

# STALIN'S SUCCESSES, HUMANITY'S GAINS

## Setting the Record Straight

From Moscow to Beijing to Washington the profit pundits have agreed to award a TKO to the free market system. Gorbachev proclaims Perestroika and gives Soviet yuppies a franchise to make rubles hand over fist. Munching on Big Macs, Deng christens the new Shanghai stock exchange. The vultures in the U.S. bourgeois press gleefully scribble that "Capitalism...is the wave of the future" (Jerry Z. Muller, *Commentary*, December 1988) and chortle about "the coming crack-up of communism" (Radek Sikorski, *National Review*, January 27, 1989).

International anti-communism has reached a new stage, dovetailing with the global spread of fascism. Now the rulers of the once-socialist countries unite with Rockefeller & Co. to warble that Marx and Lenin were wrong, that communism is unattainable, and that "human nature" demands the exploitation of the many by the few. The high priests of U.S. imperialism, both "liberal" (George F. Kennan) and "conservative" (Zbigniew Brzezinski), triumphantly mock: "We told you so..."

Both sides in the progressively sharpening rivalry between U.S. and Soviet bosses for world domination need to discredit the Bolshevik revolution and the construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R. between 1917 and the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953.

Establishment Soviet intellectuals, the vanguard of the Gorbachev forces, outdo the United States Information Agency in shedding tears over the "reign of terror" under which the Soviet masses supposedly lived during Stalin's leadership. On February 4, 1989, the New York *Times* gleefully headlined: "Major Soviet Paper Says 20 Million Died As Victims of Stalin." Twenty million is a nice round number. It also happens to be the generally accepted figure for the Soviet death toll at the hands of Nazi butchers during the Second World War. No one, certainly no Soviet worker, can miss the implication. According to both the CIA and its new-found intellectual soul-mates in the Kremlin, "Stalin equals Hitler" just as "communism equals fascism."

The blood of millions who fought and died to defend communism against the Nazis demands that the record be set straight. The working class today needs to know the truth about our history. The Bolshevik revolution, the consolidation of socialism in the U.S.S.R. under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the prodigious struggle against Nazi barbarism were all epochal achievements of revolutionary communists.

Our Party has analyzed the limitations of both the Soviet revolution and socialism in general. In our pamphlets *Road to Revolution III* and *Road to Revolution IV*, we assessed the right-wing errors that led to the full restoration of capitalism in the socialist world. We identified at the core of these errors a mistaken judgment by communist leaders (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao) of the working class's willingness to act immediately for the egalitarian concepts of the communist ideal. This misestimate produced crippling concessions to capitalist ideology and practice: nationalism, tactical and political unity with "lesser-evil" bosses, shared power schemes. Central to all these errors was the concept of socialism itself, a "transitional" strategy enunciated by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, according to which the wage system would be preserved under proletarian dictatorship as a stepping-stone to communist society.

The PLP now rejects this strategy. We consider wages in any form to be capitalist exploitation. Maintaining wages under the dictatorship of the proletariat maintains capitalism. This is one of Soviet history's key lessons.

However, Soviet socialism had two aspects. True, it preserved

wages and capitalism. But under Lenin's and Stalin's leadership *socialism also injected a dose of healthy egalitarian communist ideas and practice into a society whose population spread over one-sixth the world.* Because of these ideas and this practice, millions of workers, peasants, intellectuals, students and their leaders changed the world and proved that the masses will perform miracles to win communism.

In the following pages, we will attempt to show that, with all its imperfections, Soviet socialism under Stalin represented a gigantic stride forward to freedom for the working class and humanity in general.

---

The Capitalists Destroy Everything.

---

## **REVOLUTIONARIES MUST START FROM SCRATCH.**

---

Soviet achievements in the revolution's first two decades appear all the more remarkable when one considers the initial obstacles the Bolsheviks had to overcome. The Czarist Empire overthrown by the revolution had actually been a semi-colony of Anglo-French and German financiers. Anglo-French capital controlled 72 percent of the

Empire's coal, iron and steel and 50 percent of the Empire's oil. Huge profits were bled from the labor of the Empire's workers and peasants by foreign plutocrats allied with the Czar.

World War I was fought, in part, over which profiteer would get this booty. The cost of this profiteers' war to the Empire's working class was staggering: more than nine million battlefield casualties, including dead, wounded, and missing and untold millions of civilians killed, maimed, or homeless.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in 1917 altered the class content of these hostilities. The imperialists stopped squabbling with each other and launched a ruthless, desperate drive to recover the goose that had given them golden eggs. In the words of Winston Churchill, they wanted to "strangle the baby in its cradle." By the summer of 1919 fourteen nations had invaded the fledgling Soviet Union. They included Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy and the U.S. Fighting side by side with these armies against the Revolution's Red Army were the White Armies, who were Czarist thugs hell-bent on restoring the old order.

At one point, the Bolshevik government controlled barely

one-sixteenth of Russia's vast territory. The Red Army, later to become the world's greatest military force, was born because of this counter-revolutionary invasion. For two and a half bloody years, against overwhelming odds, the Red Army rallied the Soviet working class and peasantry and smashed the reactionaries. This victory alone would rank the Bolshevik revolution as pre-eminent among the achievements of working class history.

The cost of the capitalist invasion was daunting. *On top of the losses caused by the World War, between 1919 and 1922, seven million Soviet men, women, and children died in battle or through war-caused starvation and disease. Millions more became refugees. Russia's already feeble industry and agriculture virtually collapsed. The Soviet government later estimated its material losses as the equivalent of \$60 billion. The invaders made no reparations.*

Such were the ruins on which the Soviet working class set about the most sweeping economic and social transformation the world had yet seen.

*subscribe to*  
**CHALLENGE/DESAFIO**  
*the revolutionary*  
*communist newspaper*

---

COMMUNISM  
 INSPIRES  
 SOVIET WORKERS  
 TO TRANSFORM  
 COUNTRY

---

Soviet workers hurled their hearts and muscles into the task of reconstruction and development with a vigor and enthusiasm that astounded the puny imagination of bourgeois cynics. The spirit infusing the first generation of Soviet development proves that social relations based on selfishness and acquisitiveness do not represent the apex of human achievement. Yes, socialism was ultimately **defeated** by its own internal contradictions. Yes, the Soviet party's line proved incorrect. But for thirty years or so, tens of millions carried out this line because they thought it would **eventually** lead to communism. This shows that workers everywhere are winnable to building a collective, egalitarian way of life.

Visitors to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s who reported their findings did not fail to acknowledge achievements of historic proportion. The key to

Continued *on page 48*

# SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

*Continued from page 12*

**its success lay in the radical transformation of social relations.**

**Walter Reuther, who became a trusted anti-communist labor lieutenant of U.S. industry (the United Auto Workers president who, later, to protect his personal power, led the drive to sweep out of the union the very communists who placed him into leadership) in his youth was swept away by the promise of communism. He spent some time working in a Soviet auto factory. Writing to Detroit friends, Reuther compared labor's conditions under Soviet socialism and capitalism:**

"What you have written concerning the strikes and the general labor unrest in Detroit.. **makes** us long for the moment to be back with you in the front lines of struggle. However, the daily inspiration that is ours as we work side by side with our Russian comrades in our factory, the thought that we will forever end the exploitation of man by man, the thought that what we are building will be for the benefit and enjoyment of the working class, not only of Russia, but of the entire world, is the compensation we receive for our temporary absence from the struggle in the United States. And let no one tell you that we are not on the road to socialism in the Soviet

Union. Let no one say that the workers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are not on the road to security, enlightenment, and happiness...

Here are no bosses to drive fear into the workers. No one to drive them in mad speed-ups. Here the workers are in control. Even the shop superintendent had no more right in these meetings than **any** other worker. I have witnessed many times already when the superintendent spoke too long. The workers in the hall decided he had already consumed enough time and the floor was given to a lathe hand who told of his problems and offered suggestions. Imagine this at Ford or Briggs. This is what the outside world calls the "ruthless dictatorship in Russia." I tell you...**in** all countries we have thus far been in we have never found such genuine proletarian democracy.. .

We are witnessing and experiencing great things in the USSR. We are seeing the most backward nation in the world being rapidly transformed into the most modern and and scientific, with new concepts and ideals coming into force. We are watching, daily, socialism being taken down from the books on the shelves and put into **actual** application. Who would not be inspired by such events?" (Bonosky, **Phillip**: Brother **Bill** McKee: Building *the* Union *at* Ford; New York; 1953; pp 135-6)

**This "inspiration," which was nothing other than political com-**

mitment to Bolshevism, led to economic achievements that in any other society could only have been folk tale and legend.

In 1929 (then the peak capitalist boom year), Soviet industry accounted for 3.8 percent of world production. By 1932, when the capitalist world had fallen into the deepest depression of its history, Soviet production was 11 percent of world production. By 1936, it had risen to 15.2 percent of world production. The third Five-Year Plan for socialist construction would have plausibly reached one-third of world output had the Second World War not disrupted the process. British economist J. Miller, who studied the Soviet economy between 1936 and 1937, wrote: "...it (is) not an unreasonable prediction that within the next generation the Soviet Union will be as powerful, industrially, as the rest of the world put together" (Hewlett Johnson, *The Soviet Power*, p. 93).

The capitalist world wallowed in the downside of its boom-bust "cycle." By 1937 its combined industry had increased a measly 3.5 percent over 1929. On the other hand, total Soviet industrial production grew by 371 percent, and modern large-scale industry alone reached 428 percent of the 1929 figure.

Workers' Power  
The Reason

## **SOVIET WORKERS**

## **PROSPERED**

## **WHEN CAPITALISM**

## **STARVED ITS**

## **WORKERS**

While tens of millions of workers starved, lost their homes, or desperately sought relief in the U.S., Britain, and France; while wages in Hitler's fascist "paradise" of 1937 declined by 21 percent relative to 1929; while youth in the "advanced" capitalist nations had little to do but hang around street corners, the workers' dictatorship of the U.S.S.R. improved the quality of life as measured by any conceivable yardstick.

Although we understand today that all types of wages inevitably reproduce capitalism, and that even socialist wages therefore cannot lead to communism, the structure of the wage system under Soviet socialism nonetheless dramatically improved the living standards of the working class. The average annual wage nearly doubled between 1929 and 1933 and nearly quadrupled between 1929 and 1937. During the same period, wages in the

depression-ravaged capitalist countries shrank absolutely.

The reality of improved Soviet living conditions flew in the face of imperialist lies about the "starving" Russian masses. Not *only did Stalin's government raise wages, but at the same time it consistently lowered the prices of staple goods.* Between 1934 and 1937 bread prices were lowered by more than half, butter the same; the price of eggs was cut by nearly three-quarters; prices for meat were slashed by 63 percent and for lump-sugar by 73 percent.

Social services boomed. Stalin's 1938 budget increased maternity benefits by 30 percent over 1937. The number of factory workers and office-workers accommodated in rest homes and of children admitted to "Pioneer" camps increased in equally dramatic fashion. State expenditures for workers' cultural needs, social insurance, education, health insurance, and aid to mothers of large families were scheduled to rise by two-thirds between 1937 and 1942. (The fascist invasion, of course, disrupted these plans.)

The population increased. Child mortality plummeted. The number of kids in day care centers and kindergartens soared. Industrial accidents fell

by almost half. Cotton production all but tripled. Grain production doubled.

All these developments took place while imperialist shills and scribblers shed buckets of crocodile tears over Stalin's supposed "reign of terror." Like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, they protested too much, revealing their own guilt: the real reign of terror against workers was occurring in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. Hewlitt Johnson, one of the most important leaders of the Church of England aptly wrote, **Fear haunts workers in a capitalist land. Fear of dismissal, fear that a thousand workless men stand outside the gate eager to get his job, breaks the spirit of a man and breeds servility. Fear of unemployment, fear of slump, fear of trade depression, fear of sickness, fear of impoverished old age lie with crushing weight on the mind of the worker. A few weeks' wages only lies between him and disaster. He lacks reserves.** (*The Soviet Power* p.187).

***With all its imperfections, the Soviet proletarian state provided a life without the crushing burden of such fear. Everyone had the opportunity to work. Every child could go to school and learn. Decent, affordable housing was being built. Medical care was universally available. Sick-pay was guaranteed with no time-limit. Older workers could retire with pensions***

that allowed them to keep *their* dignity.

---

**BOLSHEVIKS GAVE  
YOUNG  
"EVERYTHING  
HUMANLY  
POSSIBLE"**

---

Nothing characterizes a society so aptly as its treatment of youth. Capitalism deals with young people in one of three ways: as labor to be super-exploited, as cannon-fodder for profit wars or as useless burdens best drugged or terrorized into submission. In the U.S. today, drugs are claiming teenagers' lives in battlefield proportion. The national high school dropout rate exceeds one in four; in the major cities, one of two. Suicide, accidents and child abuse are the leading causes of premature death among those younger than twenty-five.

In stark contrast to this abysmal record, Soviet socialism in the 1930s treated the youth as its most precious asset, the legitimate heir to the revolution. Contemporary observers like the author Lion Feuchtwanger wrote:

Everything is done for the young that is humanly possible. Every-

where one finds numerous and excellently appointed nurseries and kindergartens. A network of schools covers the whole of this huge state, and their numbers are increasing with incredible rapidity. There are children's playgrounds, children's movies, children's cafes, and excellent children's theaters. The older ones are taken care of by the universities, by innumerable courses in the various trades and in the collective economic system of the peasantry, and by the cultural centers of the Red Army. The physical conditions in which the Soviet youth grows up are more favorable than anywhere else in the world (*Moscow* 1937, p. 14).

In *Road to Revolution IV*, our Party's operating strategic document, we wrote: "Children will understand (the principle of collectivity) the moment their senses awaken." The giant laboratory of Soviet education proved they *could* learn to do so. From the earliest years, Soviet infants were taught to work with others. Soviet educational psychologists (unlike their modern racist U.S. counterparts, who are obsessed with proving the "genetic inferiority" of the most oppressed workers' children) devised tactics for getting toddlers to co-operate with each other. For example, the bricks or cubes used for play were often purposely too large for a single child to handle. The child would

call a companion, and *together* they would build their play house. Collectivity became instinctive.

As Paul Robeson sang it, the Soviet song said: "To our youth now every door is open:" open through the spread of literacy; through the availability of excellent, free schooling; through the many "Palaces of Youth," with their free classes in ballet, sculpture, history and geography, mechanical experimentation, aviation, short-wave transmission, and music; through the recreational facilities built next to every large factory and complex of small industries in the Union. No Soviet child languished in the city during summertime for lack of camp tuition. No child had to agonize over the future, to contemplate a choice among jail, fighting a rich man's war or the unemployment lines. *Within its economic limitations, Soviet socialism did more for youth than any society before or since.*

---

## **BOLSHEVIKS LED FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S FREEDOM, EQUALITY**

---

More significant yet than the breathtaking economic achieve-

ments of Soviet rule was socialism's bold attempt to create new human relations within the working class. With a taste of communism on their lips, workers discovered that they could throw off the yoke of backwardness imposed on them by centuries of feudal and capitalist exploitation.

*Nowhere did this breakthrough develop more spectacularly than in the revolutionary transformation of women's roles and status.*

Few societies had oppressed women more savagely than the Czarist Empire. *In the Christian West, women were systematically treated as chattels. The church encouraged flogging disobedient wives. In the Moslem East, bridegrooms received whips as wedding gifts. A wife slept on the bare floor while her husband enjoyed the comfort of rugs on a couch and then kicked her upon awakening. All women in Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan were made to wear a foul, hot veil of horsehair (the *paranja*) to hide their faces from the world.*

The revolutionary movement that arose in 19th century Russia knew from the beginning that this hideous oppression could not continue if the fight for a new society were to succeed. Women revolutionaries organized and fought side by side with men.

Men and women Bolsheviks lived communally in Czarist exile, sharing money and food. Women on the outside helped prisoners escape. In and out of jail, women revolutionaries studied science, the classics and Marxist theory in a time when women were generally kept uneducated. In 1905, on "Bloody Sunday," women demonstrators bled and died along with men in the brutal repression of the march on the Petrograd Winter Palace. When Kornilov's White Army attacked Petrograd at the height of the Civil War, 200,000 women marched to the front.

Women flung themselves with similar vigor and commitment into the task of building the new society. The socialist government moved to eliminate every trace of laws and practices relegating women to inferior status.

The Soviet Constitution of 1938, which summarized Soviet practice up to then, and which was known as the "Stalin Constitution," guaranteed women "equal rights with men in all fields of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life." This was not an idle promise.

Women were encouraged to become workers, a high status in the workers' state. In 1937, 41 per cent of all students in workers' faculties were women.

The Soviet Union had 100,000 women technicians and engineers by 1940. Educational facilities at all levels granted equal access to men and women. Maternity leave with full pay was made available both before and after confinement. New mothers had no worry about losing their jobs once they were ready to return to work. Nursing mothers who worked in factories could pause every three hours to feed their babies.

Soviet society provided an ample supply of kindergartens, day care centers, nurseries, milk-kitchens and playgrounds, as well as communal dining rooms at factories and elsewhere to allow women to work and abolish housekeeping as "women's work."

*Under these conditions, working-class women were able to exercise the freedom not only to help build the new society but also to help lead it.* The victory over the veil (called the *paranja*) in Central Asia provides an inspiring example.

Thousands of Bolshevik cadre, **men and women, had moved east after the seizure of power to pave the way for socialism. Women communists played a decisive role in this process, entering the yurta** (tents), sharing the horrible lives of Asian peasants, patiently winning **them over to revolu-**

tionary ideas. The *paranja* symbolized the most oppressive aspects of the old life. It had to go. Finally, with the political work done, the time came for action.

The Danish writer Fanina Halle describes the mass rejection of the *paranja* that the Communist Party organized on International Women's Day, March 8, 1928:

**On that day...tens of thousands of women, huddled in paranjas and chachvans poured like a menacing avalanche through the narrow choked streets, squares and bazaars of the ancient Central Asian cities...the vast multitude, including a number of men and children, gathered around the Lenin monument.. and the women waited breathlessly for what was to come...All the bands struck up the Internationale...(the paranjas) were flung aloft into the quivering air, timidly at first, but then with ever wilder and more frenzied speed, these symbols of slavery that the women cast off, paranjas, chachvans, and chadras. They were piled in rapidly growing heaps, drenched with paraffin, and soon the dark clouds of smoke from the burning common abjuration of a thousand year old convention, now become unbearable, flared up into the bright sky of the spring day...(Women in the Soviet East, cited in Johnson, p. 235)**

By 1940, 189 women-virtually all of proletarian or peasant origin-sat on the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. No other par-

liamentary body in the world could then boast a similar proportion. In 1940, the President of Tashkent, the largest and most important city of Soviet Central Asia, was a woman who a few years before had been an illiterate servant girl hidden beneath a *paranja*.

So great were the strides made by millions of working class women under the Soviet proletarian dictatorship that Clare Booth Luce (the most articulate of the right-wing feminists) wrote: "...Communism preaches and, since the Revolution of 1917, has tried to practice the inherent equality of men and women" (*Life Magazine*, June 28, 1963).

Luce's husband, Henry Luce, owned *Life*, *Time*, and *Fortune* magazines, and was among the most fervent of the cold warriors. Her views on the life and death struggle between communism and capitalism mirrored his. If anything, she wished to minimize the accomplishments of socialism. But she acknowledged that between 1929 and 1961, the number of Soviet women earning wages and salaries increased from 3,118,000 to 31,609,000; that between 1917 and 1961, the number of women engineers increased from 600 to 379,000 (31% of all engineers in the

U.S.S.R.); that 26% of the Supreme Soviet were women, and 20,000 Soviet villages were headed by women in 1961; and finally, that in the same year women comprised 74% of all Soviet physicians and surgeons.

Proletarian dictatorship has been reversed for more than three decades in the Soviet Union. Much of the progress women's equality enabled the whole working class to make has dissipated. Divorce, promiscuity, alcoholism and other capitalist diseases now characterize Soviet society. The "new woman" of *perestroika* is a starlet who takes off her clothes for Playboy and anyone else with a camera and a few bucks. Yet beneath the surface of this travesty looms the collective memory of millions who recall how Bolshevism smashed the *paranja*. A new day will come once again

---

**COMMUNIST-LED  
WORKERS' STATE  
FIRST GOVERNMENT  
IN HISTORY TO  
MAKE RACISM  
ILLEGAL**

---

Soviet socialism also conducted great struggles-at home

and abroad-against all forms of racism. Ultimately, these struggles failed, because of a flawed strategy. In the tradition established by Marx and Engels, the Bolsheviks thought that national oppression could be defeated by promoting nationalism among the oppressed. Lenin, Stalin, and others acknowledged that nationalism was in essence reactionary. They thought, however, that certain temporary concessions to it were necessary.

These concessions fell into the same logic as the line that wages and social stratification had to be preserved during socialism. Nationalism is the antithesis of communism: it subordinates class interests to "national" interests and therefore promotes all-class unity to serve one exploiter or another.

For example, the Jews whom the Soviets could not win to assimilate received the District of Birobijan in the Far East as a "homeland"- twenty years before the state of Israel was established. Birobijan was replicated in dozens of cases for other nationalities.

The idea must have sounded good at the time: why not allow each nationality to forge its own separate development as it built socialism? But the contradictions of socialism guaranteed

that the nationalist aspect became primary over the **working-class** aspect, not only in the individual "autonomous" republics but also throughout the U.S.S.R. as a whole. Thus, when the Soviets established these "autonomous" republics and regions they unwittingly set the stage for capitalist restoration, for **resurgent** Great Russian nationalism and for the current wave of **ultra-rightwing** chauvinist "independence" movements behind local bosses in Armenia, Azerbidjian, Georgia, the Baltic states and elsewhere.

Despite nationalism the Bolsheviks during the Stalin period nonetheless broke new ground in attempting to liberate their society from the appalling human cost of racist division within the working class.

Czarist Russia had been a swamp of deliberately fostered racism. The weaker the Czar grew, the more his government promoted "divide and rule" tactics. In the Empire's eastern regions dark-skinned workers and peasants had to bear oppression and indignity in every way worthy of the U.S. slave states or South Africa. In the west, violent pogroms periodically terrorized and massacred Russian Jews.

In one bold stroke, under Lenin's leadership the Bolshevik

government declared all forms of racism to be illegal and then imposed severe penalties for violating this principle. Unlike the U.S. today, where the rulers **hypocritically** prattle about constitutional equality and then engage in the most vicious racist practices imaginable, the Soviet government under Stalin vigilantly enforced this strong anti-racist policy.

On several occasions in the 1930s and 1940s, the black American writer Langston Hughes traveled to the Soviet Union. Having extensively, and courageously, denounced Jim Crow in the U.S., he was curious to see if the workers' dictatorship could build a multi-racial society. He found overwhelming affirmative evidence. In 1934, Hughes rode a train to the Soviet East. He struck a conversation with a fellow passenger:

... ..a man almost as brown as I am...Some Asiatic factory worker who has been to Moscow on a vacation, I think. We talk a little. He asks me what I do for a living, and I ask him what he does. I am a writer. He is the mayor of Bokhara, the Chairman of the City Soviet! I make a note in the back of my mind, "In the Soviet Union dark men are also the mayors of cities..." In the course of our conversation, I learned that there were many cities in Central Asia where dark men and women are

in control of the government. And I thought about Mississippi, where more than half the population is Negro, but one never hears of a colored person in the government... ("Going South in Russia," in *Portrait Against Background*, p. 77)

**The laws against racial intolerance stemmed from the proletarian internationalism that had been a characteristic of Bolshevik theory and practice from the outset. Contrary to the lies and vilification still prevalent in the capitalist press that Lenin and Stalin were anti-Semites, under their leadership the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union provided leadership to the entire world in the fight to smash anti-Semitism. In 1913, Lenin had written:**

**The school, the press, the Parliamentary Tribune--everything and anything is being utilized in order to sow ignorant, evil and savage hatred against the Jews. In this black-guardly business there engage not only the scum of the Black Hundreds, but also reactionary professors, scientists, journalists, deputies, etc. Millions, even milliards of rubles are spent in order to poison the mind of the people (cited in *The Soviet Power*, p. 289).**

**Stalin seconded this view. "Communists," he stated, "as consistent internationalists, cannot fail to be irreconcilable and sworn enemies of anti-Semitism" (*ibid.*, p. 289). Soviet socialism de-**

**stroyed the ghettos that had imprisoned Jewish workers since the Middle Ages. The new society made vigorous efforts to become multi-racial and multi-national. Its military arm especially achieved great success in this regard. The Red Army that went forth to destroy Nazism was**

**...an international army. Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Mongols, Jews, Georgians, and so on, men [and women] of scores of races, are found among its high officers. Racial barriers are not permitted to block individual advancement. As this principle also applies in Soviet society, the conscripts are highly literate and intelligent. (Edgar Snow, *People on Our Side*, p. 214)**

**At the height of World War II, in the midst of the most barbarous racist slaughters in history, Stalin took pains to underscore the political character of the struggle against the Hitlerites:**

**...the strength of the Red Army lies...in the fact that it does not and cannot feel racial hatred for other peoples, including the German people; that it has been trained to recognize the equality of all peoples and races, and to respect the rights of other peoples (*ibid.*, p. 189).**

**One should not romanticize the accomplishments of Soviet anti-racism. With the wisdom of hindsight, the futility of attempting to build internationalism on a base of supposedly "progress-**

sive" nationalism appears obvious. Supposedly tactical concessions to nationalism were in fact routs.

The Soviets fought World War II ultimately on a nationalist basis. "Mother Russia" became the rallying cry over international proletarian revolution. The national-chauvinist policies of the contemporary Soviet bosses have deep roots in the seemingly innocent nationalism of socialism's earlier period. The widespread revival of fanatical, Czarist-style anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union today is no accident. Nationalism begets racism. There even is an organization, the Pamyat. This Klan clone calls for expelling Jews from the country, demands the listing of Jewish bureaucrats, bewails the demise of Russian "racial purity," and proposes violent, Nazi-style solutions to the "problem." All this is part of *glasnost*.

The communist movement has digested the error of nationalism and today can conduct anti-racist struggle on more solid ideological ground than the Soviets did under Stalin's leadership. The fight against racism no longer need turn into its opposite. By the same token, while our Party recognizes the deadly consequences of nationalism in all its

forms and while we refuse to sentimentalize Soviet socialism's achievements or minimize its weaknesses, facts are facts. *Within the framework of its severe limitations, the U.S.S.R. in the Stalin period advanced anti-racist consciousness and the principle of multi-racial unity to levels hitherto undreamt in human history.* No other society could have withstood and then destroyed the Nazis' genocidal onslaughts. In the Soviet experience of anti-racist struggle, there is much to criticize- and also much to emulate.

---

## THE RED ARMY

---

With all its political shortcomings, inevitably reflecting those of socialism itself, the Red Army must be ranked among the Soviet Union's most stunning achievements. Its virtually single-handed defeat of the Nazi armies during World War II assumes added luster when one takes into account the true relationship of forces at the moment of the Nazi invasion.

The standard myth popularized by U.S. and British imperialist apologists attributes the Soviet victory to the availability of limitless human hordes used as cannon-fodder, and vast stocks of U.S. donated arms. This ex-

hausted the enemy. Russian winters also get a big play in these fairy tales—as if the weather had been warmer for the communists than for Nazis.

The opposite of the racist “horde” lie is in fact the case. The Nazi invasion represented far more than an onslaught of an “outnumbered” seventy million Germans against one hundred ninety million Russians. In reality, almost all of Europe assaulted the USSR in June 1941, a total of 310 million people. The Germans had been on a war footing for a full year and a half, and had overrun the rest of Europe before turning on the Soviet Union. Hitler had at his disposal one hundred eighty million Germans and active German allies and one hundred thirty million conquered people whose labor power, albeit unwillingly, aided the fascist war effort. With his vast labor reserves, Hitler could mobilize an army numbering between fifteen and eighteen million troops.

The Soviets could mobilize about ten million troops. A million of these were needed in the Soviet Far East and on the Afghan, Iranian, and Turkish borders, more than offsetting the Nazis’ need for troops to occupy western Europe. Nazi manpower *superiority* at the time of the invas-

ion can therefore be reckoned as three to two.

The quality of Soviet *materiel* was second to none. As far back as 1935 Nazi General Guderian noted the superiority of Soviet tanks and tractors. Nazi Colonel von Bulow praised the high technical level of Soviet war planes and cited the USSR’s capacity to continue military production indefinitely for a protracted war. Nonetheless, Germany invaded the Soviet Union enjoying a 5:2 *quantitative superiority* in the hardware of warfare, thanks to Hitler’s previous victories. The Nazis had inherited the rest of Europe’s arsenal practically intact and controlled Europe’s entire war industry.

Within the first month of the invasion, however, the Nazi blitzkrieg was stalled. The Red Army suffered massive losses but couldn’t be knocked out in the first round. On the contrary: it gave better than it got. At its fastest, the blitzkrieg never exceeded fifty percent of the Nazis’ rate of advance in conquering western Europe. By the end of the war’s third month, the Hitlerites had lost one-third of their original invading force and equipment. By the fourth month the Red Army stopped the Wehrmacht at Smolensk for an entire **month**. By the fifth month

the Nazis had been slowed to one-sixth of their initial rate. The war's essential course had been determined before the end of 1941. Although the turning point was to come months later during the heroic battle of Stalingrad, and although the Soviet working class needed a Herculean collective effort to win, the beginning of the end had already appeared.

The Nazis lost because the Soviets, though tainted with nationalism and other capitalist poisons, fought to uphold communism as they understood it. The fascist army that invaded the USSR was deeply committed to Hitler's genocidal ideology. This commitment had sustained it during the days of easy victory over capitalist opponents. But the Wehrmacht bit the dust largely because the Soviet Union's forces enjoyed overwhelming ideological superiority.

Hitler's troops fought to conquer "living space" for the "master race." The Soviet troops, though enveloped in a nationalist cloud, fought for the glimpse of communism that a generation of socialist life had given them: Men, officers, and generals alike, understand that any conqueror will rob them of their collectively owned factories, farms, schools, theaters,

museums, will halt further improvement and progress and strip them of their freedom and of other values that make their life worth living. This is thoroughly understood from the top-ranking marshal down to the company cook. This consciousness is part of the Red Army morale, which is part and parcel of the morale of the whole nation (Sergei N. Kourashoff, *Russia's Fighting Forces*, p. 107

Edgar Snow echoes this sentiment, when he cites Solomon Lozovsky, assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs, during an interview given in 1942:

*Why do the Russians fight so hard and how can they go on fighting today, that is what Americans want to know, is it so? Listen, Americans did not understand us in the past. Some were influenced by lies about us; they would not believe the truth. That is why they judged wrong about us. Now they see how our people fight and they realize there is something here is Russia which keeps them going. Do you want to know what that is? The answer is that the revolution has created here a new social consciousness and that men and women in this country have something to fight for, to die or to live for, as the case may be, but to fight for! (Edgar Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 70, emphasis ours)*

Armed with a vision, however murky, of a communist future, and with a feeling of national solidarity, the Red Army troops had little anxiety about the welfare of their families in the rear or the

intensity of effort being put forth to aid the war on the home front. Venereal disease, a scourge in the imperialist armies, was almost totally unknown. "Battle fatigue" (war neurosis), epidemic in the western military, was minimal in the Red Army. (Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 136).

As the men went off to the front, women replaced them in every conceivable job. Women engineers constructed the defense works; women became police, locomotive drivers, miners, and steel workers. Youth rapidly matured under these conditions, and most sixteen year olds could perform any task. Children between the ages of twelve and fifteen did one-third an adult's work share. Other than the infirm and very old, non-producers **were** unknown during the war.

Women and children participated in the fighting, on the front, as well as among the partisans in the occupied territories. Even craven imperialist shells like Harrison Salisbury had to marvel at the skill and commitment with which thirteen-year old Soviet Jewish boys became guerrillas, taking up the gun to kill Nazis (*Russia on the Way*, Pp. 233 ff.). Edgar Snow tells the moving story of three young women guerrillas, Panya, Liza, and Kenya, who had seen

**...crimes committed by the Nazis in their neighborhood...murders and hangings, rape as a daily occurrence, torture and all the rest of it:Many of the victims were their own friends** (*op.cit.*, pp.1756).

When asked by Snow if she had ever killed a man, Panya replied simply, "Not a man, exactly. I've killed some Nazis...I was proud that I could bring vengeance on them (*op. cit.*, p.175)." Yet her hatred and that of her comrades was in some sense a class hatred. Liza pointed out: "***We are fighting only Hillerites, and we don't want to exterminate the good Germans. Our best machine gunner is a German and we like and trust him. He is a fine man***"(*op. cit.*, p. 175). Only someone influenced by communist ideas could make such a statement.

---

## **BOLSHEVIKS NOT AFRAID TO ARM THE PEOPLE**

---

**The Soviet concept** of anti-fascist struggle was "unusually simple and staggeringly grandiose" (Kourashoff, *op.cit.*, p. 207). Basically, it regarded the entire country as the theater of war and every Soviet citizen as a soldier. Non-combatants worked feverishly to guarantee production. The fighting forces themselves

were divided into three distinct but complementary groups: the Red Army, fighting in the front zone; the guerrilla army, spreading havoc throughout the Nazi rear; and the armed population, denying the fascists access to the Soviet rear. The concept of the Soviet people in arms is not well-known in the West and merits mention. The magnitude of the Soviet war effort cannot be comprehended otherwise.

Stalin had figured since the 1919 War of Intervention that the imperialists would not give up their dreams of reconquering Russia and smashing socialism. The only issue in doubt was whether the second invasion would involve as much inter-capitalist unity as the first, and Soviet diplomacy was devoted to splitting the Soviet camp. In any event, the Soviet Union had to prepare. Contrary to the rehashed lies of vulgar western anti-communists who pretend that the Soviet people mysteriously rose up all of a sudden in 1941 despite their leaders, history shows that these leaders had meticulously planned for war since the 1930s. They tried to avoid war, but they also prepared to fight to win if war was imposed on them.

Production for war formed a key element of the plan. Defense

appropriations rose from 395 million rubles in 1924 to 34 billion in 1938. The Red Army's motor component (the number of mechanical horsepower per soldier) rose from 2.6 in 1929 to 13.8 by the end of 1938. Soviet tractor plants were constructed to be easily convertible into tank plants. Starting from scratch, by 1935-6, the U.S.S.R. already boasted seventy-four aircraft factories, of which the most important group was situated well beyond the reach of enemy bombers. Therefore, Soviet tank and aircraft production had been guaranteed six years before the invasion.

The most impressive aspect of socialist preparations for war, however, remained the human side. Right after the invasion, Soviet ability to wage guerrilla operations in the Nazi rear proved decisive. How was such activity possible? "How is it," asked military historian Sergei Kourashoff, "that plain peasants, working men, clerks, teachers, and such can pit their strength against the mighty Wehrmacht? Where did they learn the use of modern arms?" (op. cit., p. 204).

The answer is simple. For years beforehand the Soviet government had armed, trained, and organized the entire population for total war in the future.

The main government organization carrying out this task was the Osoaviakhim ("Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Air Force and Chemical Defense"). Its membership numbered fifteen million. It carried out military training among all sections of the Soviet population, particularly among youth. Instruction was provided by army reserve officers and included marksmanship, horse cavalry skills, aviation, parachuting, skiing, and other military sports. In 1938, six million adults and millions more youth had won riflery badges. The skills of Soviet partisans in all aspects of guerrilla warfare were due in large part to this training.

This brings up an important point. Anti-communists have spilled gallons of ink bemoaning the "terror" to which the Soviet people were subjected in the Stalin period. But facts are facts, and as Stalin often pointed out, their own logic has infinitely greater coherence than the logic of mere words.

Either the Osoaviakhim existed or it didn't. Either it trained millions of civilians in the arts of war or it didn't. Either it transformed collective farms and factories into miniature military bases in peacetime or it didn't.

The Osoaviakhim existed. It did all these things and more, and no objective historian denies these facts. The conclusion is inescapable. ***The Soviet government was not afraid to arm its people. It was not afraid to teach its people military science. It welcomed these developments and considered them necessary. It had full confidence in the majority of the population, and this attitude was reciprocated. Such a relationship between government and people is absolutely inconsistent with the absurd premise that Stalin ruled like a "despot" and that his power emanated from the intimidation of the masses.***

---

## OUR TERRORISM

"OK," SAY THE

## CAPITALISTS

The question of terror cannot be avoided in assessing the accomplishments and shortcomings of Soviet socialism during the Stalin period. Cold warriors and other capitalist shills wring their hands and write elegies lamenting the millions of lives allegedly snuffed out by Stalinist brutality or wasted in Stalinist slave labor camps. Entire generations of children in the US. and western Europe have been taught since the end of World

War II to believe that Stalin committed more murders than any dictator in world history, even more than Hitler. Imperialism has created a Stalin devil-cult more fanatical than most religions.

The supposed reasons for the alleged terror were the **resistance** to the various stages of agricultural collectivization and the internal battle fought in the Soviet Communist Party during the period known as the "purge trials."

An exhaustive analysis of these events lies beyond the scope of the present article. However, certain general conclusions are inescapable. The Soviet Union during this period was indeed a dictatorship, a dictatorship of the proletariat, the first in history to hold power and organize society. As the foregoing pages have demonstrated, never before had workers anywhere enjoyed such broad democracy or stood at the **threshold** of such vast material and cultural power.

The U.S.S.R. was a revolutionary state, and revolution, as Mao Zedong succinctly pointed out, is not a tea party. It is a protracted, violent struggle during the course of which one class wrests power from another and then attempts to rule society in its own interests. The displaced exploit-

ers inevitably act with the savagery of cornered rats as the desperation of their predicament increases.

At first, as we have already pointed out, the Czarist forces joined with fourteen capitalist nations to snuff out the socialist revolution in its infancy. It bears repeating that *seven million* Soviet men, women, and children died from violence, starvation, or disease directly attributable to the 1919-21 War of Intervention. Yet the CIA's anti-communist chorus led by Brzezinski, Sidney Hook (before his recent death) and Robert Conquest sing *no* laments over *these* massacres

The fledgling Soviet Union was by far the most backward of the world's powers. The backbone of the old society had been the peasantry, which toiled under conditions not much different from the Middle Ages. Socialism required modern, *collective* agricultural production. Within the limitations of their line, the Bolsheviks attempted to win the peasantry politically to this perspective. But a stratum of the peasantry had class interests contradictory to the new approach. These were the so-called "rich" peasants, the "**kulaks**," who owned some land and means

of production and who therefore had a stake in capitalism.

The question resolved itself through force of arms. The dictatorship of the proletariat fought the recalcitrant kulaks. There was bloodshed. Some kulaks died. The government imprisoned and exiled others. Exact numbers are impossible to obtain. Some anti-communist minstrels wail about the many millions who languished in slave labor camps. Other **died-in-the-wool** right wingers with a passion for professional "objectivity," have disproved these fantasies. For example, in May, **1948**, Professor N.S. Timasheff of the Jesuit **Fordham** University (not exactly a haven for the Left, much less for admirers of Stalin) attempted to **re**ckon the **1938** Soviet prison population by calculating the **discepancy** between the number of voters and the number of disenfranchised persons. ("The Postwar Population of the Soviet Union." in *The American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 54, 1948)

Timasheff calculated the difference between all those older than eighteen, and those who voted, as being two percent of the population, or 3.3 million people. This was the number of "disenfranchised persons." He further estimated about a million

of these to be insane persons and persons deprived by the courts for non-political reasons of **their** electoral rights. "The rest," he writes, "about two million, must be slave labor [Timasheff's term] in other words, inmates of prison camps" (p. 150). Timasheff also estimated that the number of prisoners in labor camps had hardly increased ten years later, in 1948.

Using similar methodology thirty years later, another scholar, S.G. **Wheatcroft**, confirmed Timasheff's figures. Wheatcroft further demonstrated that the number of persons in Soviet labor camps during that period could not, even in the most outlandish of scenarios, exceed "four or five million." ("On Assessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labor in the Soviet Union, 1929-56," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, April **1981**, p. 286).

Considering the stakes and the growing imperialist threat Wheatcroft's speculative figure of four or five million (an admitted outermost extreme) appears modest.

By comparison, one should look at the "democratic" racist **U.S.A.**, which had the greatest adult prison population of any country in the world at the end of **1985**, 2.9 million (New York *Times*,

January 2, 1987). Today it stands at well over 3.5 *million*, and is expected to increase by more than 100 percent over the next decade.

How many workers and peasants would have starved to death, how many would have fallen prey to disease and all the ravages of the old system had the Five Year Plans (for which collectivization was key) not been implemented? How many millions more would have fallen victim to Hitler's genocide had the Soviet Union failed to organize both its industry and its agriculture for the coming war? The issue can be judged only from this perspective:

**The Russian peasant who saw disadvantage to himself and his family in joining the collective farms, who distrusted his neighbors, either their integrity, their intelligence or their willingness to work, who habitually and by years of hard labor had learned to rely on his own efforts and to take for himself what he could lay hands upon, fought hard and lost. The peasant who caught the vision of a new political economy and a new society, who recognized the individual weakness of himself and his neighbors, who decided that one might better trust one's neighbors than the unkind Russian elements, fought equally hard; and with the fervor of a new faith, he won. (Susan M. Kingsbury and Mildred Fairchild: *Factory, Family, and***

*Woman in the Soviet Union*, Putnam, 1935, p. 129).

The greatest weakness in the collectivizations was not the amount of state violence directed against the right-wingers. The main error lay within the collectivization process itself: socialism, by definition, perpetuated wages, material incentives, and therefore capitalist class relations. But large sections of the peasantry had shown their readiness to act upon the communist concept of equality and upon political incentives. Once again, the very limitations of the line, of the party, and of socialism itself, inevitably fostered new capitalist forms from within. These, and not the justifiable, necessary violence of the proletarian dictatorship against its class enemies, was the new society's Achilles heel.

---

**DEFENSE OF THE  
REVOLUTION IS  
"UNCIVILIZED  
TERROR"  
SAY THE  
CAPITALISTS**

---

The second article of faith on which the anti-Stalin demonology rests is the supposed "reign of terror" that the Soviet Com-

unist Party launched to “trample democratic opposition” during the so-called “Purge Trials” of 1936-8. According to this legend, those whom Stalin executed or imprisoned during the course of these trials were lambs led to the slaughter by a blood-thirsty, paranoid megalomaniac unwilling to tolerate legitimate dissent.

The bourgeois scholar J. Arch Getty has shown that although the trials were extraordinary events, the *chistka*, or purge, (meaning literally a “cleaning”) was a standard routine of the Communist Party:

**The term “purge”...only applied to the periodic membership screenings of the ranks of the party. These membership operations were designed to weed the party of hangers-on, non-participants, drunken officials, and people with false identification papers, as well as ideological “enemies” or “aliens.” In the majority of purges, political crimes or deviations pertained to a minority of those expelled (The *Origins of the Great Purges*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p. 38).**

Getty goes on to show that at the height of the “Ezhovshchina” (so-called “Great Terror”), relatively few party members were expelled: 100,000 in 1937 (five percent) and 70,000 in 1938 (two percent). He makes the obligatory lament about the “savagery”

of the repression but in the same breath proves that for a variety of reasons, very few people lost their lives relative to the number demoted or expelled.

So far as the purge trials themselves are concerned, the present author believes that, in reality, the defendants (Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Radek, et. al.) were guilty of serious right-wing deviations, of violating democratic centralism and of acting consciously to undermine or sabotage Soviet socialism. Historians can debate the accuracy of specific charges. Stalin and the CPSU leadership organized the trials in response to an anti-Soviet threat—both internal and external—that they perceived as urgent.

In any event, the anti-communists are not concerned with making communism work. Whether the trials were fair or unfair is not the real issue for them. “Fairness” is a smokescreen behind which they attack the right of the proletarian dictatorship to defend itself. This is the real point, which must be posed in class terms. Does capitalism alone have the “right” to bring the full might of the state apparatus to bear against its enemies? When workers seize power, are they wrong to repress capitalists and capitalist-roaders

or deal ruthlessly with fascists who want to restore the most brutal forms of exploitation? The answer is as old as the hills: whose side are you on?

If our own party held power, we would face a similar choice. In a vacuum, one can hope to minimize violence against recalcitrant class forces. One can promise to maximize political struggle. Of course, given our line, we would try to win as many non-workers as possible to egalitarian communist principles. But communists are materialists. We try to understand reality. Reality in the U.S. today includes the Donald Trumps, the yuppies, the fancy lawyers, the Mercedes-driving doctors, the advertising executives, and assorted other parasites, as well as the ruling class and the died-in-the-wool loyalists of its state apparatus. These people number in the millions. Depending upon circumstances, some may be winnable to communism. Most are not. Some can be neutralized. Others will resist. The party and the working class will have to deal with them. Failure to do so with the vigor and ruthlessness required by circumstances would be tantamount to surrender. From a class standpoint, it would be criminal. Machine guns and jails are not the only tools work-

ers need to destroy capitalism, but they are indispensable.

Soviet history proves that proletarian democracy depends greatly upon the denial of democracy to the proletariat's enemies. As the "Purge Trials" got under way, the most democratic constitution in world history was proposed, debated, and adopted. The so-called "Stalin Constitution," drafted at the end of 1936 and ratified by an extraordinary Congress in 1938, between the Zinoviev and Radek trials, guaranteed each citizen the right to work, the right to rest, the right to education, the right to material security in old age and sickness. It granted women absolute legal and economic parity with men. It brought democracy to the workplace, by establishing the right and duty of workers to criticize supervisors and managers. It made all forms of racial oppression and hatred punishable by law.

True, this was socialist rather than communist democracy, fraught with socialism's basic contradiction, and therefore not fully realizable. Nonetheless, it was more sweeping and truer to the proletariat than any democracy that had preceded it. It brought millions of ordinary people into significant political activity. Above all, it was forged

in the crucible of a life and death struggle against the internal and external enemies of the working class state.

---

**'CIVILIZATION'**

---

**TURNED**

---

**TOPSY-TURVY:**

---

**WORKERS RULE**

---

**EX-BOSSSES WORK.**

---

Soviet socialism demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that workers could hold power and administer society. From the dawn of history, rulers had always jealously guarded the secrets of scientific and political knowledge. The priests of ancient Chaldea could predict eclipses five thousand years ago and used this knowledge to rule rather than serve: "The secret lore of the temple had become a tyranny, as must all knowledge when it ceases to become the common property of mankind" (Lancelot Hogben, *Mathematics for the Million*, Norton, New York, 1951, p. 44). The feudal kings ruled by "divine right" and made the acquisition of knowledge outside their church a capital crime. Bourgeois society invented pseudo-scientific racism, the fable of the biological

"superiority" of the wealthy, to vindicate capitalist dictatorship. All previous societies based on exploitation drew an absolute line between mental and manual labor, denying even the possibility that toilers could also lead.

Bolshevism rejected this obsolete fallacy and proved not only that workers could rule but that they could rule better than anyone. The Nazi "supermen" rolled over the Europe of plutocrats. The communists who defeated Hitler found their leadership among men and women of overwhelmingly proletarian and peasant origin. Stalin, whom George Bernard Shaw had called "the ablest statesman in Europe" as early as 1931 (cited in Kourasheff, *op. cit.*, p. 172) was the son of a Georgian cobbler. Kliment Voroshilov, Marshal of the Soviet Union, whose bravery and resourcefulness helped turn the tide at a crucial moment of the Civil War, was the son of a Ukrainian railroad watchman and a charwoman. He began working in the coal mines at the age of seven and taught himself to read when he was twelve. He became a metal worker at fifteen and a communist shortly thereafter.

Another Marshal, Semyon Timoshenko, was born to Bessarabian peasants. As a child,

he had to hire himself out to a wealthy landowner. He was drafted into the Russian Imperial Army. He beat up an abusive officer and was imprisoned. He joined the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution and distinguished himself rapidly in the Civil War, becoming a member of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee.

A third Marshal, Budyonny, came from a class background similar to Timoshenko's. He had worked as a farmhand, was conscripted into the Czar's army, and served in the cavalry. He had been illiterate before entering the army. He joined the Bolsheviks in February, 1917 and formed guerrilla bands after October. Budyonny organized the Red Army's first cavalry troops. The original band had six riders. It grew into an army and was known by World War II as the finest cavalry in the world. Budyonny had never seen the inside of a school until he enrolled at the age of forty-six in a course at the Moscow Military Academy.

These stories typified those of millions of Soviet men and women at all levels of military and civilian life. The children of illiterate workers or peasants, youngsters with little or no formal education, became revolutionaries and learned to lead

whatever had to be led, industry, farming, study, or **fighting**—sometimes simultaneously. The Soviet Union broke once and for all with the myth of workers' intellectual inferiority. We have already described the "Palaces of Culture" that enabled factory workers to become thinkers and leaders. The Red Army that smashed the Nazis had the highest political and cultural level of any army in the world. In 1930, it boasted eight thousand alcoves for study and recreation, eight hundred clubs with even better facilities, and ninety-seven Red Army houses lavishly provided with theaters, movie rooms, lecture halls, auditoriums, libraries, exhibit halls, and game rooms. This was only a beginning. By 1939, the alcoves (known as "Lenin Corners") had grown to 27,435, the clubs to 1,900, and the "palatial" Red Army Houses to 276 (Kourasheff, op. cit., pp. 60-1).

However, the basic contradiction of socialism affected the development of proletarian leadership as well as of everything else. To oppose communism, anti-communists have seized upon the "cult of the personality" and deliberately misinterpreted it. In this chapter of their demonology, the power-mad Stalin lusted for and de-

manded self-glorification. That the Soviet leadership fostered this personality cult is beyond doubt. Our Party criticized it publicly twenty years ago, in *Road to Revolution III*.

The cult, however, did not emanate from Stalin's wish to be venerated. By all first-hand accounts, he was a rather modest man whom lavish praise embarrassed or even disgusted. The cult grew out of a political decision inseparable from the capitalist aspects of socialism. Socialist theory reasoned that since the masses were too backward for advanced communist ideas, concessions to capitalist ideology and organization therefore became necessary. The preservation of wages, unity with the "better" bosses, and nationalism represented the major concessions. If the masses were too backward to reject these ideas, the judgment that their leaders had to think for them was therefore inescapable. The element of faith, a throwback to religion, thus entered the relationship between the Soviet working class and its leadership. Like socialism itself, the Stalin personality cult was deemed a necessary transitional phase that would eventually render itself superfluous.

If today we understand the error of such cults, our knowl-

edge is to a great extent based upon the practical experience of millions who built and defended Soviet socialism. This experience proved that no concept is too advanced for the working class to grasp and apply, that workers need no half-way house on the road to revolution, and that communist leaders do not have to disguise themselves as gurus.

The charlatans and cheerleaders of international capital point to the contemporary Soviet Union and China as proof that society cannot advance beyond capitalist relations. Gorbachev and Deng continue to call themselves communists and thereby promote widespread cynicism about the possibility of achieving revolutionary social equality. Genuine communists, who identify their interests with those of the working class, who see history objectively, who fear no truth, and who strive to analyze all phenomena scientifically, have a different view.

Soviet socialism during the Stalin period in many ways resembled the old Roman god Janus. Janus had two heads: one looked back toward the past; the other, forward toward the future. Socialism's backwardness eventually became primary and led to the post-revisionist Soviet Union whose rulers now seek world

domination for a new form of capitalism. On the other hand, socialism's revolutionary practice proved that communist workers can indeed, win and lead the world.

The Bolsheviks have two sets of descendants. On the right stand the **Khrushchevs**, the **Brezhnevs** and the **Gorbachevs**, as well as the entire motley crew who head up the contemporary

"China, Inc." On the left stand all those who believe that no amount of oppression or betrayal can ultimately prevent the day when

*The international working class*

*Shall be the human race.*

Our Party stands on the left.

**Join us.**

By A.T.

HELP US DISTRIBUTE THE COMMUNIST  
AND **CHALLENGE/DESAFIO**

SUBSCRIBE YOURSELF. GIVE A GIFT SUB.

I want a sub to **CHALLENGE/DESAFIO**

Individual Subscription Rate: \$10/year.

I want a sub to **THE COMMUNIST**

Individual Subscription Rate: \$12/year. Institutional Rate: \$24/year.

Mail My **Sub To:**

Address:

City:

State:

ZIP Code:

Country:

Mail My Gift Sub To:

Address:

City:

State:

ZIP Code:

Country:

Mail subscription form with **full** payment to:.

PROGRESSIVE **LABOR**, GPO **Box 808**, **Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202**