores Bukharin's lack of professionalism, even in the company of Mensheviks:

"Collectivization is a stage that is now complete; a difficult stage, but complete. In time, differences of opinion are outlived; it makes no sense to argue about what kind of legs should be made for a table when the table is already made. At home, they write that I was against collectivization, but this is a ploy of propagandists, a cheap shot. I had indeed proposed another path, more complex and not so pell-mell, that would have led in the final analysis to production cooperatives, a path that did not involve the same kind of sacrifices but would have ensured that collectivization was voluntary. But now, in the face of approaching fascism, I can say, 'Stalin triumphed!' Come to the Soviet Union, Boris Ivanovich, and take a look yourself with your own eyes at what Russia has become." (11)

In the context of the Soviet Union of the 1930s, it is possible someone like Bukharin could be a "traitor" aiding Trotsky, the United States and Hitler. The weakness of Anna Larina's book is typical of biographical material. It does not consider the economic, military and political conditions of the time. It does not address the serious political questions raised by the Stalinists and instead prefers to dwell on bourgeois questions of personal loyalty and

honor.

The resulting book is a mixture of Judeo-Christian ethics and Marxism-Leninism. To be fair, we should say that Stalin also made use of the masses' ideas about honor and loyalty to further the proletarian cause. Hence, we can understand why Anna Larina feels obliged to reply to the accusations against Bukharin's honor the way the masses understood them and not the way they were debated within the top party circles. After all, Stalin besmirched Bukharin in the eyes of the masses with the masses' own standards.

As a result, all kinds of bourgeois liberals, Mensheviks and anti-communists jump on the Bukharin bandwagon. They like to hear the message that Stalin repressed people inside the CPSU. According to a leading Bukharin advocate, Stephen Cohen: "Embattled reformers in ruling Communist parties had the biggest stake in his rehabilitation." (12) By "embattled reformers" Cohen refers to those people who wanted to transform the state capitalist system into an open bourgeois republic.

At the end of her book Anna Larina includes letters from various people reacting to her campaign to rehabilitate Bukharin. She does not bother to refute the anti-communists in the lot. While she does keep up something of an anti-Trotsky, anti-Menshevik and pro-Bolshevik view, she is often left in the role of resuscitating the memory of her husband instead of championing communist ideas.

Even where she does venture into complicated political waters, she does so first to prove that Bukharin was a patriot and not a traitor. Perhaps partly for this reason she paints him as a solid Bolshevik of personal integrity. For this reason she goes to the trouble of refuting Mensheviks who as late as 1965 wrote memoirs saying that Bukharin did in fact work with Mensheviks abroad to bring pressure on the CPSU to change. It was in fact scandalous for a Bolshevik to use the Menshevik press abroad to criticize the internal workings of the CPSU. Anna Larina knew this and addressed the point.

To Bukharin's credit, he was able to separate out his personal problems from those of the communist movement. Amongst his last words to his wife, he told her to raise his son "as a Bolshevik. A Bolshevik without fail!" (13) His very last words were "See that you don't get angry, Anyutka. There are irritating misprints in history, but the truth will triumph." (14) In saying this, Bukharin recognized that there is a process of struggle in the advance of

the truth.

"RESTING ON ONE'S LAURELS" AND BOURGEOIS ETHICS

One of the ongoing themes of the memoirs is that it is not possible that these "Old Guard" Bolshevik leaders could be guilty of all the charges brought against them. Mao referred to this kind of line as "resting on one's laurels." Again and again, the Old Guard charges the "Stalinists" with having no honor themselves because they don't recognize the place of honor of the Old Guard. While such issues of honor and integrity are important to the masses, they are actually a hindrance to understanding what happened in the 1930s. As we have already indicated there are no timeless morals.

It is scandalous to Christians to think of a world without timeless moral values such as loyalty, honor and integrity — characteristics that God supposedly places in each of us once and for all time, especially in the more hard-line Protestant religions upholding predetermination. These moral characteristics are then referred to by the Christians as our "moral character." The Stalinists' opposition to such an ideology leaves the Christians aghast and hence we "Stalinists" appear as "amoral" to those who claim timeless values.

Stalin refuted this kind of thinking quite well in a quote that Anna Larina attributes to him in a dialogue with Bukharin. Bukharin:

"'Koba!' [Stalin's nickname] he said. 'You have to check the work of the NKVD [state security agency which predated the KGB], create a commission to find out what's going on there. Before the revolution, during the revolution, and in the hard days after it was achieved, we served only the revolution. So now, when the difficulties are already behind us, you believe slanderous testimonies? Do you want to toss us onto the filthy garbage pile of history? Come to your senses, Koba!'

"Stalin replied in an indifferent tone. 'If you want to talk about your past merits, no one can take them away from you. But Trotsky had them, too. In fact, speaking between ourselves, speaking between ourselves,' he said twice, 'few had as many merits before the revolution as Trotsky.'" (15)

It is idealism to believe that God gave us permanent moral "characters." According to Stalin, people change with their circumstances. Trotsky

was a Menshevik at one point, a revolutionary of great merit at another point and finally a counterrevolutionary, the first contra leader of the 20th century.

No doubt from Stalin's perspective, the Old Guard rested on its laurels too much and underestimated the situation the Soviet Union was in. Largely from the revolutionary intelligentsia, the Old Guard seemed more and more impractical in its usefulness to Stalin — not Stalin as a person requiring "power" but Stalin as someone evaluating the contribution the Old Guard could make to preparing the Soviet Union for world war and global revolution.

Stalin was correct to see the Old Guard as tending to rest on its laurels and tending to deserve power because of "who" it is as opposed to "what" and "where" it is leading the Soviet Union. It was Stalin who did the most of the Old Guard to assure the professionalism and the place of science in the party.

It is often mistakenly asserted that Stalin was responsible for the creation of a "patronage" system of "vassalage" in the Soviet government. Actually the responsibility for this lies firmly at the feet of the "Old Guard" that believed in the magic powers of revolutionary prestige. They filled themselves up with feudal and bourgeois notions of honor and integrity.

Some of the same bourgeois critics blame Stalin for a widespread "Terror" while they also claim he set up an especially bureaucratic patronage system. It is not possible to have this both ways! If Stalin continuously had his own underlings executed; if even his own family was not immune (16) and if his home province of Georgia had more than its share of executions (17), we must conclude that what drove Stalin and his underlings was not "personal" loyalties and connections, but something else much more professional in demeanor. Yet because of the pre-scientific and hence superstitious and ideological nature of much of the bourgeois intelligentsia, especially in the humanities and social sciences, we hear again and again these contradictory ideas that Stalin made everyone personally loyal to him while he killed off everyone regardless of their personal ties to him! When it comes to criticizing Stalin there are absolutely no limits to how far logic can be stretched by the pre-scientific intelligentsia.

Underlying these pre-scientific criticisms of Stalin is precisely the simple horror that Stalin really was a communist. He did not put his long-time friends, home province, people of similar schooling,

people of similar revolutionary credentials or his own family first. Stalin demonstrated too few of these traditional loyalties; although of course even he could not have escaped them entirely.

While Anna Larina demonstrates some willingness to talk about the great issues dividing the communist movement, she has a less than professional attitude toward revolutionary science. In this she seems to have shared some similarities with Bukharin.

Interrogated by Beria and many others, Anna Larina hated having people repeat lines they heard somewhere else. To the revolutionary intelligentsia concerned with its honor and individuality, it is absurd that comrades might actually share the same analysis.

She evaluates Beria's struggle with her as a matter of psychological subterfuge. Speaking of her father, Beria said, "I had great respect for him ... 'We interred him with honors in Red Square.' (As if he had anything to do with my father's interment!)" (18) Once again the point here is that Beria is some kind of upstart, coming some three generations of administrators after the original revolutionaries in the Cheka. Here Beria simply repeated what the party line on her father was and she interprets it as a matter of his being an upstart.

In another interrogation, the interrogator turns out to be an old schoolmate of hers and another red-diaper baby. "Andrei Sverdlov's new occupation could not be regarded as anything but betrayal. The eyes of Cain were looking at me. Even so, the guilty party behind his catastrophe as well as mine was one and the same person: Stalin." (19) After this Biblical metaphor, Larina continues with the theme of gratitude and loyalty. "I cut him off, telling him that the 'enemy of the people' Bukharin had telephoned Stalin after his, Andrei's, arrest to plead for his release." (20)

In the most important of personal relations, she speaks of Stalin and Bukharin. She points out that they were long-time friends, and lived one floor apart from each other and even switched apartments at one point. Stalin's own family knew Bukharin so well it sometimes sided with Bukharin in arguments. They went to the same parties and socialized at the theater. This led Larina to conclude of Stalin, "Certainly, nothing was really dear to him. ... and yet?" (21) And so it is that Anna Larina sees some ambiguity in her relationship to Stalin and she sees even more ambiguity in Bukharin's relationship to Stalin. (22) They were good friends, but Stalin had

Bukharin executed.

While recognizing that Stalin himself needed friends and that Bukharin was one of those friends on the most personal terms with Stalin, she expected this friendship to be above the issues that both men apparently held to be paramount. Larina is simply unable to sort out professional issues from personal ones.

She never raises or refutes what Stalin said on this directly:

"Comrades, I will not dwell on personal matters, even though the personal element played quite an impressive part in the speeches of Bukharin's group. I will not do this because the personal element is trivial and it is not worth dwelling on trivialities. Bukharin spoke of our personal correspondence. He read several letters from which it was plain that yesterday we were personal friends, and now we are parting company politically. I don't think all these complaints and wailings are worth a brass farthing. We are not a family circle or a coterie of personal friends; we are the political party of the working class." (23)

Bukharin himself had the problem of not being able to sort out personal trivialities from what is politically important, despite his large commitment of energy to the revolutionary profession. In recounting his conversation with Kamenev, Larina admits as much:

"Nikolai Ivanovich added an unflattering opinion of Molotov: Stalin, he said, surrounded himself with faceless drones subordinate to him in everything, like the dull-witted Molotov, that 'lead butt,' who was still struggling to understand Marxism. (Actually, Nikolai Ivanovich used ruder expressions to describe Molotov, improper to repeat here. My husband was by nature excitable and outspoken.)" (24)

Once again, the recourse is to the evaluation of the intellectual and moral characters of people in the CPSU. There is no argument of substance, simply insults imitating the old ruling class's traditional justification for its rule — that the masses are too stupid to rule. (See MIM Theory 2/3 "Abolish Psychology" on why MIM prefers to avoid this kind of approach.)

STALIN'S "PATHOLOGICAL SUSPICIOUSNESS"

As all Bolsheviks of his day when speaking of each other, and even more so the many critics too dumbfounded by Stalin to raise any questions of analysis, Bukharin resorted to attacking Stalin with psychology. When all reasoning fails, resort to besmirching someone's personal motivations is the anti-communist strategy without fail.

In his "To a Future Generation of Party Leaders" and other statements remembered by his wife, Bukharin reduces the "Purges" to a combination of the existence of state power and Stalin's personality. Yet from Anna Larina's memoirs, we learn some more legitimate bases for that "paranoia" that go beyond Stalin's personality and the corruption of state functionaries which exists everywhere there is state power. (25)

The notion that there was a conspiracy of people within the Soviet Union with Menshevik emigre circles in the imperialist countries turns out to have some merit. To her credit, Anna Larina did not simply overlook the "Letter of an Old Bolshevik" published in the Socialist Herald of Paris. At the time of its publication it damaged Bukharin who seemed to be the person behind it using anonymity to make a criticism abroad to pressure the CPSU.

In 1959, for the first time, a Menshevik admitted to having fabricated the letter. Hence, Stalin had no way of knowing it was fabricated since he died in 1953. Anna Larina suggests that perhaps Stalin asked the Mensheviks to fabricate the letter to make Bukharin look bad, but she admits she doesn't understand Boris Nicolaevsky's intentions in doing this and doesn't really know what happened herself.

If this was an attempt to create discord within the communist camp, the Mensheviks succeeded. On the other hand, it also backfired, because it helped confirm the opinions of the "Left" against the "Right" and helped justify the Purge Trials. In this way, the Mensheviks contributed to a "Red Terror," which considering their "peaceful evolution" strategy doesn't seem to fit together.

Later, in 1965, Nicolaevsky said that the content of his fabricated article was based on conversations he had with Bukharin in Paris in 1936 just as Bukharin's detractors had said. (At the time of the "Purge Trials" of Bukharin in 1938 Nicolaevsky denied any political conversation with Bukharin whatsoever. (26) Hence it appears that Nicolaevsky was protecting Bukharin at that time.) In 1965 Nicolaevsky published a transcript of things he talked about with Bukharin.

Why Nicolaevsky would falsely attack Bukharin when Stalin already had been dead for 12 years, it is not easy to say, and so we should not rule out that Bukharin did inspire the "Letter from an Old Bolshevik." In this regard, Anna Larina seems to understand that the reader is not going to be able to get much satisfaction, since she herself was not present all the days or at all the meetings in Paris in 1936 that Bukharin attended. Nonetheless, while no one is yet able to sort out this political tangle, it is quite certain that whatever happened did justify "paranoid" suspicion. Clearly there is some very high-level maneuvering that went on. In the end, we have found no critics of Stalin other than Anna Larina who believes that Bukharin did not have this connection to the Mensheviks abroad.

THE NAZI CONNECTION

Anna Larina argues the absurdity of Stalin's charge against Bukharin that he worked with Trotsky while Hitler pulled strings in the background.

In the upper reaches of state power and the intelligentsia, political commerce occurs through the medium of a highly symbolic language. While the vast majority of workers and "socialists" rejected Lenin's anti-war positions and his bold new views regarding imperialism and the labor aristocracy, the German imperialists made a very smart move in helping ship Lenin back into Russia in 1917. The German imperialists did not agree with Lenin, but they understood enough of what he was saying that they believed he could help subvert the Russian war effort against Germany, and the German imperialists were correct. Such commerce between intellectuals such as Lenin, who was out of power, and the people in state power occurs all the time, sometimes so subtly that no one notices.

We will start with the more elementary cases of treason and then move on to treat more dangerous kinds. Anna Larina is apparently unaware or unwilling to treat the subject of Stalin's judgment concerning his officer corps just prior to World War II. She believes that the purge may have been connected to the military's fondness or feared fondness of Bukharin and other dissidents. As such the military purge was just another example of Stalin's supposed paranoia. "The charge that the commanders had conspired against the Soviet state, in league with Hitler, simply could not be believed." (27)

We have since learned that Stalin had a dossier on military officers from British and French intelli-

gence. These imperialists believed that the officer corps did have a Nazi "fifth column" in it and warned Stalin about it. From what we know about these matters of state, Nazi intelligence had the last laugh in fooling the combined intelligence agencies of Britain, France and the Soviet Union by fabricating the evidence for such an alliance.

In the cases of other countries, especially in Eastern Europe — Romania and Poland for example — there was no need to fabricate evidence concerning Nazi sympathies of military officers. It was quite apparent. Once again it is possible Stalin was fooled in all this, but since others were as well, it is hardly proof that Stalin was anymore "paranoid" than anyone else about Nazi infiltrators. In fact, the various countries of Eastern Europe steamrolled by Hitler were not "paranoid" enough about Hitler. For that matter, even the major imperialist country France ended up having a "Vichy" government and significant fifth column. Compared with the other political leaders of his time, Stalin showed a far greater determination to account for this reality in his handling of the military.

The case of Stalin's political opponents is harder to follow, but once again, it remains true that Stalin had a substantial case and no need to fabricate anything.

Even Trotskyist and Trotsky biographer Isaac Deutscher found Trotsky's "Clemenceau Declaration" to be a blunder. It amounted to saying that Trotsky would ride to power on the back of an imperialist invasion. In 1931, according to Lion Feuchtwanger, Emil Ludwig visited Trotsky in private and received the same impression that Trotsky still had the deliberate strategy of riding to power on the back of German tanks. Later, in the year Trotsky was killed by Stalin and just before Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, Trotsky was found advocating civil war in the Soviet Union — quite conveniently for the Nazis about to invade.

Some years after the "Clemenceau Declaration" marking Trotsky's strategy for a return to power, Zinoviev and Kamenev then made an opportunist bloc with Trotsky against Stalin. At the time, Bukharin agreed that Zinoviev and Kamenev had thus disgraced themselves.

Later Bukharin would make a pitiful attempt to make an alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev who had already been disgraced like Trotsky before them. Anna Larina does not deny Bukharin's maneuverings in this regard. In July, 1928, Bukharin had a

"fateful" meeting with Kamenev:

"I recall also that Nikolai Ivanovich, from what he told me, admitted to Kamenev and Sokolnikov that they had been absolutely right at the Fourteenth Party Congress, in 1925, when they advised delegates not to reelect Stalin as gensek [general secretary]. Bukharin went on to say that Stalin was an unprincipled intriguer who in his pursuit of power would change his politics at any given moment, depending only on whom he wanted to be free of." (28)

In this alone, Bukharin justified the purge trial's contention that Bukharin was part of a Hitler-Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc. Trotsky conjured up the image of a German army invasion that would bring him to power. Zinoviev and Kamenev later flip-flopped from vehemently opposing Trotsky to saying that Trotsky was correct all along. Trotsky loved to quote their statement of repentance to Trotsky for the rest of his life. Then Zinoviev and Kamenev came to their senses and pledged loyalty to the party, led by Stalin or not. Finally, Bukharin repented and told Kamenev that he and Zinoviev had been right all along.

Hence, in actual fact there was a political bloc between Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, as much as they disagreed about the NEP and the peasantry. The reason is that the four leaders all opposed Stalin and found it useful to make use of anarchist criticisms of "bureaucracy" as if they more than Stalin could eradicate "bureaucracy" before the basis of state power itself could be abolished. When all else failed, there was always anarchism and psychology to fall back on. In the case of these four "Old Guard" leaders, their reasoning failed to persuade a party majority, and indeed on many points they had no disagreements with Stalin. When they fell out of state power, they became critical of all power the way the anarchists are — in a sterile and infantile sort of way. They attempted to blame Stalin personally for the existence of state power.

Luckily for the international proletariat, Stalin had the "strength" or "will" to continue representing the proletariat in the face of such opportunist attacks which are always true no matter who is in power. He did not listen to their psychological babble, though he was somewhat more susceptible to it than subsequent comrades in China who understood more clearly why psychology as an entire subject matter had to be abolished.

These facts about Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin are old and available even in works by Trotskyist biographers. Yet despite the intentions of the revisionist historians and proponents of glasnost, not everything coming to light in recent years about Stalin is negative. Some facts can be ignored and de-emphasized, but nonetheless occasionally they come to light, even in connection to Nazi subversion.

Boris Bazhanov recently published an English translation of the second edition of his memoirs (29). In his second edition, he was able to state freely what he was unable to before because of fear of what would happen to friends and co-workers still in the Soviet Union. Boris Bazhanov was one of Stalin's top four secretaries in the 1920s before fleeing to the West on January 1, 1928. He was a secretary for the Central Committee, the Orgburo and the Politburo at one time or another. He was probably the most powerful person in his twenties in the Soviet government. He had some powers that even Politburo members did not have practically speaking.

Yet when Bazhanov fled to the West, he started exposing the details of the Soviet Union's inner workings to imperialist diplomats and military officials. He also started preaching Christian values.

When the Soviet Union invaded Finland in preparation for war with Germany, Bazhanov took the Finnish side and organized an army of Russian emigres to help. His work subverting the Soviet Army drew the attention of Hitler.

When Hitler took over France, Belgium and other countries of Europe, Bazhanov did not resist. Quite the contrary, he received an invitation to see top Nazi officials in Berlin. Rather than resist these solicitations, Bazhanov went to Germany to negotiate the terms of his aid to the Nazi army. Bazhanov wanted the Germans to set up an anti-communist but independent Russian government. Hitler's underlings agreed with Bazhanov, but Hitler overruled Bazhanov's suggestion by saying that Russia would be a German colony. (30)

If it were not for Hitler's absolutist views regarding racial purity, the Nazis would have won the war. Had intelligent officers staged a coup against Hitler, the scary truth is that the Germans could have mobilized many more people like Bazhanov to set up a pro-German imperialist government in Moscow.

As it happened, there was some back-and-forth between Bazhanov and the Nazis, but in the end,

Bazhanov did not actively organize for a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Bazhanov concluded that the fascists' ultranationalism is the plague of the far-right, something that always ends up playing into the communists' hands. Such fine distinctions in the anti-communist right are the only reason that we did not see an army of the like described by Stalin breeze into Moscow. Stalin understood the possible bases of Nazi support. Many of his naive and intellectual critics still don't 50 years later. It is part of the same contradiction that only the minority hold state power and even a smaller minority have held state power on behalf of the proletariat. For this reason alone, much superstition and ignorance surrounds matters of communist state power.

THE REAL ISSUES

What we must understand about the communist leaders is that they debated many things that would seem rather "dry" to the masses. Grain production figures, industrial capacity, relative price ratios and the like are the stuff of the argument over what would work best to move the Soviet Union forward.

How the masses grasp the debate amongst the leaders is crucial. The leaders knew that industrial production was a question of life-and-death importance to the people. However, just printing the figures for the Soviet Union and Germany in the newspapers would not have been enough to spur the masses in a concrete way. Merely to say that the imperialists' economies produce more than the Soviet Union is not enough.

On the other hand, from a long history of national conflicts in the pre-socialist era, the masses could grasp the urgencies associated with fighting "spies," "saboteurs" and "conspirators" from other countries. The idea that the Germans or other imperialists would send people to sabotage Soviet industry is both understandable and an issue of urgent importance to the masses.

The trouble is translating this from the top echelons of power where policy is made to the masses below. To avoid adopting the policies of the bourgeoisie was of life and death concern to the CPSU leadership. As Stalin was famous for saying in 1931, the Soviets had 10 years to catch up with the West or the West would destroy it in war. Someone in the leadership of the CPSU with the wrong plan would do much more damage to the Soviet Union than any spy or "wrecker" because the Soviet Union was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

In the 1930s, Stalin became the slave-driver of the Soviet peoples. After World War II, he himself admitted he killed too many people and that other nations might not have been so generous as to let him continue leading the country.

Where we disagree with Bukharin supporters is that we don't think the Soviet Union could have afforded not to tap the emotional energy associated with fighting foreign "saboteurs," "spies" and "wreckers." They also needed a stringent notion of patriot to spur the people in the 1930s. This is what allowed Stalin to lead the Soviet Union from being an agrarian society to an industrial country in 10 years. No other country in the world had accomplished that before Stalin without murderous repression.

Had Bukharin implemented his policies, MIM believes that Hitler would have won World War II. The Russians lost in war against the Japanese in 1905. When the Germans fought them in World War I, the Russians lost abysmally and had to give up a lot of territory. At that time, the Russians lost even though Germany had to fight on two fronts at once — one facing France and the other facing Russia. The French were the much tougher opponents for the Germans.

In World War II, Germany won on its Western front before it initiated war on the Soviet Union in the East. The Soviet Union faced the most massive military onslaught in history, but this time, under socialist leadership, the Soviet peoples won the war. Even so they had to lose 20 million dead to do it and they very nearly lost. People who do not understand the military and industrial history of Europe from 1900 to 1945 will not understand anything about the validity of Stalin's approach.

What Stalin did was to tap the nationalist energies of his people to defeat imperialism. In contrast, Bukharin would have let the peasants stay peasants and let the economy grow at "a tortoise's pace" (as he said in reply to Trotsky who feared the pace of industrial growth would be slow under Stalin and Bukharin's line of "socialism in one country.") Bukharin also would have allowed more debate and he would not have set an exacting criterion of "patriot." There would have been no mass executions in Lubyanka and no "Great Purges," but there also would have been no Soviet Union after 1941 — just a German colony.

From what we know, both Stalin and Bukharin opposed Lenin's and Trotsky's ideas about military strategy and they would have been the first to take

up protracted guerrilla warfare against a victorious Hitler. Nonetheless it would have been too late in many regards. Hitler would have seized substantial oil fields and other wealth. He would have controlled the Russian cities. With another few years, European Jews would have been exterminated as completely as the indigenous people of North America. Next would have been the African peoples Hitler had under his control. With Russia in his hands, Hitler also would have gained successful negotiations with U.S. and British imperialists, perhaps while he conquered and exterminated the Japanese. There would have been another round of imperialist world wars, but this time with no socialist bloc.

Notes:

1. The exception to this approach to Bukharin is the idea that the revolutions in China, Korea and Vietnam may have learned from Bukharin without acknowledging him or even without knowing of the principal defender of the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union. (See other MIM literature on the New Economic Policy (NEP), a policy of free trade in rural markets and private farming combined with Bolshevik state control of communications, transport and other strategic industries in what Lenin referred to as a "state capitalist" mode of production used by the Bolsheviks to smash the existing pre-capitalist relations swamping the Soviet Union.)
2. Geoffrey Hosking, *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 61.
3. MIM can see no "line" in the Zinoviev/Kamenev struggles against Stalin, only a flouting of revolutionary credentials. The rapid flip-flops of Zinoviev and Kamenev appear to have cost them their widespread support in the party. Nonetheless, we do credit their contributions up until 1924 when Lenin died. It is especially important that Zinoviev was Lenin's first lieutenant on the question of the labor aristocracy in the imperialist countries. He continued to show prescience in this area right through his work in the Comintern.
4. Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993. p. 115.
5. Larina, p. 290.
6. Leon Trotsky, *The New Course* Max Schachtman intro. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1972), pp. 207-210.
7. Larina, p. 355.
8. Ibid, p. 229.
9. Ibid, p. 229.
10. Ibid, p. 254.
11. Ibid, pp. 256-7.
12. Cohen, p. 20.
13. Ibid, p. 334.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid, p. 302; Stalin said the same to Tito about Tito's past, Ulam, p. 667.
16. See Larina, pp. 141-2 for accusation of murder of his own wife.
17. Larina, p. 56.
18. Ibid, p. 194.
19. Ibid, p. 242.
20. Ibid, p. 244.

21. Ibid, p. 291.

22. See also Larina, pp. 289-90.

23. D. Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1988. pp. 174-5; Volkogonov likewise says Stalin lacked "honor" "pity" and "sympathy" p. 292.

24. Larina, p. 113.

25. Precisely because state power does exist everywhere and is corrupt everywhere it is inappropriate to raise that fact in the context of a struggle within the communist movement. The critique of state power is a given in the communist movement. The question is how best to eradicate the material bases for the need of state power.

26. Larina, p. 271.

27. Ibid, p. 59.

28. Ibid, pp. 112-3.

29. See Bazhanov and the *Damnation of Stalin* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1990.

30. Bazhanov, p. 217.

Stalin: A New World Seen Through One Man

by Henri Barbusse

NY: Macmillan Co., 1935

reviewed by MC5

This book came out at a very interesting moment in history. This was before the so-called Purge Trials of 1936-1938, which define "totalitarianism" for many in the West. Yet the book comes after the success of the first five year plan and the coming to power of fascism and the beginning of World War II.

In 1935, Barbusse thought the Soviet Union would soon surpass all the economies of the rest of the world. At the time, he was also able to cite many bourgeois media sources that admitted communism was making capitalism look very bad ever since the Depression of 1929. Of course Barbusse turned out wrong, but only because the acceleration of the war forced the Soviet Union to become a superpower and suffer massive destruction at imperialist hands.

A strong point of the book is the review of the history of imperialist intervention in the Soviet Union, especially in the "civil war," which was really an imperialist-instigated war with troops from 14 reactionary countries participating. From the book, we can get an idea of the problems Soviet power

had in establishing itself in the early years.

Another novel stress of this author is the hostility to Eastern European nationalism. According to Barbusse, Poland was a recent French and British invention to keep territory out of Soviet socialist hands. Barbusse's treatment of the national question is not orthodox, but it is interesting. The book is proof that Stalin's action in Eastern Europe after World War II was not entirely out of the blue.

The books about Stalin by Anna Louise Strong are a little better though very similar. Barbusse falls a little bit too much for psycho-biographical methods. Yet, from his book, we can see how a progressive person was pro-Stalin in 1935. In 1935 it appeared that the capitalist world was crumbling and turning to fascism while the social-democrats had failed to change anything in Western Europe in the midst of this decay. So it seemed to Barbusse that only Stalin as the loyal applicator of Leninism was leading a forward-looking politics.

Moscow 1937: My Visit Described for My Friends

by Lion Feuchtwanger

Trans. by Irene Josephy

New York: Viking Press, 1937, 151 pp.

Like Henri Barbusse and Anna Louise Strong, Lion Feuchtwanger was a progressive person who came to grips with the "Stalin era." This is another pro-Stalin book that MIM approves.

MIM's strongest objection comes from Feuchtwanger's discussion of "political psychology." Though an advocate of "reason," Feuchtwanger does not go far enough in his science and settles for approximations thereof.

A strength of the book is its historical perspective from 1937, before the inter-imperialist part of World War II broke out. It refutes much of the trash coming out now. Today many rewriters of history try to say Stalin did not prepare the people for fascism and World War II, as if it were a simple matter. Here we learn quite emphatically that it was only in the

Soviet Union where the people were 100% sure that world war was going to embroil the major European powers including the Soviet Union.

Feuchtwanger also preserves an accurate sense of the view of Trotsky at the time — as a traitor to the international communist movement. As an example, Feuchtwanger reprints a convincing excerpt from an interview of Trotsky with Emil Ludwig in 1931. Trotsky told Ludwig that his scattered followers would come together and get a chance at revolution, "when an opportunity is presented from outside—perhaps a war or a new European intervention, when the weakness of the government would act as a stimulus." (1) Trotsky goes on to say that ways could be found to get back into the Soviet Union then.

In the midst of the so-called "Purge Trials" or "Moscow Trials," Feuchtwanger also gives his firsthand impressions. This and the fact that the book came out four years before the German invasion make it a valuable historical document.

Notes: Feuchtwanger, pp. 117-18.

Chapter 3 The United Front



Principles, strategy, tactics and World War II

by MC5
February, 1994

MIM recommends Richard Krooth's *Arms and Empire* for an analysis of the underlying economic bases of World War I and World War II. It is now widely accepted that World War I was a war over colonies. World War II was again largely a war over colonies — England, France and the United States on the one hand and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other hand. As we can learn from Mao Zedong, Japan was a new and rising colonial force. Germany and Italy were stripped of colonies in World War I. They wanted to move up, but found their path blocked by other colonialists.

THE EX-ORU (ORGANIZATION FOR REVOLUTIONARY UNITY) ANALYSIS

On the Roots of Revisionism is an analysis of the united front, published in 1979 by the now defunct ORU, but it was influenced by Mao, as well as Hoxha in his more correct aspects. Drawing from a fairly wide literature, the strength of this book is its sense of political periods. The authors weigh carefully at each moment in history what the best political road forward is. It clearly demarcates between Trotskyism and right opportunism and takes a generally materialist approach.

The book also undertakes a little concrete analysis of conditions in the United States with regard to labor, Blacks and women. J. Sakai's *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat* is still superior, though we can read *Revisionism* to connect these issues with the role of the Comintern. However, the book is weak on the question of the labor aristocracy.

Secondly, Lenin died before these issues of fascism and the united front could develop fully. However, as is typical, the ex-ORU authors of *Revisionism* quote Lenin on the split in the working class to emphasize that Lenin regarded the social-democrats as part of the workers' movement and not a bourgeois political party.

"Precisely the parasitism and decay of capitalism which are characteristic of its highest historical stage of development, i.e., imperialism. As is proved in this pamphlet, capitalism has now singled out a handful (less than one-tenth of the inhabitants of the globe; less than one-fifth at a most 'generous' and liberal calculation) of exceptionally rich and powerful states which plunder the whole world simply by 'clipping coupons.' Capital exports yield an income of eight to ten billion francs per annum, at prewar prices and according to prewar bourgeois statistics. Now, of course, they yield much more.

"Obviously, out of such enormous superprofits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their 'own' country) it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labor aristocracy. And the capitalists of the 'advanced' countries are bribing them; they bribe them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert.

"This stratum of bourgeoisified workers, or the 'labor aristocracy,' who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and, in our days, the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, real channels of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the 'Versaillese' against the 'Communards.'" —V. I. Lenin (1)

In the first place, Lenin said there was a split in the whole working class, not just between its leaders and the workers. Indeed, he was explicit that a whole stratum of workers got the bribes, not, as the social-chauvinist Trotskyists try to tell us, just the leaders. When he mentioned a figure for a population affected, he did not refer to the less than 1% of the world who are imperialists. He quite firmly counted the populations of the imperialist countries at the time as 10-20% of the world population.

Elsewhere, Lenin also explicitly said the seal of parasitism doomed "entire" nations. Secondly, MIM noticed that even in the 1921 edition of *Imperialism*, Lenin said that the plunder of the whole world had increased quantitatively. The coupons "yield much more."

From this MIM concluded that it had better analyze the conditions of the working class internationally to discover where the split lies, where the fault lines are. Furthermore, if Lenin updated his own figures from edition to edition of his pamphlets and found the superprofits increasing, MIM had better do the same and calculate the nature of the penetration of imperialism relative to the size of its working class.

MIM has found that Lenin was correct and that there is a basis to bribe the Amerikan working classes and that in fact such bribery must be going on to an extent to affect the entire Amerikan working class by any reasonable calculations. (See MIM Theory 1 and follow-up in issues 2/3 and 4.)

Meanwhile, our ex-ORU comrades who generously included this quote from Lenin in their book did not take Lenin to heart. Instead they polemicized with MIM on this point and even found the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP-USA) too hostile to their economism. Like the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) before it, the ORU comrades wanted to follow the Trotskyists into drowning in industrial worker fallacies. Basing itself in the industrial working class and even achieving some tactical victories within its standards of success, MIM is not surprised to see the ORU dissolve entirely.

ORU liquidated itself to join a revisionist-reformist coalition with a common practice in the Jesse Jackson campaign. While genuine (if fleeting) Maoist groups like the Black Panther Party (BPP) had to be smashed by the imperialists, the Maoist sound-alikes like ORU consciously based themselves in the industrial working class and, not surprisingly, they turned out as reformists just as Lenin said they would. They had turned a blind eye to the bribery all around them, partly because of the bribes they themselves received.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SPLIT IN THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS

"Were the Parties and the Comintern itself strong enough ideologically and organizationally to deal with the united front against fascism in a principled way without falling into the abyss of opportunism? (And if not, why not?)." (2)

The misunderstanding of the split in the working class holds back the analysis of fascism and World War II. It is also a crucial point for MIM's own analysis. Most communist and non-communist analyses start with the assumption that the industrial

working classes in all the imperialist countries were exploited in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. They don't distinguish between the working classes in countries that had colonies and those countries that had no colonies (or were themselves colonies).

Stalin was closer than the ORU to hitting the mark on this question. He did not know what we do now about the working class conditions of the imperialist countries, but he did have experience in seeing Lenin lead his party past the Mensheviks. As he told the Germans in 1925, he knew that until the communists were the clear choice over the social-democrats in Germany, there could be no hope of German revolution. (3)

Sakai has already written the closest thing to a history of the moment when there was an exploited Amerikan working class. From Sakai we learn to break from the straight-jacket ideology imposed on us by Trotskyists and other social-chauvinists that the Amerikan working class fits the assumption of one case of capitalist relations among many that Marx talked about in *Capital*. We learn instead that the Amerikan working class is not and was not exploited for the better part of this century. By the 1920s, the United States had joined the winning side of a world war for colonies — a material fact that must be accounted for in assessing the revolutionary potential of the working class.

Meanwhile in Germany, a near-revolution after World War I almost changed the course of history. It appears in that case the subjective forces (the vanguard) were not ready to take advantage of a revolutionary opportunity.

Germany in the 1920s had no colonies. The masses there had a choice: to gear up for forcing their country's way into the ranks of the colonial powers or to bring down the whole system and join with the Soviet Union to make a pivotal socialist bloc. Germany chose to look West instead of East.

If ever there was a period in history where the outcome teetered between revolution and counter-revolution, Germany of the 1920s and 1930s was that period. While the Depression in 1929 had the effect of radicalizing many in the imperialist countries, in Germany it had an even greater effect.

In European politics, much attention is paid to the principles that separate fascism from bourgeois democracy and social-democracy from communism. MIM steers away from these philosophical discussions and instead starts with an analysis of political economy.

Sakai has done this for the United States. For

Europe, H.W. Edwards, in *Labor Aristocracy: Mass Base of Social Democracy*, (Aurora: Stockholm, 1978) has done much to lay bare the opportunism propagated in the name of the "general crisis of capitalism." For decades in Europe, the various leaders proclaimed the dissolution of social-democracy (and its social base, the labor aristocracy) through stagnation and economic crisis.

We should now be aware that there was no revolutionary opportunity in England of any kind, ever. It had won the war and was the top colonial power. Engels once said that there was no working class politics in England because of the colonial "feast."

In the United States, the objective conditions for revolution did exist in a limited way up till the 1930s, but not because of the Great Depression as the economists and social chauvinists asserted. In the United States, a revolutionary opportunity was lost again because of a combination of repression and a shortage in the subjective forces for revolution.

Most "communist"-chauvinist analyses of this period focus on the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) and the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) unions it built. While it is important to understand the success of the CPUSA, conditions for revolution in the Black Belt South also existed, from the moment the Civil War ended.

The 1928 Comintern thesis on self-determination for the Black Belt nation was a big step forward, but even that was too little too late. By the end of World War II, the chance for a Black nationalist sharecropper revolution in the South was gone. The pace of industrialization of the Black population had increased very rapidly in the war, because during the war women and Blacks were given roles not usually accorded to them.

Some of Sakai's comrades have written about Black movements at the time and their relationship to the Communist Party. Yet comrades Tani and Sera, who wrote *False Nationalism, False Internationalism*, condemn Stalin, and claim that the CPUSA destroyed what could have been a promising Black revolutionary nationalist movement.

The implicit assumption of Tani and Sera is that Stalin and the CPUSA central leadership were all-powerful and could have made the Black revolution a success, and it was in fact their fault that the Black comrades didn't organize their own separate revolutionary nationalist organizations. (It's this kind of excuse-making for political immaturity that

we also see in the case of the Spanish civil war and again in Greece after World War II where the actions of the revolutionaries are blamed exclusively on Stalin.)

Had a Mao Zedong arisen in the South around 1900, there would have been the kind of revolutionary movement that would factor heavily into the considerations of the united front during World War II. Yet although the economic conditions for such a movement existed, it did not happen. Nonetheless, we must look at the past also through the eyes of those Black communists who did organize at the time.

Through their eyes, we must see that there were material conditions for revolution, though those conditions were eliminated with the growth and penetration of U.S. imperialism. Through the eyes of the American working class though, the Depression of 1929 put communism squarely on the agenda, but it could not shake off the memories of the benefits of empire from the "roaring '20s" right away. No crisis succeeds in instantly eliminating the history that preceded it. That's something today's cheerleaders of Euro-American labor need to realize more keenly than their Depression-era counterparts.

The roads that lay open to the American working class were too many for revolution to arise in the early 1930s. The American working class would first try to fix what seemed to bring economic growth only a short while ago. To fix it, the working class would naturally try reform first. It would also have to try extensive unionization. In fact, the working class got to try these things very quickly, during Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal.

CPUSA leader William Foster correctly summed up this mood among the industrial workers in 1936: "The workers believed the promises of Roosevelt." (4) The legalization of crucial aspects of union-organizing (such as collective bargaining) cleared the way for American workers to negotiate with the imperialists on a more favorable footing.

This stands in marked contrast to the situation of the Black nation, which had plenty of historical reasons to know that revolution would benefit them. The benefits of empire had not clearly extended to them, and indeed the white ruling class still ruled with political forms short of bourgeois democracy. A new democratic revolution would have been welcomed by the Black masses.

In this regard, the subjective forces were to blame. Why there was such a gap between the objective conditions and the subjective forces is

something we cannot presently answer. We can only surmise that severe repression at a time when the existing mode of production had not exhausted itself for Blacks squelched the creation of subjective forces for revolution.

Since Amerikan imperialism was on the upswing and relatively united, the opportunity for a revolutionary movement did not exist. Throughout the world in fact, the anti-colonial forces finally got their chance in World War II, so the Blacks in North America were not the only people with revolutionary conditions and a lack of political opportunity/subjective forces until World War II. (5) Mob lynching and legal lynching were both common. In just one example, a Black youth nearly received the death penalty for circulating an anti-poverty leaflet that did not even mention violence. (6)

We must understand the material conditions of the time to understand what was possible for the revolutionary movement and hence what was opportunism and what was correct analysis. We have more sympathy for the Amerikan communists who thought that organizing unions among workers as if they were exploited was the way to go in 1930. It's not nearly as bad as doing the same thing in 1994 — after decades of consolidated bribery that will not be forgotten even with another crisis.

However, even in 1930, the communist forces should have taken stock of Lenin on the split in the working class. They should have done some calculations. They should have understood the full meaning of U.S. imperialism being on the upswing. All these things had been told to them years earlier by Lenin. They had read all these works, but still saw the labor aristocracy as small and the majority of workers as exploited.

They also should have noted the struggle in England before and during World War I and Lenin's criticism of the social-chauvinists there. In effect, labor and its political representatives supported World War I in order to gain jobs and social security.

Yet, despite all this, MIM is not aware of anyone at the time who said that the working classes should not organize politically for their economic demands in the imperialist countries. Trotsky mentions one Dr. Pepper who sounds somewhat like MIM, but Stalin had him removed from Comintern leadership as a concession to "Trotskyist prejudice," as it was rumored according to Trotsky. Perhaps in retrospect, it was correct to try organizing Euro-Amerikan labor demands, because reformism had

not exhausted itself sufficiently. Even Lenin spoke of what could be learned from the Labor Party's elections.

Indeed, in Germany, despite all the ruckus about attacking "social-fascism" — the social-democrats as the twins of the fascists — the communist party there did make great gains even as measured by vote counts, compared with the social-democrats. If the electoral road were an important part of communist strategy in Germany, then the communists were successful in the early 1930s, by winning many seats in the legislature.

Such election results can be seen as a vindication of the communist strategy step-by-step. The results can also be contrasted with the situation in the countries that did have colonies. In England and the United States, the communists did not come close to this popularity. While the German communists received a good portion of seats in the legislature, the U.S. communists could not exceed 1% and the membership of the party in this good period for the party was 14,000 in 1932, 24,500 in 1934 and 41,000 in 1936. (7) At the height of Soviet popularity during World War II and the heyday of CIO mainstreaming, the CPUSA achieved 100,000 members from 1944-45. (8)

It appears the German communists were not ready to go to armed struggle once a certain legitimacy had been gained. Hitler had gained power legally with the help of the social-democrats and his party had gained vote totals as large as the communists' and social-democrats'.

Hitler proved to know when to advance to the next stage qualitatively. The communists, on the other hand, were not prepared and implicitly relied on a crumbling bourgeois-democratic state that they had successfully attacked. Though the support from the masses for the two sides was apparently about equal, the fascists triumphed easily once the battle went to the streets. Once the communists were crushed, it must be said that the German working class rallied behind Hitler to try his way out of crisis — an attempt to become the top colonial power. This was always a danger given the potential of Germany as an imperialist power. The appeal of that road taken by the working class declines as the power marshalled by the country declines, and also as the number of competitors for the same booty increases.

The German communists certainly suffered a terrible loss. The social-democrats go back and ignore their historical treachery and say that the

communists should have made greater concessions to the social-democrats and prevented a fascist takeover in Germany by uniting with the social-democrats. While the two combined did have the power to control the government, the question is to what end?

Also, with a growing fascist menace, what was the best means of mobilizing workers for an eventual civil war with the Nazis? Compromise with the social-democrats entailed the risk of alienating the workers and sending them to the Nazis. It also risked confusing them with legalisms in the preparations for dealing with the Nazis. Hence, we see that the question of friends and enemies occupied a lot of time and energy in the 1920s and 1930s. With all that has been said, MIM does not do full justice to the situation here. We merely point out something of the balance of forces in Germany compared with North America and England.

THE CPUSA'S ALLIANCE WITH FDR

Many critics of the CPUSA look back on this history and see that it violated the taboo against reformism. The CPUSA seemed too soft on Franklin Roosevelt. In retrospect, MIM does not believe the CPUSA could have created a revolutionary situation in Amerika in the 1930s. At the same time, the success of the CPUSA, relative to U.S. history and certainly not German history, generated economism and reformism.

The CPUSA was the best there was for Amerika. Ironically, the CPUSA took the correct line on World War II, but for the wrong reasons.

From the point of view of the international proletariat, to expect too much from the Amerikan working class would have been a mistake. Keeping it out of the clutches of Nazism and a greater pan-Aryan alliance was an accomplishment in itself. Exhausting legal channels to mitigate the problems of unemployment and poverty was also necessary. Furthermore, in all this work organizing unions and fighting for the welfare state, the communists gained some popularity by Amerikan standards.

When calculating a strategy, the leaders of the international proletarian movement must do the most to account for strengths and weaknesses in order to win the greatest victories possible. Any international strategy counting on the Amerikan working class to rise from below for revolution in the 1930s and 1940s would have failed and cost all the power of the oppressed built up through previous steady tactical victories.

It would have been an ultraleft mistake to have pinned that much hope on the bought-off workers of the United States who still had many reforms and a world war to try before they would (hypothetically) give up the spoils from the system. That the world was lurching to another world war and that U.S. imperialism would have some role was well understood by the early 1930s and earlier.

To this day, after decades of consolidated bribery of Amerikan workers, too many "communists" are waiting for an economic crisis to bring socialism. These idealists will not understand the nature of an economic crisis on the level of 1929 if it does come, because they won't understand the aspirations of Amerikan workers based on its past alliance with imperialism as a labor aristocracy. Even the most wretched economic crisis does not eliminate history overnight.

Yet because of the peculiar conditions of World War II, the labor aristocracy could make one small contribution and the CPUSA correctly asked for that contribution. During World War II, the communists asked that the workers not strike so that more materials and energy would find their way to the front against the Nazis.

The Amerikan working class was not ready to accomplish revolution, but it was a good achievement for the working class to support anti-German American patriotism and to view the Soviet Union as an ally. MIM supports the Stalin-era CPUSA in its call on workers not to strike once Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

In the first place, a strike would have been by the most privileged workers in the imperialist system, those already bribed, so the economic demands in themselves were not valid. In the second place, a strike would have slowed down the war effort of the United States against Germany.

Many now say that World War II was principally an inter-imperialist war and that the Soviet Union was wrong to call for international support in the fight against German imperialism. They believe that had the Soviet Union been defeated by the Germans and occupied that socialism may have arisen elsewhere, perhaps on even more territory.

This was definitely not the case in the United States. The contribution that the Amerikan working class could make was limited. Although the Comintern didn't have exactly the same reasons as MIM, it believed U.S. imperialism was ascendant and hence its goals for the Amerikan communists were limited.

Here we exclude the formation of a Black republic. If a Black liberated territory had formed in the 1930s, then its struggles would have had a different character than that of the Amerikan working class's.

Even in the case of the formation of a liberated Black territory, it would be hard to say that it should have taken advantage of the fight with the Nazis to free itself from the U.S. imperialists. Sentiment among Black people also opposed the fascist alliance, for among other reasons fascist Italy's occupation of Ethiopia and the fascists' ideological hatred for non-white peoples. Had a Black nation formed, perhaps it could have struck a deal with the Amerikan nation — freedom of operation in exchange for a united effort against Germany. Nonetheless, the formation of a Black liberated territory did not happen, so this question did not arise in a practical way.

Years later, George Jackson disagreed with Stalin on the question of World War II, arguing as J. Sakai does in *Settlers*, that Black people had no interest in World War II. (9)

Sakai liquidates the role of the class conscious forces in formulations that equate neocolonial governments with communist governments. According to Sakai, the revolution in China and the Soviet Union had the same weight as the oppression of Puerto Rico and Mexico by U.S. imperialism. (10) Hence, in Sakai's analysis, there was no reason to support the Western imperialists against Hitler in the case of the Black nation while there was a reason for the Chinese and Albanians.

This point of view is true to a mechanical internationalist vision but not very realistic in terms of what actually happens in the process of revolution. It is in effect a bourgeois internationalism, one that equates bourgeois led movements with proletarian led movements — saying that the bourgeois movements should not be sacrificed for the proletarian ones, because all countries are equal — a very moralistic approach that doesn't work.

Something that Sakai does not mention in *Settlers* is that the sentiment against Hitler was not just Euro-Amerikan rhetoric — as hundreds of Black men and women went to Spain to fight on the side of the Republican government against Hitler-backed fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War. This was not the usual case of conscription of Blacks by a white government. These Black fighters volunteered for international brigades that went to Spain to fight fascism. Here again the CPUSA played its interna-

tionalist role in organizing men and women to go to Spain.

Yet at the same time that hundreds laid down their lives in armed struggle in Europe, the party in the United States took an increasingly reformist outlook. The CPUSA itself was later to refer to this period as "revisionist" and the CPUSA went through some internal upheaval ending in the departure of Earl Browder, the General Secretary of the CPUSA from 1930 to 1945.

MIM finds it humorous that Gus Hall and the revisionists of the CPUSA of 1979 still had the gall to criticize Browder. Through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the CPUSA was tailing after and supporting elements in the Democratic Party that made the ones Browder tailed after look radical. However, consistency in the CPUSA since Khrushchev has not been a strong point.

For its own opportunist purposes, the revisionist CPUSA of 1979, which published the *Fighting History*, needed to claim continuity with the CPUSA in its glory days. Ironically, if this meant condemning as revisionism something in the 1940s that the CPUSA was doing right now, then CPUSA shamelessly did so. The CPUSA should have concluded from the necessity of its backsliding that its analysis of the labor aristocracy was wrong and it was no longer appropriate to pursue the old course of flattering the Euro-Amerikan working class.

As a matter of fact, the reformism of the recent CPUSA was worse than Browderism, because that much more time had passed to clarify the nature of the labor aristocracy and reformism in the United States. Meanwhile, the CPUSA of the 1940s was able to face this problem much more honestly than the revisionist CPUSA of later decades. In 1945, William Foster himself, perhaps under pressure from Moscow, was able to report some responsibility for the problems of the period. Through the following we can see that the CPUSA retained some mechanism for changing its line and recognizing revisionism:

"Yet it is a fact that I have held and fostered certain opportunist illusions regarding the post-war role of the anti-axis sections of monopoly capital. And in so doing I contributed toward the main errors which our national leadership was committing." (11)

The CPUSA of 1938 explained the social forces at work and explained why it maneuvered in the

wake of the great FDR steamship:

"The New Deal wing of the Democratic Party, created under the leadership of President Roosevelt, is supported by a great following, largely unorganized, of workers, farmers and city middle classes. ... It furnishes today the broadest framework, albeit a precarious and incomplete one, for the gathering of the full forces of the democratic front of the majority of the people in the 1938 elections." (12)

Even in 1979, the CPUSA was able to see, like its predecessors, that Amerikan labor was firmly in the clutches of Franklin Roosevelt: "The New Deal won wide support and held an ideological grip on the people, especially the working class. The Communist Party was not exempt from these social pressures." (13)

Unfortunately, in 1945, the CPUSA was still not able to see the nature and extent of the labor aristocracy and petty-bourgeoisie in the United States. By 1979 it was completely inexcusable: all the socialist revolutions in the East and the many anti-colonial liberation movements had occurred. Mao Zedong had clarified many issues on an international scale that the CPUSA chose to ignore. The international proletariat had stood up more and more clearly and loudly and still the CPUSA couldn't hear it.

The CPUSA since Browder has been rooted in the labor aristocracy that masqueraded as a section of the international proletariat. For this reason the CPUSA was not able to resist revisionism and despite the favorable influence of international forces on the CPUSA in 1945, it soon re-collapsed into Browderism — tailing after one section of monopoly capital or another — as soon as revisionism in the Soviet Union prevailed.

In contrast, what MIM is doing will prevent the problem through a careful analysis of the social forces in the United States who really have similar interests to those of the international proletariat. And MIM has already said that if that means we can at best organize 20-30% of the people, so be it.

A small but non-revisionist party can make some small contributions through its influence on a moderately strong proletarian element in North America; and that would be better from the perspective of the international proletariat than having a large but revisionist party that only ends up collapsing into reformism.

On the battlefield, the revisionists will field 10 brigades that run in confusion and shoot each other down, while MIM will field one brigade that will contribute solidly to the cause of the international proletariat. In the end, the MIM brigade will also have a larger material presence than the revisionists' brigades. Much of this is already seen, as the CPUSA crumbles before our eyes and leaves MIM as the sole communist organizer of any kind in some cases.

The CPUSA under Browder is only the first major example in party history in the United States of the general law of the period: Those supposed vanguard parties that base themselves in the labor aristocracy — including a narrowly defined Euro-Amerikan industrial working class — will inevitably fall into one of two things 1) Reformism and liquidationism 2) Trotskyism or crypto-Trotskyism.

The CPUSA fell into the first category, because it never understood the international split in the working class. But having greater intelligence than the Trotskyists of the period, the CPUSA recognized the difference that Stalin taught between tactics and line.

THE ORU ON BROWDERISM

On the Roots of Revisionism is a 400-page book saying the incorrect strategies of the WWII era were the roots of revisionism. The ORU line is more correct than Browderism. Unfortunately, the ORU book is overly traumatized by having to steer between the Trotskyist ultraleft and the Browderist right. In not so many words, the ORU concludes that since Browderism ended up being the concrete problem, it was necessary to steer toward Trotskyism a little bit in the questions it raises. Instead of taking as givens the debate as handed to it by the Trotskyists and the Browderites, the ORU should have redone its political economy.

In any case, the ORU dedicated 30 pages in a chapter to an analysis of Browderism. (14) One reason that it gives for the emergence of Browderite liquidationism is the liquidation of the Comintern itself in 1943. (15) From the description given throughout the book, the picture emerges of a CPUSA's letting the Comintern solve all its major problems of line. The ex-ORU comrades went so far as to conclude that such an organization as the Comintern was necessary for the immature parties of the imperialist countries to exist at all. (16)

Communists have the responsibility to evaluate their own conditions and actions, and not simply

blindly follow the mandates of a Comintern. Mao knew when to ignore Stalin and the Comintern while staying within some kind of international discipline.

Typical of much incorrect thinking about the Stalin era, the ORU excuses Browder for dissolving the CPUSA because the Comintern dissolved. It is anti-communist to assert that comrades are unthinking and incapable of their own responsible action.

Another ORU excuse for Browderism is that the CPUSA dissolved its factory nuclei in the late 1930s. This suits the ORU's fancy that somehow it must all be related to a deviation from the industrial working class base.

The ORU does not stop to consider that the CPUSA's industrial working class base was at its all-time high and the liquidationism colored by optimism about the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and FDR was its logical political expression — the logical political expression of the labor aristocracy to whose demands the CPUSA had carefully catered. Indeed, the CPUSA thought of itself as so much on the offensive (as its own growth justified), it seemed the working class could operate in the open through the AFL and the Roosevelt wing of the Democratic Party. Hence, there was no longer a need for a CPUSA.

As Sakai points out, the steel and mining workers left the CPUSA between 1939 and 1942 not to join something more radical but because they thought of themselves as having succeeded already. (17) It was precisely its success in achieving labor aristocracy demands that damaged the CPUSA.

Furthermore, it does not speak well of the workers in the CPUSA that they quit at such a crucial time as the period between 1939 and 1942. They were perhaps influenced by the ultraleft — which abandoned the Soviet Union because of the 1939 Stalin-Hitler pact — without joining it in anarchist or Trotskyist movements.

But by 1940, the right was the problem. Browderism was not a problem when more than 75% of CPUSA membership in the early days came from foreign language associations. When immigrant workers were the largest basis of the CPUSA, the only charges to be heard were maybe some "sectarianism" and a little "ultraleftism." In those days, World War I, the creation of the Soviet Union and the battle against imperialism were at the forefront. Once the demands of the industrial working class took the lead, the CPUSA sealed its own doom as a revolutionary organization, even though its

membership reached its height at the same time as the Browderite revisionism.

The ORU goes on to tell us that "Policy came from above. Thus policy (and leadership generally) was provided (at except the very highest level) by the college-educated, those who had 'come from' the petty bourgeoisie or bourgeoisie." (18)

The ORU never explains when this was not the case for the CPUSA. The question is really why this problem came to express itself as Browderism in the late 1930s and onward; and the ORU must twist and turn to do everything it can to avoid concluding that it was taking up the demands of the Euro-American working class itself which catapulted the CPUSA into having "an extremely low ideological level" and its general chaos of revisionism. (19)

Just when the communists scored unprecedented gains organizing the CIO and going on the "offensive" for Euro-American workers, the party turned revisionist. It did not just have a small ultra-left "deviation" or a rightist "error" here and there. By all accounts, Browder managed to consciously and in print liquidate class struggle and the CPUSA. While international pressure helped right the CPUSA for a period, it quickly fell back into Browderism with a new name a few years later — this time permanently.

Unfortunately, we can also say that the ORU fell for Browderism as well and in fact Browder may have been more correct, because he at least once belonged to a vanguard party. The ORU never did and more consciously practiced a general liquidationism, while Browder only felt that particular historical circumstances had made the CPUSA irrelevant as an organization. Hence, we can say that Browder got the last laugh on the CPUSA and the ORU.

One root of ORU liquidationism was a line on the vanguard party shared by many of our comrades in Europe and Quebec. It was a vague and idealist formulation by Stalin that has led many to liquidationism.

Although MIM cannot say what the situation was in semi-imperialist Russia, it can say from the experience of imperialist countries that waiting for the conditions that Stalin talks about in Foundations of Leninism is pure idealism. (20) In every society there is a most advanced pole, embodied in a party, or, if there is no party, an organization or single individual. The materialist scientific method says we can find that most advanced pole. That is the key. Ideological line is decisive and we can find it by con-

crete comparisons.

Marx is a good example. He wrote the "Communist Manifesto" at age 29. When Karl Marx was just starting his organizing career, there was no excuse for anyone not to work with him, just because he did not have a full-scale party organization or thousands of industrial workers as backers. Though his circumstances were so moderate that Engels had to support him just to keep him alive, Marx represented the most advanced thought in 1848. Whether he knew it or not, he and Engels were the vanguard. Their organization was the vanguard party in Germany.

THE RCP LINE ON THE UNITED FRONT UNDER STALIN

The ORU correctly pointed out that Trotsky was the first to hold to the line that there was no difference among the imperialists fighting in World War II. Likewise, the RCP-USA continues to characterize the war as "principally" an inter-imperialist war. Criticizing Stalin, the RCP says of the states involved in World War II: "They came to be defined simply as 'aggressor' and 'non-aggressor' states, which tended to cover the thoroughly imperialist — moribund, vicious, exploitative, predatory — nature of the 'non-aggressors.'" (21)

Georgi Dimitrov was a Bulgarian communist put on trial for burning the Reichstag in Germany. Stalin got Dimitrov out of Germany in 1934 and put him to work in the Comintern, where he was a highly influential theorist of the Comintern debates on the United Front. Despite other errors, Dimitrov correctly pointed out that there was a socialist state in the USSR and the fascists were a qualitatively new phenomenon, since they sought to occupy other imperialist powers. (22)

The Soviet Union could not have survived without its temporary alliances in World War II. Many critics from countries that hardly suffered any war damage, including the RCP-USA, have unjustly condemned the Soviet Union for lacking in internationalism at that time.

The critics forget that despite all the alliances and change of tactics from World War I, the Soviet Union still suffered more than 20 million dead in World War II. Reality demonstrated that Stalin had a great ability to foresee the future and he turned out to need every bit of the help for which he asked. In this regard, MIM believes that the people who do the fighting against imperialism deserve the credit. When it comes to internationalism in World War II,

the Soviet Union played the greatest role and did not just ask for the most support — it gave the most support. It is shameful that the "Left" phrasemongers, largely from countries relatively unbruised by the war, can say such nonsense about Stalin and World War II.

Even when it comes to the liberation struggles oppressed by Anglo imperialism, World War II did not have to be a setback just because the Soviet Union took the side of the Allies. The Soviet Union, the Chinese Communists and others took the chance to gain some freedom of operation. With the communists solidly on the Allies' side, there were deals to make for such freedom of operation including rhetoric for colonial independence in exchange for cooperation against the Nazis.

Throughout the world, the liberation forces used the breathing space created by the inter-imperialist rivalry to build up their armed strength. The Soviet Union also necessarily built up its strength, an important factor in the coming anti-colonial struggles after World War II, not just as a geopolitical factor that constrained the imperialists, but also as a direct example to the Third World of development and military strength as possible independent of imperialism.

Just as Lincoln used the slaves to fight the South and hence had to promise freedom as a reward for fighting, so too the situation in World War II. In conflicts between ruling classes, the oppressed can always make great gains.

THE MISTAKEN GENERAL CRISIS LINE

Another influential line held by communists internationally, including the Marxist Leninist Party Deutschland, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Monthly Review school of scholars is the "general crisis of capitalism" line applied to the economies of the imperialist countries. In this view, expressed by the Comintern, revolutionary crisis was permanent in the era of imperialism and revolution was permanently around the corner.

While this may sound like a perfect ultraleft deviation, it also had use as an excuse to reconcile with the labor aristocracy, which many believed would momentarily return to the proletariat in the midst of economic crisis. Obviously, MIM is not a fan of the "general crisis" line for the imperialist countries, because with the exception of the prediction made in 1929, it has resulted in incorrect predictions year after year. Meanwhile, MIM apparently agrees more with the position of Dimitrov in later years that

this error tended to block comrades from making concrete analyses of their immediate conditions.

"The Social Democrats who headed the bourgeois democratic state pushed through counter-revolutionary compromise in the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in November/December 1918. That compromise was the proposal to hold elections to the National Assembly in January, 1919 and dissolve the Councils at the same time. ... Meanwhile, the Social Democrats formed an alliance 'with the old rulers of the military and civil service' who murdered the Communist leaders Liebknecht and Luxemburg in January, 1919, and, under Social Democratic leadership, established 'systematic terror' against German workers and revolutionaries through 1919." (23)

We must understand the history of social-democracy. At crucial points it voted for measures to help the Nazis and it helped Hitler to his legal posts in government. While it legalized the Nazi paramilitary forces, it also clamped down on the communists. (24)

Trotsky, ORU and a "consensus" in the European and American "Left" have said that Stalin would have laid a better, more steady course, if he had not labelled the social-democrats "social-fascists." The line goes that if the communists had united with the social-democrats in time, the Nazis would have been kept from power. Furthermore, since the Nazis did come to power and massacre the communists across the country, the first error led to a second error, which was to adopt the "popular front" in France. The "popular front" is widely considered a "right" error, following after the "ultra-left" error as if to make up for the original "ultra-leftism."

MIM is not prepared to accept the consensus view that social-democracy should have been distinguished from fascism, especially in Germany. There were too many recent historical parallels between social-democracy and fascism, too many common historical roots.

First, the lessons of World War I were too fresh on the communists' minds to easily forget how badly the moderate socialists (known as social-democrats) betrayed the workers by leading them into imperialist war. Second, the blood of communists in 1919 could not be easily forgotten. Nor could the repression of demonstrations in 1929. Third, the social-democrats' legal role in both helping the Nazis to their posts and preventing communists'

armed struggle while overlooking the Nazis' — these would be hard to overlook. In short, for the politically astute worker, it would be difficult to distinguish between Nazism and social-democracy in any principled way.

The position of Trotsky on this question is particularly contradictory, as Trotsky seeks to have it both ways. He seeks to emphasize how German revolution is central to the success of all revolutions and should be hastened immediately, while at the same time he wants to distinguish between the Nazis and social-democrats and unite the social-democrats with the communists.

If there is any practical substance to what Trotsky was saying in his disputes with Stalin in the mid-1920s, it is that Trotsky felt somehow the Comintern must be prepared to aid the Germans and also prepare the army to invade Germany to tip the scales of revolution at the crucial moment.

Yet Stalin's strategy of pointing out social-democratic collaboration with the Nazis worked precisely to hasten the revolutionary situation — as Trotsky supposedly wanted. It contributed to the polarization of the German masses. The social-democrats' influence declined, while the communists' rose.

This proves that the policy of equating social-democracy and fascism did work and did the most to hasten the revolutionary situation. On the other hand, the treachery of social-democracy again proved pivotal. While the Nazis enjoyed legal advantages, the communists could not arm themselves legally. According to the ORU, the social-democrats repressed the Red Front in 1929 while continuing to allow legalized right-wing paramilitary groups. (25)

In essence, the "Left" in the West found itself shocked by the rise to power of fascism. It never really understood the role of social-democracy and simply found it too hard to believe. Combined with the horror of World War I, it was almost unspeakable what the social-democrats had done.

The communists contributed to this difficulty whenever they forgot the "split in the working class." Many speeches still spoke of "the" working class. Even those that acknowledged the split often believed that the labor aristocracy would come around soon, especially in the face of fascism. For this reason, some did not expect the social-democrats to go so far in suppressing the communists and tolerating the Nazis. Perhaps they imagined that the social-democrats would seek at least a balance of power, with the labor aristocracy as the

pivot.

The truth is that to this day the rank-and-file social-democrats and social-democratic intellectuals are not willing to face up to their national-chauvinist, racist and imperialist role in World War I. Many do not know, or blot out, their role in the murder of communists. And finally, the social-democrats still cannot accept responsibility for putting Hitler in power, failing to resist him when he moved against the communists and then following him.

Likewise, many supposed communists cannot face reality and so they humor the social-democrats in saying that the social-democrats were only so bad because the communists broke up some social-democratic meetings and called the social-democrats "fascists." In this way, the communists make excuses for the social-democrats. They do not understand that the labor aristocracy is an ally of imperialism. After killing or cowing its genuine proletarian element, Germany went to war as a united nation. The labor aristocracy never wanted to resist. This is what all the apologists for the social-democrats miss — the material basis for what happened in the 1930s.

Here's what happened at the crucial moment in February 1933:

"The Germany Communist Party, at the prodding of the Comintern, called for a general strike against the Hitler government in early February, 1933. 'The trade unions did not move, and the Communist elements within them were unable to prod them into motion at such short notice ... The strikes petered out ... In the hour of decision the apathy of the majority of Germans was appalling. They succumbed to the Brown terror with barely a whimper.'" (26)

There are those, like Trotsky, who say that a policy of united front with the social-democrats would have brought at least a whimpering working class government and would have prevented fascism. For reasons not widely discussed in the debate over the class pedigree of such a united front, Stalin was correct in not pushing for a united front government that would have been dominated by the labor aristocracy social-democrats. Stalin's reasoning was simply that a social-democratic Germany was the most likely to line up with the Anglo-French alliance for anti-communist maneuvers. At least in the case of the Nazis, there was an obvious stated intention to take over the competing

imperialists. Hence, if the Bolsheviks could not seize power in Germany, the choice between the Mensheviks of Germany and the Nazis of Germany should go based on their foreign policies. Stalin detected that the social-democratic foreign policy was selective hostility to the Soviet Union, while Nazi aggression was aimed in all directions.

It was Lenin himself who instructed communists to take advantage of all such divisions among the imperialists. In fact, Lenin was the first to introduce a pro-German tilt into foreign policy: "Germany is one of the strongest advanced capitalist countries, and so it cannot put up with the Versailles treaty. Herself imperialist but pinned down, Germany must seek an ally against world imperialism ... Here is a situation we must utilize," said Lenin in 1920. (27)

This orientation of Lenin's laid the basis for Soviet cooperation with Germany after World War I. On Soviet territory, the Germans trained their troops and conducted military exercises so as not to be in violation of the Versailles treaty, or at least so as not to get caught. Hence, influential reactionary circles in Germany appreciated its relationship with the Soviet Union more than its relationship with the West. The Social Democratic Party on the other hand was more pro-Western. Ironically, as late in the post-World War I Soviet-German collaboration as 1934, Hitler would make speeches in front of the Reichstag where he referred to Stalin's "last great speech" and paid homage to the traditional German-Soviet relationship since Versailles. He made a point of saying there was no anti-Soviet sentiment brewing in Germany contrary to what some were saying. (28)

Many have said that Stalin changed his position on the class pedigree of the united front after Nazi advances taught him a lesson. According to Trotsky he lurched from ultraleft in Germany (by opposing alliance with the Social Democratic Party) to right in France of the popular front, going so far as to admitting the bourgeois "Radical Party" to the popular front. MIM does not believe France faced a revolutionary situation, while Germany potentially did. Hence, Stalin was right to roll for big stakes in Germany and settle for stopping fascism in France with the popular front. We say all this tongue-in-cheek, because there is very little that Stalin could influence from his position in Moscow. It was more a question of his taking advantage of opportunities created by forces not of his making.

The critics like to say that Stalin misjudged the

strength of the French military and underestimated the German one. This is true, but it is more true of all other analysts at the time. No one predicted Hitler's monumental successes. Yet though he could not prevent those successes, Stalin pushed a complicated and unpopular maneuver on the French communists. He told the French government in 1935 that the Soviet Union had nothing against its military preparations. As a result the French communists stopped opposing military budgets and conscription requirements. (29) This was a bold move by Stalin, who dumped the usual communist prescription opposing all imperialist military build-ups. In the case of Europe, Stalin judged that the imperialists were so unevenly matched that it was necessary to build up France for a fight with Germany. France still fell in two weeks, but Stalin had had the correct idea on how to prolong inter-imperialist rivalry.

Much later, some organizations claiming the banner of Mao in Australia and the United States claimed that we should favor building up U.S. military strength because the Soviet social-imperialists were the "main danger" from the late 1970s on. MIM opposed this line at the time and still does, but we should point out there is nothing in principle that makes such an approach automatically incorrect. At the time there was no socialist bloc to defend and the case for seeing the Soviet social-imperialists as the principal danger to proletarian forces was not very good. Hence, we disagree with the analysis of the Soviet "main danger" concocted by the Chinese revisionists and their supporters for the late 1970s and 1980s.

Related to this is the question of the Three Worlds Theory. (See "Historical applications of Line, Strategy and Tactics.") Many organizations across the world have made this theory a dividing line question and MIM does not agree with that decision. The Three Worlds Theory was a strategic conception and as such depended on a detailed analysis of the balance of forces. To expect all good Maoists to agree on the reality of the balance of forces at any time is too much to expect as a dividing line question and will have the effect of weakening the proletarian forces. The resolution of the issue should be left to majority rule under democratic-centralism, unless some comrades err in counting revisionists as part of the socialist side in the balance of forces.

We disagree that there was anything inherently morally impure about the Three Worlds Theory

because of the class alliances it proposed. Since we believe Stalin was correct to take up the Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler and he was also correct to lean to the Allied side after the German invasion in 1941, we can hardly write off the Three Worlds Theory out of hand. It is only the naivete and moralism of the stateless that condemns all strategic conceptions like this out of hand.

MIM itself rejected most aspects of the Three Worlds Theory, so we have agreed with the instincts of the international communist movement on this question. On the other hand, as in August 1939, we cannot afford harboring the naive within our ranks. Stalin was correct that inter-imperialist rivalry was the "greatest ally" of revolution, so we can afford to dirty our hands a bit to fomenting that division where possible.

Compared with Stalin's, Trotsky's ideas received hardly any critical scrutiny. The "anyone but Stalin" movement outside the Soviet Union is one reason that Robert Tucker did not notice any contradictions in Trotsky's positions on the question of the united front. In his typical support of liberalism, Tucker noted the Dewey Commission's vindication of Trotsky. The Liberals argue that Trotsky's "Clemenceau Declaration" would not be considered treason if only the Soviet Union accepted liberal democracy. In the rush to sympathize with anyone ready for liberalism, the critics dropped all critical thought regarding Trotsky.

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When it comes to the united front and interstate politics, the contradiction in Trotsky's position can be summed up this way: He favored an alliance with the social-democrats in France and Germany, and criticized the communists for ultraleftism in the early 1930s because they saw social-democrats as the "main danger" since they were "social-fascists," as Stalin said. Yet while Trotsky was for alliance

with social-democrats, he was for civil war against Stalin and his "bureaucracy." Combined, these positions of Trotsky's merely proved that he had resumed the hateful anti-communism of his Menshevik days. No wonder the critics all find it so easy to quote favorably both Mensheviks and Trotsky in the same breath.

SUMMING UP THE EX-ORU LINE ON THE UNITED FRONT

To return to the question at hand, we can offer this pithy quote from ORU: "There is no question that the defense of the Soviet Union as the main task led to pacifism and opportunism within most of the world Communist parties." (30)

MIM disagrees and believes that this problem has been overblown; a close examination of the Comintern documents would show that it is based more on Trotskyist fantasy than the reality of what Stalin and the Comintern were holding up as line. As a counter-theory for what happened, MIM would say that inadequate consideration went to the conditions internal to the imperialist countries. Stalin did not expect much from the Amerikan, British and French working classes and he was right, if not always because he recognized the extent of the labor aristocracy in those countries. It was enough to Stalin that capitalism was ascendant in Amerika and neither Britain nor France had emerged as losers in World War I. For this reason and because of the immediate conditions in those countries, Stalin recognized it was not realistic to expect revolutions in those countries. Instead, he held out for keeping France from going fascist and he pushed the other imperialists to ally with him instead of Germany. In all this he did about as much as was possible.

According to ORU,

"An interim form of government ('united front government' or 'popular front government') leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat. For the capitalist countries such a policy was a welcome mat for the rightists and in fact it was one of the primary roots of modern revisionism." (31)

Again, MIM does not agree with this prognosis of revisionism in the imperialist countries. It is a facile attempt to blame such revisionism on Stalin, when in fact there is never any excuse for revisionism and the communists of every society or nationality bear the main responsibility for their own lines (especially after 1943, when there was no

Comintern!).

ORU, like many others in the post-war world, has agreed with Trotsky that Stalin's attack on German social-democrats as "social-fascists" was incorrect. (32) In contrast, MIM believes Stalin took the appropriate risks vis-a-vis Germany, which had a much more realistic shot at revolution than the other major imperialist powers. All the obsessing about the class pedigree of the united front left out the interconnection of the most important global contradictions, especially the inter-imperialist contradiction. In this it is ironically the Trotskyists and crypto-Trotskyists who lacked a sufficiently global perspective, and it was Stalin who steered the world into a stage of inter-imperialist rivalry as principal contradiction.

Stalin most fully embodied Lenin's legacy in the battle against Menshevism internationally, as represented by the social-democrats in Germany. It was also Stalin who paid careful attention to what Lenin said on inter-state politics and diplomacy:

"To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, a war which is a hundred times more difficult, protracted and complicated than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states, and to refuse beforehand to manoeuvre, to utilize the conflict of interests (even though temporary) among one's enemies, to refuse to temporize and compromise with possible (even though temporary, unstable, vacillating and conditional) allies—is this not ridiculous in the extreme? Is it not as though, when making a difficult ascent of an unexplored and heretofore inaccessible mountain, we were to refuse beforehand ever to move in zigzags, ever to retrace our steps, ever to abandon the course once selected and to try others?" (33)

Notes:

1. Lenin, from the preface to *Imperialism*, in *Revisionism*, pp. 200-201.
2. *On the Roots of Revisionism*, p. 192.
3. Tucker, Robert C. *Stalin as Revolutionary*. New York, 1972. p. 227.
4. William Foster, *Highlights of a Fighting History: 60 Years of the Communist Party USA*, New York: International Publishers, 1979. p. 101.
5. For something of the conditions communist organizers faced in the South organizing industrial workers and farmers, see Foster.
6. "The Angelo Herndon Case," Foster, pp. 72-4.
7. Foster, p. 100.
8. Sakai, J. *Settlers, the Mythology of the White Proletariat*. p. 127.
9. Sakai, p. 91.
10. Sakai, p. 94.

11. Foster, p. 220.
12. Foster, p. 177.
13. Foster, p. 174.
14. See Revisionism, pp. 379-410.
15. Revisionism, p. 394.
16. Revisionism, p. 410.
17. Sakai, p. 128.
18. Revisionism, p. 408.
19. Revisionism, p. 407.
20. Revisionism, 374-5.
21. Revisionism, p. 133.
22. Revisionism, p. 132.
23. Revisionism, p. 91.
24. Revisionism, pp. 93-4.
25. Revisionism, p. 93.
26. Revisionism, pp. 108-9.
27. Tucker, p. 226.
28. Tucker, p. 257.
29. Tucker, p. 343.
30. Revisionism, 155.
31. Revisionism, p. 177.
32. Revisionism, p. 179.
33. Quoted in Revisionism, p. 187.

Historical applications of Line, Strategy and Tactics: The United Front

by MC5
May, 1993

In MT5, MIM treated the relationship between line, strategy and tactics. Here we apply some of that language to the concept of a united front with imperialists.

STALIN AND THE UNITED FRONT

In this article we discuss the strategic necessity of the united front during World War II, and make connections to Mao's Theory of the Three Worlds. We conclude that Stalin's strategy with regard to dividing the imperialists during World War II was correct. Contrary to theories that blame Stalin's so-called "class collaboration" for the failure of socialist revolutions in the imperialist countries, MIM argues that super profits and the growth of the labor aris-

tocracy are at the root of revisionism in imperialist-country socialist movements.

During World War II, Stalin sided with the Allied imperialists and counted them as part of the united front. The Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) instructed followers to have a "no strike" policy, to refrain from attacks on President Roosevelt and even make approving references to the American flag.⁽¹⁾ The Marxist-Leninists had decided that American nationalism was objectively progressive during World War II, a time when every nation in the world was threatened with Nazi occupation.

One crucial aspect of the united front, treated in MIM Theory 5, is the relationship between single-issue organizing (mass organizations) and the vanguard party. The goal in such united fronts is to have proletarian leadership of vigorous and broad movements to attack the imperialists.

Another aspect of the united front is the occasional and temporary unity of communist movements with bourgeois or imperialist states—as a matter of dividing those imperialists. Trotskyists, including Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP) Chairman Bob Avakian, have succeeded in obliterating this issue within the international communist movement, maintaining instead that communist movements should never work for tactical unity with imperialist or otherwise bourgeois states.

Furthermore, in *America In Decline*, Raymond Lotta and the RCP argue that inter-imperialist rivalry is a necessary form of the anarchy of production, which is correctly seen as one of the two component parts of the fundamental contradiction between private appropriation and socialized production. Thus, according to the RCP, imperialists will not cooperate to divide up the socialist camp. Consequently, there is never a reason to side with one imperialist bloc against another. One implication of the RCP line is that Stalin needlessly worried about dividing up the imperialist camp during World War II. A related corollary of the RCP line is that the next inter-imperialist war could be nuclear war, and hence the proletariat cannot afford to go even two rounds. It has to win in one big round, go to knockout imperialism with a first-round knockout. Such is the attitude whipped up around Avakian's book, *A Horrible End? Or an End to the Horror?* We wish that at the very least, the RCP would separate this analysis of nuclear war strategy from having to go back and criticize Stalin and Mao.

The most important justification for the Stalin policy was that the socialist Soviet Union faced

German attack. Hence, Stalin played the imperialists off against each other, using Amerikan nationalism.

In addition, the Marxist-Leninists eventually argued that fascism is qualitatively more evil than ordinary imperialism. First, fascism occupied imperialist countries and exterminated national self-determination in direct ways that the other imperialists did not. Second, and less important, fascism is the open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie instead of just the more masked dictatorship of bourgeois democracy.

Arguing for simultaneous world revolution and defeatism in all inter-imperialist conflicts, many Trotskyists said that the CPUSA was incorrect in its united front with imperialists. They also argued that a communist movement could prepare the way for a post-World War II depression and renewed revolutionary class struggle.

In contrast, MIM believes not enough attention is paid to the contradiction between the socialist camp and the imperialists. Certainly there was inter-imperialist rivalry, but MIM would argue that the most important ways history changed in World War II had to do with the unravelling of the imperialist/socialist contradiction. Hence, in retrospect we can see the contradiction between the socialist camp and the imperialists was the principal contradiction for a crucial period.

Stalin chose to expand the socialist camp by dividing the imperialists instead of letting the imperialists divide the socialists. Crucially, our analysis hinges on two points:

1. Most importantly, the Germans came very close to subjugating the Soviet Union. From MIM's interpretation of military history (that we share with many bourgeois historians), the Nazis only lost because of strategic blunders. One blunder was dividing their forces on the eastern front instead of seizing the oil fields on the southeastern front first and then finishing off the Soviet Union.

Another mistake was staying too true to Aryan racial purity ideas and hence not allying with those of "inferior" racial stock among various nationalities to overthrow the Soviet Union from within. Perhaps another mistake was to start with France and then take out the Soviet Union. If Hitler had taken out the Soviet Union first without taking over Poland it is possible the West would not have raised an eyebrow. Instead, perhaps Hitler shared the common European view that France was the tough nut to crack and once cracked, the Soviet Union would fall like a house of cards.

2. If Germany had won the war with the Soviet Union, fascism would have ruled the world and left the international proletariat on qualitatively weaker ground. The triumph of fascism would have meant a detour from revolution — another round of nations liberating themselves and another round of democratic movements in countries where these movements were no longer progressive, this all in the midst of an ever-decaying imperialism.

The real test of something is its success in promoting socialist modes of production, not whether or not it offends naive and moralizing people. In this sense, we agree with the now defunct Communist Workers Party that you cannot judge a movement or state by its foreign policy. You have to look at the modes of production.

One implication of the RCP line is that Stalin needlessly worried about dividing up the imperialist camp during World War II.

Every ounce of effort was necessary to save and expand the socialist world. That meant letting the imperialists fight by making it worth the while of one imperialist side to redivide German and Japanese interests instead of Soviet interests. Hence, there was no time for strikes or negativity about the American flag or FDR. To be taken seriously as a partner in dividing up German/Italian and Japanese interests, Stalin had to sweeten the deal and remain silent about the American flag. Likewise in the Non-Aggression Pact, Stalin sweetened the deal with Hitler by fulfilling terms of the deal that included material provisioning of Hitler's forces.

Underlying this position is an understanding of the crucial role that the German-Soviet conflict has played in world history. That conflict was the principal contradiction in the world during World War II for a crucial portion of the war. Nothing else would have mattered if a united Europe had come under Nazi rule.

MAO ZEDONG AND THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE SUPERPOWERS

Mao's Three Worlds theory held that there was

a united front against the superpowers, principally the Soviet Union, in the 1970s. Mao correctly saw some parallels between the revisionist Soviet Union and Nazism. Both occupied traditionally independent nation-states. Both had dictatorship against the working class; although, the Soviets were not open about it the way the Nazis were, since the Soviets were cloaking themselves in Marxist rhetoric.

Ultimately, to support the Three Worlds theory, some comrades calling themselves Maoists argued that vanguard parties should support NATO. This position was simply echoing Stalin's on playing off the imperialists by siding with one side against the other. Bob Avakian argued against these comrades in the "Sooner or Later" debate regarding whether the Soviet Union would be the hegemonic, Nazi-like power "sooner or later." However, Avakian undertook this debate and others on the Three Worlds Theory partly in order to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

At the time, Mao's Theory of the Three Worlds held that Britain, France, etc. constituted a Second World and could be played off against the United States to some extent. The Soviet Union and U.S. imperialism constituted the First World — contrary to the common usage of the term today to refer to the industrialized countries of both Europe and North America.

Mao's theory also united the bourgeois governments of numerous Third World countries in diplomatic maneuvering against the Soviet Union and the United States. Like Stalin's united front, Mao's Three World's theory held that using inter-imperialist rivalry was fundamental to the conduct of foreign policy.

CONCLUSIONS

Failures in the united front thus far in communist history may only be blamed on strategic error, not line error. Problems deriving from a united front with bourgeois governments are only line problems if the proletarian forces are stronger than the bourgeois forces in the short-run, and thus the socialist camp does not need to play the imperialists off each other. In that circumstance which hasn't existed yet, merely rallying existing socialist camp forces will suffice for victory, and it would be a rightist error or revisionist line to compromise with imperialists or national bourgeois forces.

A strategic error comes from not knowing the correct balance of forces in the medium-run. This is

a matter of ignorance of material conditions, not a conscious abandonment of internationalism or other revolutionary principles.

The ultraleft would not agree with us, because in effect, to the ultraleft everything is a matter of principles and the material circumstances comprising the balance of forces do not matter to them. People like Avakian and Trotsky make going on the offensive a matter of principle in all contexts, regardless of the likelihood of victory. For example, they would counsel us to push for the glorious goal of revolution at all times as if the labor aristocracy for example were about to rise up and could be counted on. In another case, the ultraleft in the Soviet Union, pushed for the Red Army to go take on Poland and the Germans and 14 imperialist invaders all at once as a matter of principled internationalism. The ultraleft blames Lenin, Stalin and Mao for taking on the enemy one at a time and the ultraleft is always ahead of material conditions or ignores those conditions completely as a matter of "principle"—a practice MIM refers to as "moralism" or "moralizing."

Stalin did not make any line or strategy mistakes during World War II in connection to inter-imperialist rivalry, despite the claims of many historians trivializing this or that aspect of Stalin's rule. On the other hand, Stalin himself admitted to handling China incorrectly. Mao proved to have a superior sense of the strategic situation—the balance of forces in China—and he was able to go all the way to victory contrary to Stalin's expectations. Hence, Stalin was guilty of a rightist error in this case, but he admitted it and even exaggerated it in the last moments leading to liberation in 1949 in order to fool the imperialists for Mao's benefit. Underestimating the Chinese Revolution was not an issue of principle for Stalin, simply a case of not knowing what could be done with existing material forces. Good comrades will make such mistakes all the time.

For his part, Mao appears to have made some strategic and tactical errors in Angola. The general premise that Soviet revisionism must be fought was not incorrect and there was definitely superpower contention there. However, Mao appears to have been fooled as to the long-term nature and strength of the U.S.-backed forces he supported in Angola. This had to do with a problem getting accurate information on the nature of the concrete forces in Angola, not a problem of Mao's line.

One could also argue that Mao made a mistake

on the Three Worlds theory, because the Soviet Union's social-imperialism has proved to fade away and was not the "main danger." On the other hand, one could argue that because of the success in applying Mao's theory, Mao's China was critical to unravelling that social-imperialism and leaving the U.S. imperialists as the hegemonic imperialists — and that now there is a need for a new strategy to account for the new balance of forces.

After World War II, or even before, the First World communists walked the plank into the sea of revisionism, but that was a result of the political economy of superprofits and the growth of the labor aristocracy, not because of the long arm of Josef Stalin.

Despite what seemed to the Trotskyists to be elaborate "betrayals" of principle during World War II by Stalin, the socialist camp expanded. Alone, the fact that the socialist camp expanded proves that at most Stalin made strategic errors with his version of the united front. Actually, MIM is inclined to think he did about as well as could have been done. It was not Stalin, but the growth of a parasitic working class in England, France and the United States, that sealed the doom of revolutions in those societies and allowed those imperialists to retain some grip on the colonies.

Notes:

1. See for example, "The Trotskyite 5th Column in the Labor Movement," by George Morris. New Century Publishers, 1945

A law of degeneration: blaming the United Front for labor-aristocracy revisionism

by MC5

In this article we explain the labor aristocracy in the imperialist countries as the root cause of what

MIM terms the law of degeneration. Any communist party that didn't recognize the non-exploited character of the labor aristocracy has degenerated into revisionism. This is true in the United States as well as in Europe from what MIM knows. We focus on the post-1960 communist party history in the United States, and what we know of developments in Quebec and among current European parties.

PLP, BPP, ETC.

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is crucial example of the law of degeneration in the United States, which our comrades in Europe today need to note carefully.

One of the greatest moments in communist history in North America occurred when two comrades from the CPUSA broke off and formed the Progressive Labor Party in 1962. It was a pro-Mao party that broke with revisionism. For four years, the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) was the vanguard of North America. Then, in 1966, the Black Panther Party (BPP) formed, and there should have been a complicated but friendly relationship between the two. Instead, the BPP went on to become the greatest vanguard party in North American history before being smashed. Meanwhile, the PLP disintegrated into a crypto-Trotskyist organization.

The 1960s did not present a revolutionary opportunity in the United States. Even in the Black nation, the civil rights approach had not completely exhausted itself, and more importantly the political opportunity for revolution did not present itself. Instead, the state smashed the BPP.

On the other hand, had the PLP of 1962 and BPP of 1968 or 1969 managed to continue in some form or another in a steady way, we would be in much better shape right now. No doubt the state would have infiltrated and damaged both organizations, but there was no excuse for revisionist departures from the original principles of the two organizations. Instead, we are left sorting out how so much energy from the 1960s left so little behind in the way of real organizational presence.

In the history of the PLP after the first four years, there are two key line struggles that come and go. The first question was the national question. The second was the Cultural Revolution itself, in which PLP elements had a direct though shrouded role.

Some say that the PLP change on the national question came about because of organizational competition from the BPP. For whatever reason, howev-

er, the PLP started putting a higher priority on "anti-racism," and dropped its previous support for national liberation struggles. It now deems all nationalism as bourgeois and reactionary. It alienated the more correct forces with this kind of stand on Vietnam. How did PLP's "anti-racism" (as opposed to national liberation) apply in Vietnam? This was unrealistic. The Vietnamese, as a nation, needed to resist Amerikan domination.

The PLP clearly wanted a multinational working class movement and organization. However, in betraying its original principles and a national liberation struggle in the making, the PLP contributed to the delay of that day in which communist movements will take a more multinational form.

People around the BPP came to distrust Maoism in part because of clashes with the PLP. But then the PLP also broke with Maoism. In 1969, Mao Zedong shut down the Red Guard movement, and by 1971 the PLP had broken with Mao.(1)

Prior to its break with Mao and to this day, PLP became a major advocate of the "student-worker" alliance. Not surprisingly then, it found itself cutting support for the Cultural Revolution and contributing an incorrect line on the national question.

The PLP argued that students who had a real sense of dominating their universities organizationally, and who also led large movements against the war, should look to the next stage. PLP offered an offensive by seeking influence in the working class, the supposedly crucial step toward revolution. Many PLP comrades and other Maoist forces went so far as to adopt industrial jobs themselves to become more like the workers. PLP comrades also cut their hair to make students more palatable to the workers. (MIM distributes a book called *SDS* by Alan Adelson to give readers a picture of what PL was like at the time.)

This approach had intuitive appeal to many students in the 1960s who were just learning Marxism. As J. Sakai and others were to admit, those Maoist-inspired forces that resisted the PLP formulation did so intuitively on the grounds of the national question, but without a worked out line.(2) The PLP had an organized analysis with frequent references to Marx and Lenin.

What the PLP lacked was a concrete analysis of the "working class" that it threw itself into without reservation. A number of arguments from the period arose over the issue of "economism." The PLP, Revolutionary Union (RU) and countless other groups (including Trotskyists) believed that incor-

rect leadership was the reason that the working class did not provide a greater communist movement. They never undertook an accurate analysis of the classes in existence in North America.

It was not until the publication of Sakai's book that we are able to sum up the history of the efforts of a whole era of comrades. We must not negate the thrust of the PLP or the BPP in the 1960s, but we must also learn that it was the PLP's uncritical acceptance of Euro-Amerikan workers as exploited that served as the tried and true basis for its own degeneration into crypto-Trotskyism.

The RU and October League (OL) both sought to organize the industrial workers for their own class demands in the mid-1970s (instead of organizing them to recognize their own privileged and parasitic position). Both RU and OL tried to stay more true to Mao than PLP. The result? OL liquidated and RU had an admittedly hard time with what it called "economism": the labor-aristocracy workers could not be led beyond struggles for more wealth. The labor aristocracy once again proved the kiss of death for proletarian politics.

Slightly under half of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP, the successor to RU) split off to form the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (RWH) after the coup in China in 1976. Through pure luck in the timing, the coup in China produced a split in the RCP which sent the comrades more involved in serving the labor aristocracy/Euro-Amerikan working class off to their liquidationist and revisionist futures. Had the split in China not occurred, the RCP would be very busy filling in the shoes of the CPUSA right now. Instead, the RCP has assigned itself to a more Trotskyist outcome.(3)

THE LAW OF DEGENERATION IN OTHER IMPERIALIST COUNTRIES

Here MIM will review the evidence against the industrial working class fallacy outside U.S. borders. Without exception, the failure to grasp Lenin on the split in the working class has been fatal.

Starting with Quebec, in 1975 two organizations competed for Maoist followers. Holding meetings the same day to clarify who belonged to what groups, the Maoist parties in Quebec each attracted 2,500 people per meeting for a total of 5,000 Maoists in the Montreal area.

These parties were heavily police infiltrated but they also both blindly accepted that the white working class is exploited. The remnants of this period immersed themselves in the industrial work-

ing class.

Today in Quebec there are no Maoist parties, although there is a "Marxist-Leninist" group (Socialist Action), as well as something that may yet prove to be Bukharinist (Mobilization).

These Bukharinist and "Marxist-Leninist" forces are very close and constitute the vanguard of Quebec, if MIM is not itself the vanguard of Quebec. According to Socialist Action, the Mobilization people focus themselves more in the lumpenproletariat and don't believe in the existence of an industrial proletariat. MIM has yet to see that this is true of the still-forming Mobilization group, but we take Socialist Action at face-value in its attempt to claim a greater base in the industrial workers.

Socialist Action adopts both a strong workerist position and liquidationism: one of the reasons there is no Maoist party, and was no self-proclaimed vanguard in Quebec for quite some time. Both Mobilization and Socialist Action discuss the problems of theory and economism, but there is no firm basis for a break from the social basis of liquidationism and Trotskyism. (That is not to mention the affinities of these groups with overtly Trotskyist groups. Mobilization will not condemn Trotskyism, especially not in comparison with "Stalinism.")

In England, MIM is less aware of the history of the 1960s and 1970s. At this moment there is no Maoist party or pre-party in England, except for one that conciliated itself to Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng. Perhaps it is recently being pulled in a better direction. There had been three Maoist groups in England, much influenced by the RCP-USA. None rejected the class demands of the labor aristocracy and none exists today.

In Belgium the situation is clearest for understanding the muddiness. After years of having the same position as MIM, the Belgian Workers Party (PTB) started referring to China as socialist and opened relations with the revisionist party in China, which it still meets with today. Next in a bizarre set of moves, it hailed Gorbachev. Yet, at the conference in Germany in 1993, it came back and criticized Mao from the standpoint of Stalin and upheld Mao Zedong Thought and the Cultural Revolution. These moves have concerned many in Europe, some to the extent of wondering if Belgium will be the center of a new international "neo-revisionism."

Yet from what MIM can tell, the PTB is the most firmly rooted in "the" working class of the parties ever claiming Mao in Europe. Though Belgium has a small population, the quantitative presence of

the PTB in the industrial working class is larger than in any other party claiming Mao in Europe. In any case, however it compares with other parties, it is clear that the PTB does organize the imperialist country labor-aristocracy working class for its own demands.

The European and Quebec comrades accuse MIM of comprising petty-bourgeois vacillators for not consciously rooting ourselves in the industrial working class's demands. Yet, from what we can see, it is the PTB that is a model of vacillation, with other parties more or less displaying liquidationist tendencies.

From our own history with some very large political experiences, literally involving hundreds of thousands of people, we can say that PLP, RU and later ORU only brought themselves political vacillation, factions and liquidation when they tried to go from their original Maoist principles to organizing the Euro-Amerikan working class for its own demands. The reason is that the interests of the international proletariat as crystallized and represented by Maoism are not consonant with the interests of the imperialist country labor-aristocracy working classes.

THE CASE OF GERMANY

The Marxist Leninist Party Deutschland (MLPD) is a Maoist vanguard party in Germany. It has consciously broken with student politics and moved to base itself in the German working class. It believes MIM is making a serious mistake by not organizing the Euro-Amerikan working class for its own demands.

Germany presents the most difficult case for our analysis for several reasons. Though there are many cultural similarities between North America and Germany, the history of class struggle is vastly different. The Communist Party in Germany had been a mass party under Engels and later in the 1930s, when it gathered a good fraction of the national vote. Such a phenomenon has never occurred in North America.

For a long time, Germany had no colonies and only since World War II has it had a stabilized role in the international imperialist system. The "Pax Americana" included a role for German imperialism. (In the post-World War II era, the Western imperialists and Japan have enjoyed comparable returns to capital, by which MIM means a roughly equal division of the surplus-value extracted from the Third World. This is accomplished by the relative freedom

of capital within the Western imperialist and Japanese spheres; that includes banking and multinational industrial corporations that facilitate such movements of capital.)

Another difference is that the German working class has had a profound experience with the bankruptcy of nationalism in an advanced capitalist country. For this reason and its role in the center of Europe, internationalism in Germany has some strong objective bases.

Finally, a new but large difference is the reunification of Germany, bringing with it a large population of people experienced with living under revisionist rule. In addition, the economic role and future of this people is not clear. The entire German working class aspires to an alliance with imperialism, but the working class in East Germany may not yet feel that alliance's reality yet. Such is not the case in North Amerika.

The MLPD is another of the parties in the imperialist countries that actually advanced in the 1980s and did so without vacillating terribly on Maoism, like the PTB did. We do have some important differences with the MLPD on the finer points of upholding Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. We should admit that the RCP-inspired groups in Europe should at least in theory have a better understanding of these issues than the MLPD, but the MLPD appears open to considering these issues, not just with MIM but along with the Communist Party of the Philippines in particular. Thus far, we can say that the RCP has had to move considerably to take up Maoism, thanks to pressure from the Communist Party of Peru (PCP).

The MLPD attributes its success to breaking with various petty-bourgeois trends and by adopting a working class outlook. Whatever success the MLPD has had MIM will attribute to the following. 1) The clear situation of being the frontlines of the East-West conflict and the realities of revisionism present in East Germany that cannot be denied to the face of workers from East Germany. 2) The rich legacy of class struggle and the clear historical repudiation of fascism and the corresponding internationalism with regard to the Kurds, Turks and now the Filipinos.

MIM believes that at some point the MLPD will throw away its advantages of being on the former front-lines in a country with a rich history of class struggle — if it does not look carefully at the nature of the German working class. The MLPD's inability to recognize Maoism as put into practice by the PCP

in Peru may be a symptom and turning point. On the other hand, in the last year, MLPD has made solidarity with the Philippines its focus. This campaign should greatly aide the MLPD, especially compared with campaigns it could have launched with regard to industrial worker demands in West Germany. From what MIM knows, the greatest events organized by the MLPD, both qualitatively and quantitatively, have been in connection to the Philippines. Solidarity with the Philippines is indubitably in the interests of the international proletariat. Working for both sides of the split in the working class is not.

MIM takes heart from the early immigrant worker-based CPUSA, the Black Panthers and our own continued existence. Summing up the communist parties of the imperialist countries, MIM sees little to brag about in the ones that based themselves in the labor aristocracy the most firmly, just liquidationism, Trotskyism and crypto-Trotskyism.

Notes:

1. See "Road to Revolution III: The Continuing Struggle Against Revisionism. PL Magazine Vol. 8, No. 3, Nov. 1971, reprinted. See the same magazine for an extremely simplistic ultraleft rejection of Lenin's, Stalin's and Mao's united front ideas during inter-imperialist rivalry and socialist versus imperialist contention.
2. J. Sakai, *Settlers: The mythology of the white proletariat*. Morningstar Press 1983. Available from MIM.
3. In reference to the RCP and the united front, see "Trotsky and RCP Quotes" on page XXX of this issue of MIM Theory.

“At present the great majority of mankind are sufferers, and only through the path Stalin points out and with the help he gives can mankind be free from suffering.”

— Mao Zedong, 1939. vol. III

Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Lawrence and Wishart, 1954

“Comrade Stalin was responsible for over-all, epoch-making developments in the theories of Marxism-Leninism and

impelled Marxism forward to a new stage. Comrade Stalin creatively developed Lenin’s theory that socialism can first

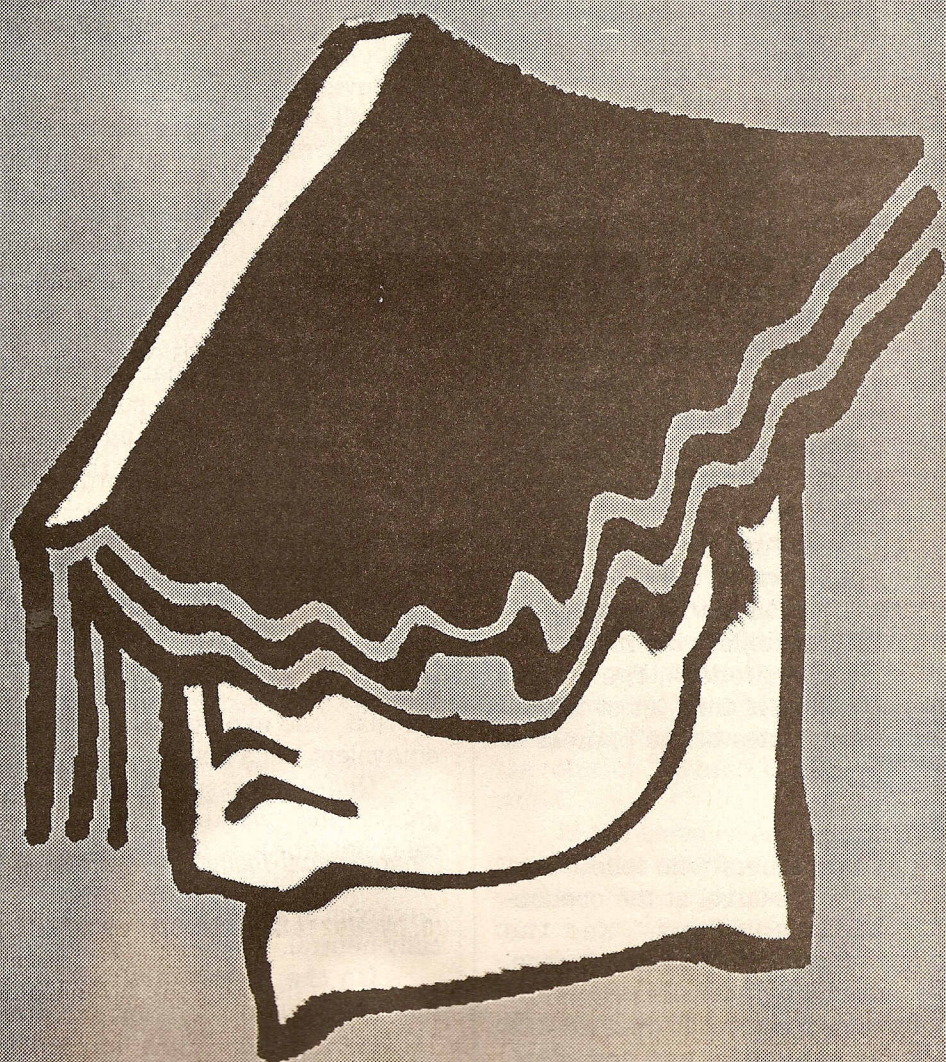
MAO ON STALIN

be victorious in one country; Comrade Stalin creatively contributed the theory of the general crisis of the capitalist system, contributed the theory of the fundamental economic laws of present-day capitalism and socialism, contributed the theory of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries. . . .Long live the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin!”

— Mao Zedong, 1953

The Political Thought of Mao Tse Tung,
ed. by Stuart Schram, Schraeger, 1969.

Chapter 4 **Sectarian Reviews**



Trotskyism and reformism

by MC12

July 1991

The following is adapted from a response to articles by two writers, which are not included here.

The first writer discussed the "revolutions" of Eastern Europe from a Trotskyist perspective — a discussion of the downfall of "deformed workers' states" and "Stalinist regimes." The writer was especially interested that the "Stalinists" (the state capitalists in power) and the "capitalists" (those who sought to "restore" capitalism in 1989) seemed to have so many overlapping goals: the result of a failure to understand the restoration of capitalism, or thinking Eastern European countries under Soviet social-imperialist control were socialist in the first place.

The second writer chastised the "American left" for "forgetting its own country." This writer cited two main reasons: 1) Amerikan leftists think the white working class is sold out, which this writer thought was a "fatalistic" and "overly pessimistic" assessment; 2) Amerikan intellectuals don't think there can be any revolution in this country (because the white masses are sold out), so they neglect "important electoral struggles," such as the Jesse Jackson campaigns.

Much of the criticism of Amerikan left intellectuals was right on, but the writer fell far short of pointing out their real errors in his/her attempt to make mountains out of molehills with respect to electoral struggles. In the process, the writer ignored the very struggles MIM finds most important: the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations within North America.

THE SAME OLD MISTAKES

Some Trotskyists and others who follow that tradition one way or another marvel at the overlapping strategies of the "capitalists," and the "Stalinists" in the "revolutions" of Eastern Europe, which made them so peaceful. All parties apparently wanted stability and non-violence. It doesn't look like a conflict between capitalism and socialism, which is usually bloody and violent. Almost as if

they had similar interests overall. This is partly a problem in terms, and it results from the lack of class analysis in the Trotskyist conception of the USSR and Eastern Europe — an analysis which is paralyzed by its dogmatic fundamental assumption: that the USSR and the Eastern European "socialist" countries are "deformed workers' states," in which the proletariat is still in power, but some really bad proletarians happen to be leading right now.

Under this ahistorical framework, all struggles in these countries are political battles within proletarian tendencies. It becomes impossible to see the battles within the USSR and Eastern Europe as battles between capitalist tendencies, no matter how clearly the various factions in power tell us they are all capitalists. Maoists have understood the possibility for the restoration of capitalism since the 1950s, when the direction of the Soviet Union shifted sharply under Khrushchev. Only Trotskyists and the various bourgeois classes have continued to take the Soviet revisionists at their word that the USSR was still a workers' state.

Describing the "Stalinist"-controlled countries as "deformed workers' states" gives more credit to Stalin than Trotskyists would like to realize. Lenin refused to call the Soviet Union a "workers' state," (1) much less socialist. He insisted that, "the term Soviet Socialist Republic implies the determination of the Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the existing economic system is recognized as a socialist order." (2) So if the USSR wasn't socialist under Lenin, socialism must have been constructed by the "Stalinists," who then went on to "deform" it!

MIM, on the other hand, understands that socialism only exists as a transitory process — if it's not moving forward, it can no longer be socialism at all.

Trotskyists and others who denounce "Stalinist deformed workers' states" are making a mistake Lenin criticized Trotsky for directly. They don't realize that "the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is not equivalent to its disappearance." (3)

Under the assumption that the bourgeoisie was gone in the "workers' state," Trotsky ignored political considerations in his policies, beginning with the military, which he organized along the same old hierarchical lines, as if military strategy was politically neutral.

On the question of labor discipline, subsequently, Trotsky assumed the invulnerability of the "socialist" state: "Before it disappears," he wrote, "state compulsion will, in the period of transition,

reach its highest degree of intensity in the organization of labor.'" (This as opposed to Lenin insisting that workers should still be able to strike even under the dictatorship of the proletariat.) Trotsky called for worker blacklists for those who resisted work appointments, penal battalions for deserters, and "their confinement to concentration camps," (4) as well as the subordination of trade unions to state control.

"To a large extent," writes Bettelheim, "the theses of Trotsky and Bukharin were rooted in the idea of the infallibility of the party, of its superiority, 'by its very nature,' in relation to the masses, of the 'guaranteed permanence' of its proletarian character and that of the state which it leads, whatever the party's ideological and political practices may be." (5)

The political situation thus presumed stable, the measures advocated by Trotsky were supposed to be purely economic measures to improve production, etc., a position Lenin challenged directly:

"Trotsky and Bukharin make as though they are concerned for the growth of production, whereas we have nothing but formal democracy in mind. This picture is wrong, because the only formation of the issue (which the Marxist standpoint allows) is: without a correct political approach to the matter the given class will be unable to stay on top, and, consequently, will be incapable of solving its production problem either." (6)

TROTSKYISM: THE REVOLUTIONARY LEAD BALLOON

Those who cling to the "vision" of Trotsky throw away 70 years of history in the struggle for socialism in the USSR, China and elsewhere. To them, once the original "Stalinist" took power, history froze. There is a very good reason for the perpetuation of this approach: there is no correct theory without practice, and Trotskyism has not ever had any successful practice.

Trotskyism has gone over like a lead balloon in the Third World, because it denies any progress in the fight for socialism since 1923. Even in Lenin's time, Lenin was able to see that the revolutionary center of gravity was shifting to the colonies in general and Asia in particular, heralding the "'Eve of the debut of the East.'" (7)

The Russian Revolution itself proved the imperialist industrial proletariat was not the vanguard for world revolution, a reality which was hammered home by the Chinese Revolution, and every subse-

quent Third World revolutionary struggle — each one increasing infinitely the ratio of revolutions generated by Third World workers (Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Eritrea, Nicaragua, etc.) to imperialist workers (none).

THE UNITED STATES

All this is history. But the first thing some of us knew about Trotskyists was that their conceptions about the United States were so obviously false that we were repelled by (what we thought was) Marxism itself.

Look at a recent example from the Spartacist League of the U.S. Fourth Internationalist (the ones who took the sickle out of the hammer-and-sickle):

At the end of being wrong about the war against Iraq all the way through — telling Americans to support the war against Amerika, which Iraqis never even should have supported, and most didn't — they finally all but disregarded Iraqis altogether: "It is up to the international proletariat, first and foremost the American working class, to bring down by revolutionary class struggle this imperialist ruling class bent on war." (8)

The Vanguard also asserted, again with no evidence, that "black or white, American working people have no interest in this oil war." (9) (Tell that to the two-car, white working class household which needs lower interest rates in order to nail down that second mortgage and send its kids to college.)

This pure-fantasy world is unique to Trotskyism. Willfully disregarding the history of this century — the history of one oppressed nation and colony after another delivering blow after blow to imperialism — they go back to an idea which was wrong but more understandable in 1923, when history froze: that the industrial proletariat of the First World countries is the vanguard of world revolution. There is no longer any question of presenting evidence for this assertion, for there is none — it has become the unique property of a rebellious strain of "revolution" which prides itself on ignoring the world.

In the same issue, the Sparts went so far as to speak of the "revolutionary struggle of the American working class supported by the black and Hispanic poor." (10) (The Black and Latino and Indigenous proletarians are better off left out of this categorization of the "working class," but the slight is still offensive.)

THE OPPRESSOR NATION

On the subject of the white working class in Amerikan history, MIM suggests J. Sakai's *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*. From Bacon's Rebellion to the Vietnam War, this book shows how the various settler-worker movements since the colonization of this continent have sought to win more of the spoils of imperialism for their privileged workers, not to end imperialism.

While it should be read by anyone hoping to break away from oppressor-nation thinking, *Settlers* is worth quoting at some length here.

Those who want to glorify the reform struggles of white America have to be prepared to lose the support of the oppressed masses in this country, not to mention the rest of the world. The Trotskyist line of reasoning on the white working class is that, rather than being "bought off" by all of its wealth, it is instead supremely class conscious as a result of its ongoing struggles to get a bigger piece of the imperialist pie. There is (only) a grain of truth to that: the white working class is conscious of its victories, of its struggles, and has gained a tremendous "consciousness" as a result of these struggles; but it is not class consciousness — it is national consciousness, oppressor-nation consciousness.

If the victories won by the white working class, which resulted in such a high level of consumption and income, represented class victories against the bourgeoisie, wouldn't the bourgeoisie have to have lost ground? Well, they didn't. For all the white working class has gained, the bourgeoisie has gained more. The surplus won by the white working class was extracted from the hides of the international working classes, whose condition steadily deteriorates with every victory of the white working class.

Among Euro-Amerikans, writes Sakai:

"The masses share a way of life that apes the bourgeoisie, dominated by a decadent preoccupation with private consumption. Consuming things and owning things, no matter how shoddy or trivial, is the mass religion. The real world of desperate toil, the world of proletarians who own nothing but their labor power, is looked down upon with contempt and fear by Euro-Amerikans." (11)

This is only possible because:

"The most exploited Euro-Amerikan workers live whole levels above the standard of the world proletariat, since they may be on the bottom, but

they are on the bottom of a privileged nation of oppressors. Nation is the dominant factor, modifying class relations." (12)

Rather than endlessly search for nuggets of progressiveness, let's face facts:

"There is nothing mystical, elusive, or hidden about real working class consciousness. It is the political awareness that the exploiting class and its State must be fought, that the laboring masses of the world have unity in their need for socialism. The Red Army is class consciousness. An action for higher wages or better working conditions need not embody any real class consciousness whatsoever. Narrow self-interest is not the same as consciousness of class interests. 'More for me' is not the same slogan as 'liberate humanity.'" (13)

And Sakai quotes Lenin:

"Only when the individual worker realizes that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognizes the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government does his struggle become a class struggle."

And, at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International:

"We cannot — nor can anybody else — calculate exactly what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will only be revealed through struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution."

REFORMISM AND ELECTIONS IN AMERIKA

If the political orientations are realized through struggle, where is the struggle? Rather than ignoring the working class history, the recognition of "the dialectical unity of democracy and oppression" in Amerika (14) is the consideration of that broad sweep of history from the vantage point of the oppressed, not through the filter of what Euro-Amerikan "leftists" want to see.

Before championing the resurgence of grass roots movements and their ties to electoralism (a la Jesse Jackson) let's really look at those past movements Euro-Amerikan "leftists" love to love.

Eugene Debs explained what the Socialist Party had to offer to Blacks in Amerika in 1903, articulating a policy never revised: "We have nothing

special to offer the Negro. The Socialist Party is the Party of the whole working class, regardless of color — the whole working class of the whole world." (15) What great internationalism! So where were the "Negroes"?

National oppression, and the national consciousness it produces, are not merely creations of nationalist activists. They are the product of material conditions. In this century, the only true internationalists have known when to support nationalist struggles. We can attempt to ignore them, as Debs and other Euro-American "socialists" have done, or we can recognize them and help realize their revolutionary potential, as internationalists have done from Korea to Eritrea to Oakland.

Even the famed integrationist militancy of the I.W.W. was a cover for a pragmatic strategy to protect white workers from below as well as from above. "Leaving the Negro outside your union," wrote the union in 1914, "makes him a potential, if not an actual scab, dangerous to the organized worker, to say nothing of his own interests as a worker." In recruiting Black workers, the I.W.W. called Black strike-breakers "niggers," but Black men who joined the union were "Negro fellow workers." (16)

But the debate over electoral struggles should have been over a long time ago. They don't work. They have never worked. Maybe they will suddenly work for the first time in history, but what is that to offer the oppressed? In fact, elections have meant less and less throughout this century, in terms of voter participation. If we are to look back and glorify the Debs election campaigns, in order to make more of Jesse Jackson (who supported the war against Iraq), wouldn't it be fair to point out that even at its height the Socialist Party had a small minority of support, and accomplished nothing?

Yes, something politically meaningful is happening in the United States, among white, mainstream America, but there is a lot more evidence, especially in 1991, that that happening is a move toward fascism and a closing of ranks with the Euro-American bourgeoisie, as white working class privileges are threatened. Witness the renewed drive to keep "American jobs" (championed by those beloved radicals, New Directions "movement").

But even if the white working class came alive — which there is no evidence that it is doing (efforts to democratize reactionary imperialist unions like the Teamsters and the UAW aside: what does that mean?) — it is diminishing in size and power and

international importance. What's left is a society of people whose work involves the manipulation and distribution of wealth produced elsewhere.

**Those who want to glorify
the reform struggles of
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to mention the rest of the
world.**

The "mantle of of revolutionary struggle" [mentioned by the writer] has not recently passed to the Third World: it's been there since 1917. That includes the Third World within the First World. For the economic reshuffling — the growth of service and decline of manufacturing, the growing gap between rich and poor — of the last decade or two has not had an equal effect on all levels of society. The dream of the radicalized white working class is still just that.

If Amerikan academics really studied even the "leftist" movements they would learn a lot. And if they studied those movements most choose not to deal with — from the Seminole War to the Black Panther Party — they might learn what a proud revolutionary tradition there is within Amerika's borders, but outside the Amerikan nation.

Notes:

1. Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR, First Period: 1917-1923*. Monthly Review Press: New York, 1976. p. 392.
2. Bettelheim, p. 445.
3. Ibid, p. 139.
4. Ibid, p. 385.
5. Ibid, p. 387.
6. Ibid, p. 392.
7. Ibid, 424.
8. *Workers Vanguard* 3/1/91, p. 1.
9. *WV* 9/21/90.
10. Ibid.
11. J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*. Morningstar Press, 1983. p. 147-8.
12. Sakai, p. 149.

13. Ibid, p. 154.
 14. Ibid, p. 16.
 15. Jervis Anderson, A Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972. p. 149.
 16. Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, Black Workers: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989. p. 32.

Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That?

by Bob Avakian
 Banner Press: Chicago, 1986

Reviewed by MC12
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INTRODUCTION

"It is a law of Marxism that socialism can be attained only via the stage of democracy."

—Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government." Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 233.

"This is the historic epoch in which world capitalism and imperialism are going down to their doom and world socialism and people's democracy are marching to victory."

—Mao Zedong, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks." Selected Works, Vol IV, p. 173.

There is nothing good that is original in this book by the head of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP), as far as a Marxist interpretation of democracy. Avakian correctly asserts that Democracy is always class-specific and contingent in class society. The idea of political equality without economic and social equality is an idealist dream, or, more frequently, a malicious lie. So much was already known by Marx and Engels, not to mention Lenin, Stalin, Mao and so on.

Thus we read that Plato thought it was fine to hold slaves, that John Stuart Mill argued for state repression of revolutionaries, that property rights were considered central to the founders of democracy, etc. This is all important for Marxists to understand. We should never be satisfied by the claims of those who say they want a socialism that "realizes" democracy instead of just promising it, or those who say Amerika would not be oppressive if only it

"lived up" to its promise of democracy.

The question at hand, however is different. First, what is the role of democratic struggles in the socialist revolution; and second, what is the role of democracy under socialism and communism? Avakian uses the Marxist analysis that democracy will be unnecessary in classless society in order to take away from the crucial importance of democratic struggles in the socialist revolution, especially struggles for national self-determination, as well as popular struggles under socialism on the way to communism.

MIM maintains that bourgeois democracy is a particular political form through in which one or several classes of rulers exert their control over those whose labor provides the wealth of the society. Any oppressed person who wants to be president is free to raise a billion dollars and run, provided she or he doesn't propose anything illegal, such as abolishing property, patriarchy or privilege. That's bourgeois democracy — the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie — and it is in need of destruction, not perfection.

Socialist democracy, on the other hand, is the temporary political system through which the formerly oppressed classes exert control over their former exploiters, even as they encourage the conversion of all those who can be convinced or coerced to come over to the side of the people, to the side of socialism and communism. And it is how the socialist masses propel society forward toward communism.

Socialist democracy, however, is still a class system — part of the dictatorship of the proletariat — and not a system of complete equality and openness to all. The former exploiters lose some of their privileges and "rights" during this period, especially their right to use property to exploit others, and their right to buy political influence greater than their numerical strength, but also, in extreme cases, their basic democratic rights period.

Complete freedom, complete equality, the end of oppression and coercion — all that will be strived for under communism, when democracy itself will no longer be necessary to mediate the relationships between classes, because classes themselves, along with national and gender inequality, will no longer exist. In a literal sense that will mean the realization of "true democracy" — rule by the people — but it will not make sense to call it democracy because it will mean so much more than that historically-specific term was ever meant to imply.

Avakian does take on some more recent mani-

festations of bourgeois ideology on the question of democracy, particularly social-democratic apologists for capitalism and Soviet revisionists. In some of these passages, Avakian's description is useful.

But he didn't write a whole book to do that. No, Avakian's purpose in *Democracy* is rather to make several very specific points relevant to the international communist movement and Maoism in particular in the late 1980s.

First, Avakian wants to distance Maoism from national liberation movements as an essential, decisive component of socialist revolution in the era of imperialism. He does this by stressing the conceptual relationship of national liberation to bourgeois democracy on the one hand and neglecting the role of national liberation struggle in the socialist revolution on the other.

Second, and in a very related point, Avakian wants to criticize the United Front (U.F.) policy led by Stalin and the Comintern before and during World War II. This is partly because of the implications of the U.F. for current national liberation struggles — the necessity of strategic unity between communists and such non-proletarian sectors as the progressive national bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations — and partly because he wants to criticize the concept of socialism in one country.

Third, in direct contradiction to Mao and all materialist dialectics, Avakian wants to say that conditions external to a particular country are fundamentally decisive to its development, rather than internal conditions and movements.

These three characteristics of the book are subtly written as a subtext, and have to be drawn out by careful readers of RCP-Avakian-thought, who have learned to watch him as he fakes left and runs right, as in this case, or vice versa.

At the root of all three of these characteristics — and the reason MIM asserts the comparison between Avakian and Leon Trotsky — is an oppressor-nation chauvinism, which is always at the root of Trotskyism. The thrust of all three is that revolution in the imperialist countries is at the center of world revolution, that it is the most important, decisive element in the course of socialism in the USSR, China and other countries. This ideology is poison to the oppressed majority of the world, and music to the ears of First-World chauvinists.

This error — or deception — on Avakian's part, from the mouth of a (sometime) self-proclaimed Maoist, underscores the vast international impor-

tance of MIM's analysis of the labor aristocracies of the imperialist countries as opposed to revolution under current conditions, and the urgent necessity of struggling over this issue among all communists, especially those in the imperialist world.

The fourth underlying point Avakian makes, in his criticism of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976), and in his proscription for future revolutions, is that struggle against capitalism within the communist party in power should be primarily directed and led by the party and state rather than by the masses themselves.

By this Avakian means that in the relationship between socialist democracy and proletarian dictatorship, it is the job of proletarian dictatorship (the state led by the party) to conduct the struggle against revisionism — to restrict the rights of oppressors and would-be oppressors — and the job of socialist democracy (mass participation) to contribute to the construction of communism. In this, as we will describe below, Avakian learns the wrong lesson from the GPCR, the failure of which he takes as a call for more repression under socialism.

AVAKIAN AGAINST NATIONAL LIBERATION (AGAINST LENIN)

National self-determination at the turn of the century belonged to the sphere of bourgeois democracy. Nevertheless, in the era of imperialism, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party recognized that the democratic demand for self-determination was not only an essential step in the process of anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle for socialism, it was also an important means of uniting the oppressed peoples of different nations, especially those of the oppressed and oppressor nations, such as Russia and the nations it oppressed under Tsarist rule. Only by explicitly guaranteeing the right of nations to self-determination — embodied in the right to secede at will — will it be possible to forge trusting alliances between the workers of different nations as they struggle against imperialism.

(In the case of Amerika, this means oppressed-nation masses will only come to trust the masses of the oppressor nation after a period of receivership in which the liberated oppressed nations rule the former Euro-American oppressor nation until its masses are sufficiently transformed to be allowed back into the cooperating human race.)

The struggle for national self-determination is a democratic demand. It belongs to the era of nations, which is the era of bourgeois democracy.

When successful, however — when it is led and won by communist forces — it leads to the period of New Democracy and the establishment of socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat — toward socialism and communism. When Avakian says democracy is not only mythical but against the interests of the oppressed, he negates a crucial stage in the revolutionary struggle.

Avakian complains that the masses have naive views about democracy, that it means "economic opportunity" or "the rights of man." And he says:

"While such views of democracy and freedom serve to foster and reinforce the inclinations and prejudices of these privileged strata, they also exert considerable influence among the dispossessed in society — both because of the prevailing social 'atmosphere' and values and because of massive promotion of these ideas through media, the educational system, and other means — they serve to channel and contain outrage and outbursts against oppression.... In reality and in essence, democracy, in whatever form, means democracy only in the ranks of the ruling class (or classes) in society." (p. 5)

Now read Lenin, from 1916:

"It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of diverting the proletariat from the socialist revolution or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy." (1)

So, contrary to Avakian-thought, Lenin argued that the struggle for democratic rights was also an important element in the development of socialist revolution, even if it encountered failures along the way. Lenin addressed such views as Avakian's directly when he argued that it was wrong to consider the possibility of self-determination and other democratic rights "illusory," and thus not worthy of struggle:

"This is because not only the right of nations to self-determination, but all the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially 'practicable' under imperialism, and then in a distorted form and by way of exception.... The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies that is put forward by

all revolutionary Social-Democrats [what they called communists] is also 'impracticable' under capitalism without a series of revolutions. But from this it does not by any means follow that Social-Democracy should reject the immediate and most determined struggle for all those demands — such a rejection would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction — but, on the contrary, it follows that these demands must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis such as the Dreyfus case or the Zbern incident, or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc." (2)

Avakian wants to argue that imperialism is the highest stage of democracy, that it represents the culmination of the system started into action by Plato, picked up by the French Revolution, etc. So he rejects Lenin's argument that imperialism negates democracy by denying the "rights" it sets out to greater and greater numbers of people. He denies the value of the lessons learned and the gains won in the revolutionary struggle for such democratic rights as self-determination. So Avakian denies a qualitative difference between Nazi German fascism and Amerikan bourgeois democratic rule, and he rejects the struggle for democratic rights among the oppressed as a component of the revolution.

Avakian is against Lenin on this point, so he fakes left — in preparation for running right. He says:

"It is also true that, in making the flat statement that imperialism represents the negation of democracy — and that democracy corresponds to free competition while political reaction corresponds to monopoly — Lenin went overboard and was guilty of some exaggeration and one-sidedness." (p.163)

Then Avakian turns the question into one of the necessity of armed struggle, which of course

Lenin supported.

For Avakian on national liberation:

"From all this [discussion of Thomas Jefferson & Co.] it can be seen that the democratic principle of the equality of nations and the right of nations to self-determination, while it must be upheld and fought for today in opposition to the domination of oppressed nations under imperialism, nevertheless is historically delimited and in the final analysis is not sufficient even to illuminate the way to the abolition of national inequality and oppression. It falls far short of pointing to a world in which humanity is no longer marked by division into nations as well as classes." (p. 63, emphasis added.)

In contrast, Lenin argued that not only did national liberation illuminate the way toward socialism, it was an absolutely essential element. Lenin said:

"In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede." (3)

Avakian's struggle against revolutionary nationalism is relentless. He sees national liberation as a part of democracy which must be left behind — and not just in the future: he faults the Black Panther Party for their "ultimate failure to rupture with the whole framework of democracy." (p. 88) National liberation for the Black nation, of course, is part of the "whole framework of democracy."

For Avakian, there have been "deviations within the Marxist movement" that included not only social democracy in the imperialist countries, but also:

"toward nationalism (as well as some other manifestations of bourgeois democratic tendencies) in the oppressed nations (though, again, the latter does have the virtue of often assuming a revolutionary expression, even if not a fully Marxist-Leninist one)." (p. 260)

In opposition to this, Lenin, Stalin and Mao all recognized that revolutionary national liberation struggle does not merely "often assum[e] a revolu-

tionary expression" — in the era of imperialism there is simply no socialist revolution that does not include this "bourgeois-democratic" demand. (MIM also notes that on the same page Avakian ominously refers to the development of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement — the RCP's international front — as an "extremely important, if still beginning [in 1986], step, including in terms of making such a rupture" against the nationalist deviation within Marxism.)

In imperialist oppressor nations such as Euro-Amerika, the struggle for democratic rights on the part of the labor aristocracy or other privileged groups does indeed have negative consequences for the oppressed of the world. J. Sakai calls this the dialectic of democracy and oppression in Amerika (4). For this reason MIM does not agitate for the democratic demands of the oppressor nation labor aristocracies, even as we continue to uphold the essential need for democratic struggle — especially national liberation struggle — among the truly oppressed as a stage in socialist revolution.

AVAKIAN AGAINST THE UNITED FRONT AND NEW DEMOCRACY (AGAINST STALIN)

Avakian correctly criticizes those theories that lump the Stalin-led USSR with Nazi Germany into the category "totalitarianism," in the process denying the class-specific character of each political system. But his real purpose in the discussion is to say that Nazi Germany was not qualitatively different from other imperialist countries at the time, and thus the United Front was a wrong-headed policy:

"Throughout this period Germany was and remained nothing other than a bourgeois imperialist state, though it ruled at home not in the 'classical' form of bourgeois democracy but through a fascist — an openly terroristic — form of bourgeois dictatorship." (p. 173)

Maybe Avakian considers Poland and Czechoslovakia, not to mention the USSR or France, to be Germany's "home," but MIM does not!

Nazi Germany not only unleashed a new level of terror and repression within its borders, but expanded that system across Europe, up to and into the Soviet Union. But there is no room for such trivialities in Avakian's analysis, which is bent on showing the worthlessness of democratic right, and thus wants to paper over any difference between imperialists — who all represent the height of democratic

oppression.

MIM knows it is important to point out the similarities between fascism and bourgeois democracy in the imperialist countries, especially in their conquest of oppressed nations, the complicity of their labor aristocracies, and in their expansionist aggression. In fact, as MIM repeatedly points out, the United States and Germany colluded during World War II, as Amerika was willing to let parts of Europe fall to fascism in exchange for a Nazi attack on the socialist USSR.

Nevertheless, MIM does not make the mistake of saying there is no significant difference between the two systems either. Nor does MIM deny the critical importance of the Soviet Union's position in the world revolutionary movement at that time in history, something Avakian ignores.

On the subject of New Democracy, Avakian says as much by what he doesn't say as by what he does: he devotes less than three pages out of 269 to the concept. In those three pages, he grudgingly accepts that in the Third World, the "immediate transformations" that must be carried out:

"conform, as a general rule, to what can broadly be defined as democratic tasks: the winning of genuine national liberation and the elimination of various forms or vestiges of precapitalist economic relations and their reflection in the superstructure."

When he says things "as a general rule" or "broadly defined," look out! He's after these ideas, leaving the extent of the implied exceptions purposefully undefined, even though he calls new democracy a "decisive component" of world revolution. MIM, on the other hand, unequivocally states that New Democracy is absolutely essential in all cases for the transition to socialism in the oppressed nations, and that national liberation in the oppressed nations is absolutely essential in all cases for the transition to socialism.

At the same time, MIM believes that more developed countries will have shorter periods of new democracy, as one of the critical tasks of the period is to gradually eliminate precapitalist economic arrangements and gradually win over some members of the progressive national bourgeoisie and peasantry to the socialist consciousness.

Avakian's revisionism on New Democracy is very related to the United Front. Both involve the strategic necessity of enlisting the efforts of the national bourgeoisie and other middle elements in

the struggle against imperialism — efforts that are crucial to the victory of national liberation and the transition to socialism. Both avoid the ultraleft error of isolating middle forces that can be won over to socialism. Here again, Avakian fakes left.

Once he has supposedly established that Nazi Germany was no different from any other imperialist country, and without any reference to the international situation, including the threat to the Soviet Union, he attacks the United Front thus out of context. The Comintern called on workers in the imperialist countries to support their countries against fascism, prompting Avakian to declare:

"Not only was the Leninist line on the nation in the imperialist era openly reversed — it was stated that the communists should be the best representatives of the nation, even of the imperialist nations, whereas Lenin had insisted that the statement in the Communist Manifesto that the workers have no fatherland applied precisely to the imperialist countries — but, despite talk about finding ways to make the transition to the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, it was actually argued, 'Now the working masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the necessity of making a definite choice, and of making it today, not between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism.'" (p. 258, with quote from Georgi Dimitrov.)

Avakian is upset that:

"It was not emphasized that bourgeois-democratic rule means bourgeois dictatorship, and fascism was presented as a dictatorship only of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie — rather than as the dictatorship of the bourgeois class as such — in open terroristic form."

In other words, Avakian objects to the application of materialist science to the existing circumstances of World War II, instead preferring abstract or out-of-context criticism — idealist criticism.

What the idealist criticism boils down to, whether advanced by open Trotskyists or Avakian crypto-Trotskyism, is that revolution in the imperialist countries was stalled by the decision to support the war against fascism. In other words, that the political decisions of foreign leaders were decisive in determining the course of events internal to the imperialist countries — the blame-it-on-Stalin school of explaining why no labor aristocracy has ever pro-

duced a revolution. (Further, any local decision to follow the advice of foreign leaders does not place responsibility for the outcome of that advice on the foreign leaders; revolution can not be exported or imported, as Mao said.)

Aside from political opportunism and idealism, this approach reflects a basic misunderstanding or distortion of materialist dialectics. Therefore, in educating open-minded revolutionaries to understand and oppose this view, we go back to dialectics: to Trotskyism, socialism in one country, and the determination of internal forces.

AVAKIAN AGAINST THE DETERMINATION OF INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS (AGAINST MAO)

Let us begin by examining Mao's central thesis on this question. In "On Contradiction," Mao wrote:

"Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes. Thus materialist dialectics effectively combats the theory of external causes, or of an external motive force, advanced by metaphysical mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism. ... Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions of society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new [which includes the gender contradiction—MC12]; it is the development of these contradictions that pushes society forward and gives the impetus for the supersession of the old society by the new. Does materialist dialectics exclude external causes? Not at all. It holds that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes. In a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, because each has a different basis."(5)

This scientific truth has been most sorely tested by the revisionist claims that it is impossible to develop socialism in one country; these claims were advanced by Trotsky, and are now continued by Avakian, among many others. Maoists do not take this principle as an abstract matter of dogma or religious adherence to holy scripture. Avakian's problem is not simply that he disagrees with the letter of

Maoism; his theory is wrong.

Under imperialism, and indeed for many years before the highest stage of capitalism, the whole world was interconnected economically, militarily and politically — to different degrees. Nevertheless, the most profound changes in any particular society were always principally the product of internal developments.

Thus, even when colonialism imposed severe conditions upon oppressed nations, the effects of colonialism were always filtered through local conditions, and the colonists were constrained by the characteristics of the society under attack.

For example, in North America, where many different small indigenous nations existed before European conquest, and they were mostly not politically centralized, the colonists ended up destroying or dispossessing the First Nations little by little and in different ways, in the process killing or dispossessing almost all of them. This in turn shaped the development of the settler society.

In contrast, in those areas of South America where there were developed, centralized societies prior to the European conquest, the colonists sought to take over and then undermine existing hierarchies. This resulted in a less complete genocide and displacement in these areas, and led to the hierarchical structure of settlers oppressing indigenous peoples, living much closer together for much longer than in North America. Thus, even in the case of colonialism, where one could make the best case for the decisiveness of external forces, we see that internal conditions play a decisive role in shaping the outcome of these societies.

Mao wrote:

"In the era of capitalism, and especially in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, the interaction and mutual impact of different countries in the political, economic and cultural spheres are extremely great. The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history as well as in Russian history. It exerted influence on internal changes in the other countries in the world and, similarly and in a particularly profound way, on internal changes in China. These changes, however, were effected through the inner laws of development of these countries, China included."(6)

This is a liberating, empowering theory, because it makes it clear that, as Mao said, that "it

can be seen that to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line and the solidity of its own organization."(7)

In other words: no blaming Stalin if the revolution in your country doesn't work out. This is liberating because it recognizes that the destiny of a people is in its own hands. This was so even in the Warsaw ghetto, in which Jews were imprisoned by Nazi Germany during World War II, totally surrounded, walled in and trapped by the Nazi army. There, once they saw the extermination Hitler had in mind for them, the Jews waged a heroic uprising, and fought to the last person. Even there, where external conditions left them with only two options — to die lying down or to die fighting on their feet — they determined their own destiny, and in so doing set an example for all oppressed people.

After praising the accomplishments of the GPCR, which "brought into being new, indeed unprecedented, transformations in the economic relations and the political and ideological superstructure of society," Avakian adds:

"At the same time, it is important to stress that the struggle for communism is, and must be, an international struggle, and that the class struggle within a particular country, even a socialist country, is, and must be, subordinate to the overall world revolutionary struggle to achieve dictatorship of the proletariat and carry through the transition to communism. Here my purpose is not so much to repeat the criticism I have previously made that the Cultural Revolution, while it indeed represented the highest pinnacle yet reached by the international proletariat, was still treated, even by Mao, a bit too much as a thing unto itself and 'too much apart from the whole, worldwide struggle ...' and 'even though support was extended to revolutionary struggles elsewhere and it was stressed that the final victory of a socialist country requires the victory of the world proletarian revolution, it was not firmly enough grasped and popularized that the socialist transformation of any particular country can only be a subordinate part of the overall proletarian revolution.' But what must be emphasized here is that the overcoming of the social inequalities characterizing the old order — the eventual elimination of bourgeois right in the broadest sense — must be approached, above all, on the world level in order to carry through the transition to communism."(p. 225, quoting himself.)

Left unsaid here is what it means, practically, to subordinate the struggle in one country to the world proletarian revolution, in the case of the GPCR. Lenin, for example, said:

"internationalism ... means waging a revolutionary struggle against [one's own] government and overthrowing it, and being ready to make the greatest national sacrifices (even down to a Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty), if it should benefit the development of the world worker's revolution."(8)

In Lenin's case, the principle is materialist, not idealist, and the example is concrete. What is the sacrifice in the case of the Brest-Litovsk treaty (in which Bolshevik Russia conceded territory in order to get itself out of World War I) to which Lenin is referring? He explained in 1918, that the peace deal increased the conflict between imperialists, and he added:

"Here is something that has decisive significance.... For, until the world socialist revolution breaks out, until it embraces several countries and is strong enough to overcome international imperialism, it is the direct duty of the socialists who have conquered in one country (especially a backward one) not to accept battle against the giants of imperialism. Their duty is to try to avoid battle, to wait until the conflicts between the imperialists weaken them even more, and bring the revolution in other countries even nearer."(9)

Thus, Lenin, for one, described as a sacrifice the concession of conflict with imperialism in order to advance socialism in one country! Left to Avakian is the task of explaining how the Cultural Revolution went against this principle of internationalism.

While Mao, Stalin and Lenin understood that the world situation set conditions for the decisive internal developments within socialist countries, Avakian in Democracy sees the priority reversed. He notes that socialism develops unevenly, in a few countries at a time, and says:

"So, especially viewed in light of all this, it becomes clear that not only does the bourgeoisie still retain the upper hand in the world as a whole — and is likely to for some time — but this interpenetrates with, and indeed sets the overall framework and foundation for, the struggle to carry forward the

revolutionization of society in any particular socialist country." (p. 226-7. emphasis added.)

Thus, Avakian converts Mao's "external condition" into an external "foundation" which determines the course of internal events. He futilely tries to take destiny out of the hands of the revolutionary masses of socialist countries.

Avakian explains this crucial revision more clearly a few pages later, when he says "the contradictions and struggles within the particular socialist country intertwine with and are ultimately determined by the contradictions and struggles on a world scale." (p. 231. emphasis added.)

In general, these ideas belong to the theory of Trotskyism, which holds that socialism is impossible in Third World countries before the imperialist countries have had revolutions. And in particular, Avakian here belongs to the economist school of thought that puts the development of productive forces over the development of production relations in the transition to socialism and communism.

Avakian says that:

"a decisive point which the historical experience of the socialist transition so far has underscored is that this transition cannot be approached, fundamentally, within the particular countries, taken by themselves, but must be approached, above all, as a worldwide process...."

And the "basis does exist for carrying through this worldwide, and world-historic struggle, exactly because of the previous development of human society...." So, again, it is development in the advanced industrialized countries that make it possible to achieve socialism in the Third World.

As a corollary to that is the RCP thesis, wrong at the time and now decisively proven wrong, that the conflict between Amerika and the social-imperialist USSR was the principal contradiction on a world scale. Avakian quotes himself on that point again in this book (from *A Horrible End Or An End to the Horror?*):

"a deadly serious struggle is going on between these two trends which will have everything to do with determining the direction of human society, and indeed the destiny of humanity itself." (p. 267)

Again, by this non-materialist theory, the people of the oppressed nations will not decide their

own fate.

AVAKIAN AGAINST PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY (AGAINST COMMUNISM)

Communists have learned a lot about how to bring about socialist and communist society, primarily from the experience of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, as well as others. In particular, we have learned that when a communist party comes to power after a military struggle, it cannot simply institute a classless society (communism) or even a society without private exploitation of labor or ownership of the means of production (socialism). Instead, the protracted revolutionary struggle continues, and goes through many stages, some of which have been identified and developed into useful models.

As already discussed, the period of new democracy is a transitional period before socialism, in which progressive capitalists — those who are willing to contribute to socialism even though it will mean the end of themselves as a class — are included in a democratic process, under the leadership of the working classes. After that transitional period, the dictatorship of the proletariat has replaced the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that existed under capitalism, and socialist construction begins in earnest.

Even under socialism, classes still exist, and therefore socialist democracy represents proletarian dictatorship: the former bourgeoisie — which still exists and still poses a threat to socialism either through its own organic power or through its connections with international capitalism — finds some of its bourgeois-democratic rights restricted. No longer can the bourgeois class use its property to extract surplus value from workers and peasants; no longer can it use its wealth to buy political power. At the same time, the working classes have greatly increased democratic rights.

And under conditions in which the leading communist party directs economic planning and management, the party has a great potential power, including the power to exploit labor for a profit, in the process developing within itself a new bourgeois class. In the case of the USSR, this new class developed over a long period, and finally seized power after Stalin's death. In China, where Mao and the communist leadership had learned lessons from the USSR and China, the people and the party launched a vast popular struggle against the new bourgeois class within the party, the GPCR. Despite

10 years of acute struggle, the new bourgeoisie still won the battle and seized power in 1976.

Avakian's book raises the question: what do we learn from the USSR and the GPCR for future struggles? Avakian's conclusion is mostly implicit and we will attempt to draw it out. Avakian argues that democracy has only a minimal role to play in the advanced struggles of a cultural revolution, that proletarian dictatorship — exercised primarily by the party and the state — plays the decisive role in the acrimonious development from socialism to communism. MIM does not deny the crucial role of the party and the state in this struggle, but we believe Avakian sets up a false dialectic — that the dictatorship exercised by the party has a democratic form at this stage of the struggle. The masses participate in the party and the state democratically, and together the masses, the state and the party exercise dictatorship over the enemies of socialism.

We know, although Avakian tries to conceal, that democracy under socialism is fundamentally different from democracy under capitalism, that because of this difference it is not something that must be limited beyond the concrete restrictions placed on the bourgeoisie. In short, democracy under socialism has lost its bourgeois character.

When the masses struggle against new or old bourgeois forces under socialism, they can be increasing the power of the proletarian dictatorship over those bourgeois forces, even as they increase socialist democracy. The more the dictatorship wins victories over the enemies of socialism, the more socialist democracy the masses can enjoy.

Avakian focuses this discussion around a critique of the bourgeois philosopher John Stuart Mill. And it is here that we see the danger in Avakian's concepts of democracy and dictatorship, which, as he applies them, would lead to strengthening the state exclusively, but not increasing socialist democracy in the process. He writes:

"Whether Mill meant to say so or not, the reality is that some kind of authority, in one form or another, has to provide guidance, direction, leadership — and in the final analysis, dictatorship, so long as we are talking about class-divided society — in determining what will and will not be discussed, and in what terms, in society at large..." (p. 244)

Here he says it is dictatorship, not proletarian democracy, that in the final analysis, shapes the public debate under socialism. In contrast, we argue

that the means of dictatorship are only necessary to restrict the old and new bourgeoisie from generating influence beyond the strength of their numbers in the population, while the means of proletarian democracy exercise the greatest influence on the course of political and economic development.

Avakian paraphrases Lenin: "... Lenin's answer to the accusation that he was a dictator ... can stand as an answer to Mill and all other apologists of this system: better me than you, better the dictatorship of the proletariat than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. When such apologists ... insist on equality for all opinions and denounce attempts at dictatorship not only in the sphere of action but in the ideological sphere as well, they are actually ... insisting on the continued domination of the bourgeoisie in the domain of ideas — and in society as a whole." (p. 250)

But under socialism, especially after a certain amount of extended mass struggle, the ideas of the bourgeoisie are no longer the dominant ideas; they still exist, but they no longer dominate. When the bourgeoisie has lost its previous hegemony over popular thought — lost control over schools, mass culture production, and so on — and when the state apparatus is used to keep the bourgeoisie from gaining influence greater than its numbers, then a freer flow of ideas is better, not worse. Thus the dictatorship gets stronger even as it is required to act less in its repressive capacity. As the people gain strength, letting the bourgeoisie express itself politically — letting them speak with their mouths, not with their money — will result not in the resurgence of bourgeois ideas, but in a strengthening of the masses' ability to create and advance their own socialist ideas. At the same time, when the dictatorship has less work to do to repress the bourgeoisie, the masses will be able to have a more productive political debate among themselves, in a freer environment.

Finally, Avakian speaks of the "withering away of democracy," through the strengthening of dictatorship:

"This process — this struggle — is dialectical in a two-fold sense: it involves the dialectical relationship between dictatorship and democracy in socialist society...; and it involves the dialectical relationship — the unity and opposition — between strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat and, at the same time, by the same means, creating ... the conditions whereby the dictatorship of the

proletariat will no longer be necessary ... or possible." (p. 253)

This requires careful scrutiny to understand. Remember, when two things are in dialectical contradiction, it means one is coming and one is going, one will replace the other in a process that transforms both. There are two dialectical processes in Avakian's analysis. This first is between dictatorship and democracy. He sees democracy — which he has defined as universally bourgeois — being replaced by dictatorship. MIM, on the other hand, sees no such opposition. More proletarian dictatorship means more proletarian democracy. Democratic methods are used to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat, and democracy is the means by which the masses participate in and criticize the state and the party on the way to constructing communism.

The second process he sees is that which at once builds up and tears down dictatorship, as dictatorship eventually eliminates classes. MIM agrees that such a process is necessary, but again, it is not a matter of dictatorship triumphing over democracy, but rather both triumphing over the bourgeoisie and revisionism.

Notes:

1. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," 1916. In *Selected Works in One Volume*, International Publishers, 1971. p. 158. While Avakian's comment is vague and general, Lenin was speaking specifically of nations in which bourgeois democracy had not been established, which is also the case in struggles for national self-determination.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 158-9.
3. *Ibid*, p. 160.
4. J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*. Morningstar Press, 1983. p. 16.
5. Mao Zedong, *Selected Readings*, Foreign Languages Press, 1971, pp. 88-9.
6. *Ibid*, p. 89.
7. *Ibid*, p. 90.
8. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, in *SW in One Volume*, p. 473.
9. Lenin, "Left Wing" Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," 1918, in *SW in One Volume*, p. 433.

MLP Statement

In the 1980s, MIM witnessed two liquidations

— the Maoist Organization for Revolutionary Unity (ORU) in the United States and the vanguard Maoist party in Canada. In 1993, another party — but one claiming to uphold Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Hoxha — also collapsed. Before it collapsed, it underwent internal split and toward the end of its life, MIM spoke to MLP members that knew nothing about Hoxha or the MLP's earlier history. What all three dissolutions had in common was relentless pursuit of the industrial worker.

The following is an excerpt of the MLP's dissolution statement, a negative example:

Our collective existence sprang from a single precept: as revolutionaries coming from different walks of life and varying experience in mass struggles, we shared a common conviction of the need for a party of the proletariat. Over the years, our particular views on a host of questions evolved or changed. Pretenders to the heritage of the world movement came and went. Yet we remained dedicated to the aim of building a party, and toward that end we oriented ourselves toward concentrating our forces in the industrial proletariat, toward intervening in all social movements from a revolutionary standpoint, and toward carrying through the theoretical struggle and theoretical clarification.

Our attempt at realizing this project has been approaching the end of its natural life. For nearly a decade the social movements have failed to give rise to new forces attracted to this program as we in our time rallied to it. Our forces have slowly eroded, while the pressures on us have mounted. Our industrial concentration has nearly been extinguished, while our capacity for intervening in the social movements has by-and-large become marginal. Outstanding theoretical problems have multiplied beyond our ability to satisfactorily address them.

This process of erosion has culminated in a crisis in our central organs: the National Executive Committee is dysfunctional, and we are unable to sustain our existing system of publications. That we are unable to overcome this crisis is due not only to the practical problem of numerical erosion of our forces, but also to the loss of ideological cohesiveness and to the loss of most reflection among the masses of our activity. These factors, when continued over a protracted period, could not be overcome simply by individual belief in the need to maintain party organization at all costs, and inevitably reflected themselves in the spirit of the party as well.

Under all these conditions, no amount of tinkering, adjustments or reorganization can patch things back together again. We no longer are we what we once were.

Rather than endure further drift, rather than permit our organization to become a mockery of its past, the Central Committee prefers that we recognize that the end has come, and make a clean break of things, the better to clear the way for whatever the future will bring.

—September 19, 1993

4th Plenum of the Central Committee

Marxist-Leninist Party

Sartre on Stalin

“ The opponents of the regime, the Trotskys, the Serges (who, nevertheless, had helped to construct it) simply distinguished what it might have been from what it had become; they had recourse to *historical* circumstances to account for this ‘degeneration.’ The masses were tired; peasant resistance turned to civil war, etc. Besides Trotsky, while recognizing that circumstances prompted the bureaucratization of the Party, conceived all the same a certain range of possibilities inside this very bureaucracy; there was the *good* bureaucrat — who would have been Trotsky himself — and the *bad* bureaucrat— who was Stalin. . . . This platonic description never takes account of the situation of the USSR about 1920, immense socialist country, therefore threatened by death, whose riches had been pillaged by the war and whose industry, although it had sprung into life in the early years of the century, had a hundred years’ lag to make up. To push on industrialization, develop productive industry, create new frameworks, establish a technical organization: this resembles the ‘tertiary’ of capitalist societies: these duties do not seem fundamental to you? And you do not believe that Soviet society, in danger of death in the midst of middle-class democracies, had to impose an iron discipline on itself— or vanish?” (J. P. Sartre, *The Communists and Peace*, “An Answer to Claude Lefort,” Hamish Hamilton, 1969, pp. 253-4)

“ I am speaking once again to all those who maintain that they are at the same time Marxists and anti-Communists and who today rejoice because the working class is in the act of breaking loose from the CP’; I would remind them of this phrase of Marx’s which they have read, re-read and commented on a hundred times: ‘The proletariat can act as a class only by forming itself into a distinct political party,’ and I beg them to draw the consequences: whatever they think of the ‘Stalinists,’ even if they deem the masses to be deceiving themselves or to be deceived, what then will maintain their cohesion, what will ensure the effectiveness of their activity, if not the CP itself?” (Sartre defending the French CP before Stalin died, *Ibid.*, p. 81)

“ The fallacy of the anti-Communist is that he calls simultaneously to his aid two contradictory processes: in order to take away from the Communists the merit of having unified the masses, he begins by making a sort of passive unity of the class; then, to set it against them, he endows it with an uncanny spontaneity.” (*Ibid.*, 82)

Read Up on the Philippines

There must be a conscious and organized effort to build solidarity and cooperation among the workers and peoples of the entire world in order to bring about the resurgence and advance of the world anti-imperialist movement.... To carry out the task more effectively than before, there must be an international system of aid and cooperation under working class leadership.

— Jose Maria Sison, founder of the NPA and former chairperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

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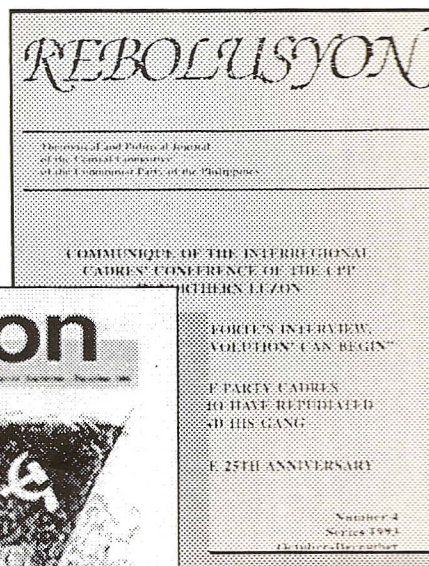
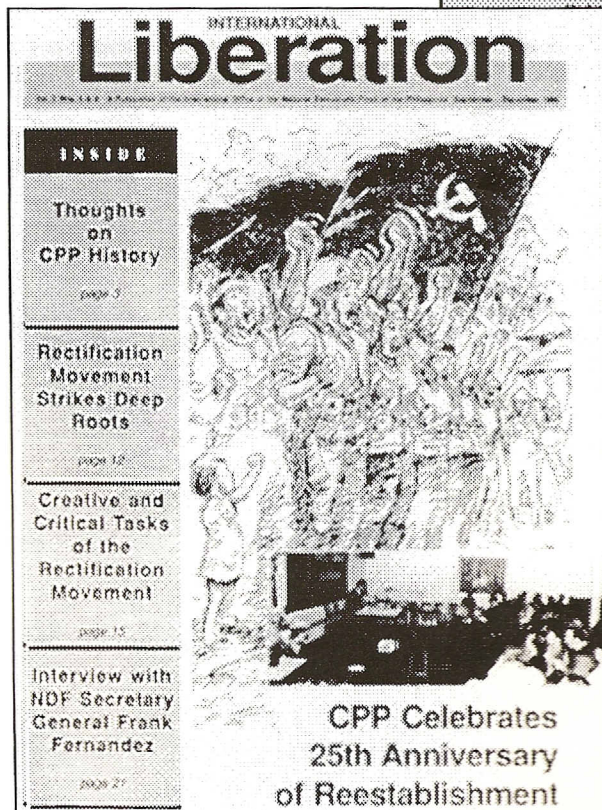
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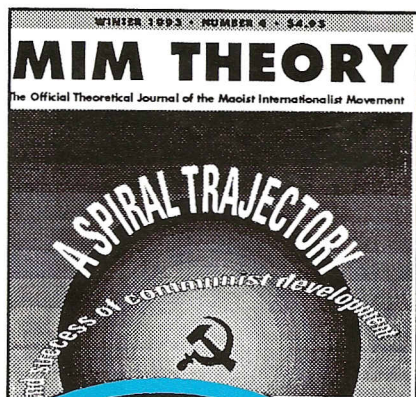
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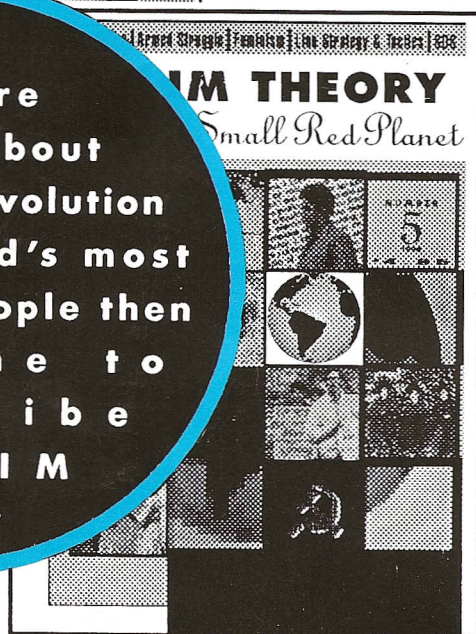
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