

# Stalin

***Stalin***

Pablo Miranda

***Stalin: Biographical Sketch***

Alejandro Ríos

***Stalin's Cult of Personality:  
Did It Really Exist and Was It Allowed?***

Alejandro Ríos

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## Presentation

70 years ago, Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhughashvili, Stalin, architect of the construction of socialism in the first proletarian state in the world, brilliant strategist who led the Soviet Red Army to victory over the Nazi-fascist beast in World War II, undisputed leader of the international communist movement, died. Despite the brutal campaign unleashed against him by imperialism, the international bourgeoisie, revisionism and Trotskyism in order to disfigure and hide the historical significance of his theoretical and practical work, Stalin's image remains high, inspiring the struggle of proletarian revolutionaries, workers, youth and the peoples of the world.

The material we put for your consideration contains works written by Pablo Miranda and Alejandro Ríos. *Stalin*, corresponds to a lecture given by Pablo Miranda in the Dominican Republic, at a symposium organized by the Communist Party of Labor of the Dominican Republic, in 2003; it was later published in issue No. 24 of the international journal *Unity and Struggle*, organ of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations, ICMLPO. *Stalin, Biographical Sketch* is the compilation of several articles published by Alejandro Ríos in the weekly *En Marcha* on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Stalin's death. We now incorporate a selection of three articles by the same author, written in 2012, on Stalin's alleged cult of personality.

### **Editions of the Ecuadorian Revolution**

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*Pablo Miranda*

# Stalin

During his life, Comrade Stalin aroused the admiration and affection of the working class and all the peoples of the vast Soviet Union, as well as the respect and friendship of the workers of the five continents, the fervor and enthusiasm of the communists of all countries and, of course, the hatred of the reactionaries, of the imperialists and bourgeoisie who felt deeply wounded by the colossal achievements of the Soviet Union, by the great economic, cultural, technological and scientific feats of the workers and socialist intelligentsia, by the great and resounding triumphs of the revolution and socialism, of the communists.

In that conspiracy against Stalin in whose name communism was fought, Nazi propaganda stood out for its slander and persistence, which did not let a day go by without launching its disastrous diatribes.

Of course, this counterrevolutionary and anti-communist hatred also characterized Trotsky and his followers.

Shortly after Stalin's death, the voices of the "communists" who had acceded to the leadership of the Soviet Party and State joined the chorus of reactionaries and anti-communists from all countries who had always reviled Stalin.

From then until today, anti-Stalinism is the recurring voice of all reactionaries, ideologues of the bourgeoisie, Trotskyists, revisionists and opportunists of all colors.

By attacking Stalin, they want to undermine the extraordinary achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union and in what was the socialist camp, they want to minimize and even ignore the great contributions of the Red Army and the Soviet peoples in the decisive struggle against Nazism, they try to denigrate the Communist Party and the socialist system as totalitarian, as a negation of freedom and democracy. In the name of Stalin, they are attacking Lenin, Marx and socialism. To denigrate Stalin as a bureaucrat and bloodthirsty means to attack the dictatorship of the proletariat and with it to disavow the freedom of the workers and the peoples, socialist democracy. To slander Stalin as ignorant and mediocre is to ignore his great contributions to revolutionary theory, to Marxism-Leninism.

To attack Stalin means to deny the necessity of the existence and struggle of the Communist Party, to transform it into a movement of free-thinkers and anarcho-syndicalists, to take away from it its Leninist essence, democratic centralism. The height of anti-Stalinism is to label as Stalinists those who betrayed the revolution and socialism in the name of putting an end to “Stalin’s crimes” and making the Soviet Union a “democratic country”. The stupidity of the reactionaries and opportunists does not allow them to recognize that Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin, avowed anti-Stalinists, destroyed stone after stone the great work of the Soviet working class and peoples, of the communists, of Lenin and Stalin.

The attacks on Stalin are of such magnitude that even a significant number of social fighters, leftists and revolutionaries have fallen victim to their lies. Fundamentally, these are sincere people, interested in social and national liberation, who are unaware of Stalin’s personality and work and that is why they join some of these distortions. They are also some petty-bourgeois revolutionaries who attack Stalin from supposedly “humanist” positions.

It is up to us communists today to defend the revolutionary truth about Stalin, and it is intimately incumbent on us since we are his comrades, his successors.

The Great October Socialist Revolution was one of the great epics of humanity. The workers and peoples of the largest country on earth stood up, undertook a long revolutionary process, led by the Bolshevik Party that led them to victory in October 1917. That grandiose feat of the workers and peasants, of the soldiers and the intelligentsia, was a winding, complex process, full of setbacks and advances.

The proletarian revolution that shattered the empire of the tsars was inconceivable without the enlightening guidance of Marxism, which stood as the doctrine of the emancipation of the working class; inconceivable without the efforts of the Russian communists, mainly Lenin, for its creative application in the social, economic, cultural, historical and political conditions of old Russia; without the construction, existence and struggle of the Bolshevik Party; without the decisive participation of the working class and the millions of poor peasants; without the social and political mobilization of the great masses; without the existence and combat of the Red Army; and, without the important contribution of the international working class.



Several decades of strikes and street fights; the use of parliamentary struggle and the participation of communists in the Duma; the ideological and political struggle against the bourgeoisie and the tsarist autocracy; the organization of the Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers; the great theoretical and political debate against opportunism within the party that would lead to the defeat of the Menshevik theses and proposals and the formation of the Bolshevik party governed by democratic centralism; the fiery battles against social chauvinism and social pacifism on an international scale; the profuse and fruitful propagandist activity of the communists; the struggle to win ideological and political hegemony within the Soviets; the revolution of 1905 and its lessons; the revolution of February 1917, its results and consequences; the great armed insurrection of October; the Brest-Litovsk peace agreements; the revolutionary civil war; the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constitute the most salient features and characteristics of the struggle for power of the Russian communists, organized in the Bolshevik Party.

Among the outstanding leaders of the Bolshevik Communist Party, for their theoretical and political work, for their practical work in the leadership of the Party and the revolutionary process, Lenin and Stalin stand out.

Stalin was born in Gori, a small town near Tbilisi, in Georgia, on December 21, 1879. His father was a shoemaker, the son of serfs, and his mother, a servant, also the daughter of serfs.

He joined the ranks of the party in 1898, when he was 19 years old, and from then on his life, thoughts, dreams, and intellectual and physical effort were devoted to the cause of communism, to the struggle for revolution and socialism.

Until March 1917, when he came to Petrograd and joined the leadership of *Pravda*, Stalin was and continued to be an indefatigable organizer of trade unions and the party, of mobilizations and strikes, of newspapers and magazines, a scholar of Marxism and author of various documents and proposals; he was in prison and exile, in congresses and party conferences. He was a fighter and a leader of the revolution.

The revolutionary period opened by the February Revolution was the scene of great ideological and political confrontations against the bourgeoisie and the imperialists, but also against the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, as well as within the party. The whole process of winning the majority of the Soviets for the policy

of the Bolsheviks had in Stalin a great leader and organizer. The preparation of the insurrection, the technical and military contacts and preparations and also the debate in the leadership of the Bolshevik party found Stalin in a leading role; he was a great comrade of Lenin in all aspects of political work.

Stalin was part of the first Soviet government as People's Commissar for Nationalities and the Peoples and participated directly in the revolutionary civil war in his capacity as Commissar and Commander on several fronts; this demonstrates his military and political capacity in the forging and consolidation of the young Soviet power and in the strengthening of the Red Army. He was one of the most prominent leaders of the party, the government and the army.

In 1921, by decision of the Party and together with Lenin, he actively participated in the foundation of the Third or Communist International, which was to play a great role in the organization and leadership of the revolution on an international scale.

A great task that the proletarian revolution assumed was the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which meant, in concrete terms, the application of the Party's line with respect to nationalities and peoples. That "prison-house of peoples" that was the empire of the tsars became a community of nations, nationalities and peoples, governed by socialism, which postulated the defense and development of national cultures, their inclusion in the formation of the new society.

The responsibilities he assumed, his dedication and self-denial in their fulfillment, his theoretical ability made Stalin General Secretary of the Party in 1922. When Lenin died in 1924, the Political Bureau of the Party appointed Stalin as the main leader of the party.

The Communist Party (Bolshevik), under the leadership of Stalin, faithful to the Leninist legacy, during the 1920s promoted the New Economic Policy (NEP) and in the midst of great difficulties, relying on the mobilization of the working class and the peasantry, overcoming the blockade, sabotage and resistance of the defeated reactionary classes and the strength of individual capitalism that emerged in the peasant economy, it managed to overcome the disastrous material situation. The economic and social crisis in which Russia had been left after the civil war, reduced to 14 percent of pre-war production, and was expressed in widespread famine and the profusion of diseases.

In this period, a bitter ideological and political battle was waged

within the party between the Bolsheviks and the so-called “left communists,” who sought to “export the revolution” and place the burden of the economy on the peasantry, liquidating it as an ally of the proletariat.

In 1929, the NEP was ended and the accelerated collectivization of the countryside began, the great battle against the kulaks who sought to reverse the revolutionary process in the countryside.

In 1930, the process of large-scale industrialization was promoted with great material efforts and supported by the mobilization of the working class. It was a great feat which required great investment and consequently limited the possibilities for the well-being of the great masses of workers and peasants. In spite of this, the revolutionary fervor and enthusiasm allowed them to meet and even exceed the goals.

In the West it was the epoch of the Great Depression; in the country of the Soviets it was the time of the victorious construction of socialism. The Soviet Union becomes the second economic and commercial power in the world, after the United States. For eleven years, between 1930 and 1940 the USSR had an average growth in industrial production of 16.5%.

A good part of socialist accumulation had to be invested in the defense and security of the Soviet Union, which had to face the arms race in which all the capitalist countries of Europe, the United States and Japan were engaged.

By 1938-39 the specter of imperialist war loomed over Europe and the world. The German Nazis, the Italian fascists and the Japanese reactionaries advanced rapidly in the formation of the Axis. The Western powers led by the Anglo-French alliance were working hard to conclude a pact with Germany in order to incite it to direct its attacks against the Soviet Union, in order to liquidate the Communists, wear down the Germans and enter the war in better conditions. It was a twisting and cunning diplomatic game that handed over the Sudeetenland region and then all of Czechoslovakia to the Germans.

The Soviet Union was a developing economic and military power, but its military capacity was far inferior to that of Germany, France, England and the United States. It was surrounded by powerful enemies and required material resources and time to prepare for the eventual war that was announced with cannons and planes.

The Soviet Union needed to integrate diplomacy and international politics with industrial development and military power. This

circumstance forced the communists to devote a large amount of material resources in that direction, but also to look for diplomatic alternatives that would allow them to defend themselves.

Several international meetings, endless proposals and projects were discussed in the foreign ministries. The Soviet Union was unable to form an alliance against Nazism, because the main interest of the Western powers was aimed at it. Under these conditions and in its defense, the Molotov-Von Ribbentrop Pact of “non-aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union” was signed in August 1939.

This international treaty gave the Soviet Union precious time to boost its military industry. Using great material resources and the will of the peoples, in a short time it was able to build aircraft, tanks, cannons, weapons and ammunition in large quantities and simultaneously to transfer the main part of the industry located in European Russia to the East, behind the Ural Mountains.

World War II broke out in 1939. The Germans invaded Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, the Balkans, France, Belgium and the Netherlands and using the tactic of “blitzkrieg”, lightning war, in a few weeks it destroyed the armies of those countries and imposed puppet governments.

By the time of the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the Germans did not have the military capacity to apply and win the blitzkrieg; they ran into the Resistance of the Red Army, the guerrillas and the great masses of workers and peasants who defended their socialist homeland. The Red Army put up fierce resistance and ceded space to the Nazi troops, forcing them to penetrate the vast territory, filled with guerrillas who persistently harassed them. They could not take Leningrad and even less Moscow. A great battle was fought at Stalingrad, street by street, house by house, man by man. The Soviets resisted and then took the initiative and defeated the German army. Thus began the beginning of the end of the fascist beast.

The Red Army undertook the reconquest of the territories occupied by the Nazis and advanced victoriously through the mountains and plains of Europe, contributing to the liberation of several of the countries of Eastern Europe, as far as Berlin, which was taken on May 9, 1945.

This great victory of the Soviet Union was the result of the strength of socialism, of the unity and will to action of the working class and peoples, of the courage of the Red Army, but it was also the consequence of the diplomatic, political and military genius of the

General Staff and the leadership of the Soviet Party and Government led by Stalin.

At the end of the war, there was the victory of the revolution in several countries of Europe that built systems of People's Democracy, the triumph of the revolution in other countries of Asia, and the Soviet Union emerged as a great economic and military power that aroused the affection and respect of the workers and peoples of the world, of patriots and democrats, of revolutionaries and especially of communists. The defeat of fascism had the Soviet Union, the Communist Party and Stalin as its great protagonists.

The Great Patriotic War meant great human and material sacrifices for the Proletarian State. The victory achieved was built on the great spiritual heritage of socialism that sheltered the workers and peoples of the USSR; it was possible because of the great patriotic sentiments that the Communist Party was able to instill in the body and mind of the Soviet peoples, because of the deep affection of the workers for Soviet power, because of the brave and courageous contribution of the communists who put all their abilities and energy into the defense of socialism. The Soviet Union's losses in World War II exceeded 20 million people, of whom a little more than 3 million were courageous members of the Bolshevik Party. The party gave its best men to the war, it lost invaluable political and military cadres, but it also tempered Bolshevik steel even more; at the end of the war it had more than 5 million new members.

In Yalta and Tehran, at the peace negotiations, the workers and peoples of the world had a great representative, Comrade Stalin, who knew how, with wisdom, prudence and aplomb, to vindicate the rights of the peoples and countries that were victims of war and fascism, to contribute to the establishment of agreements and open the way to new levels of democracy and freedom in the world.

The Second World War was the prelude to the national liberation of dozens of countries on the five continents that won their independence by breaking the old colonial order. The Soviet Union led by Stalin was always the safe and reliable rearguard of that great liberation movement.

In the camp of revolution, the victories achieved in Albania and other countries of Eastern Europe, in China, Korea and Viet Nam led, to the formation of the powerful socialist camp. A quarter of the population that inhabited a third of the planet's surface was building socialism and had in the Soviet Union, led by Stalin, an illuminating

example and unreserved support. In the rest of the world, the working class, the peasantry, the youth and progressive intelligentsia saw with certainty and confidence the socialist future of humanity.

The end of the Second World War established a new order of things in the realm of capitalism. The United States emerged as the world's leading power and hegemonized the capitalist countries.

A new contradiction arose in the international arena: the one between the old world of capital and the new world of socialism. Bourgeois ideologues and politicians baptized it as the "cold war", alluding to the antagonism of the dispute.

Once again, the superiority of socialism became evident. In the Soviet Union, but also in the other countries of the socialist camp, culture and the well-being of the masses, science and technology, the social and material progress of the workers and peoples flourished. The atomic bomb was built in 1949 and in 1957 the USSR began the space race, taking the lead.

Neocolonialism, a form of imperialist domination that emerged after the independence of dependent nations and countries, always found a counterweight in the Soviet Union led by Stalin. The peoples of the former colonies always had a loyal friend.

In a few years, from 1917 to the early 1950s, the proletarians, led by the communists organized in the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Stalin, built the dreams of a new world, the world of socialism. They built it in the essentials, many things were lacking, some failed, but humanity never knew a broader and truer democracy; never before could the multitudes have access to social and material well-being, to equality among their peers. This was proletarian democracy.

It was an epic of the workers and the peoples, the concretization in life of the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism, the gigantic effort of the communists, the serene and intrepid work of the leaders, of Lenin and Stalin.

When we speak of Stalin we refer to the leader, the organizer, the Chief, the comrade and friend, in reality one of the great builders of the new man, of the new humanity.

This significance of Stalin cannot be understood without discovering and learning from his extraordinary theoretical work.

From the beginning of his communist militancy, he was characterized by correctly appraising the role of theory in the process of organizing and making the revolution. He studied the Marxist materials he had at hand, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the works

of Plekhanov. Soon he began to know Lenin, his writings and directives, in his capacity as an organizer and leader of the communists, until he met him physically at one of the party events, from which time a great friendship emerged, affirmed in militancy and the great community of opinions and concerns. Stalin was also a great reader of Russian literature, a man of vast culture, who grew daily, throughout his life.

How can we fail to keep in mind in the training of communists of all countries his most outstanding works: *Anarchism or Socialism?*, *Marxism and the National Question*, *On the National Question*, *The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists*, *The Foundations of Leninism*, *Problems of Leninism*, *Trotskyism or Leninism?*, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, *Marxism and Linguistics*, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, the Reports to the Congresses of the Communist Party.

Stalin was a theoretician of the revolution, a Marxist who recreated and developed revolutionary theory in order to respond to the problems posed by the revolution. He was not a theoretician who speculated with knowledge in the attempt to arouse ideas and proposals. No, his theoretical work deals with burning questions concerning the development of the class struggle, the problems facing the party, the trade unions, the state and the revolution on an international scale.

The depth of his writings is not at odds with the simple way of making them known. Stalin was rigorous in theoretical analysis, his notes are valid, they constitute a true guide for action, as he himself pointed out referring to Marxism, but, in addition, he is simple, easy to understand.

Stalin's detractors insist on some issues that should be analyzed. All of them: the self-confessed reactionaries of anti-communism, the Trotskyists, the revisionists and the opportunists of all stripes coincide mainly on the following charges: intellectual mediocrity, Lenin's testament that supposedly condemned him, the building of socialism in one country, the forced collectivization, the bureaucratism of the party and state, the extermination of the Bolshevik old guard, the great purges, his tyrannical and bloodthirsty character, the forced industrialization, his incompetence in war, the cult of personality.

Regarding Stalin's intellectual mediocrity, the facts, history and its vicissitudes speak emphatically. The October Revolution, the

building of socialism in a large country and for the first time in the history of humanity, his skill in leading the party, the working class and peoples of the USSR, his great feat of forging a new world would not have been possible with a mediocre, intellectually poor leader. These diatribes fall under their own weight. Trotsky, who pretended to be a great theoretician and man of culture and who was one of the detractors in this field, was precisely defeated in theory and in practice, by someone who, according to him, was mediocre.

In relation to the so-called “Lenin’s Testament” a great deal of nonsense has been written, such as that Trotsky was the one anointed by Lenin to replace him as head of the Party, or that these notes of Lenin had been hidden from the Central Committee. We will say that Lenin’s health was very weak by the time he was supposed to have written the famous “testament”, his understanding was undermined by the complaints of his mate. However, Lenin had enough revolutionary political culture, enough Bolshevik training to understand that he could not draw up a testament, a last will; He also knew that a leader, whatever his rank, can only give opinions, not orders, in the collective. For these reasons, Lenin’s notes must be understood as opinions which, moreover, were out of the context of the daily life of the leadership of the Party and the State and in no way as provisions to be observed without question. On the other hand, it is completely false that these notes were hidden from the Central Committee; it knew them and discussed them. The results were known, Stalin was elected Primary Leader of the Bolshevik Party and that was a just and correct decision. The facts, history reliably demonstrate this. The one supposedly anointed by Lenin to be leader of the party, Trotsky, was placed by life and the revolutionary struggle in the dustbin of the counterrevolution.

The Leninist thesis of the building of socialism in one country took into account the uneven development of capitalism and as a consequence the various stages of the class struggle. This situation made it possible to break the chain of imperialism at its weakest link, old Russia. Stalin was the continuator of this Leninist Line. Relying on the workers and peasants, on the great spiritual and material reserves of the Soviet peoples, he built up this great feat, defended the revolution and overthrew the detractors of this thesis. Those who raised the impossibility of building socialism in the USSR until the revolution triumphed in the capitalist countries of Europe and branded the peasants as reactionaries and counterrevolutionaries ran into a stone wall.



The USSR developed and so far there was no revolution in any of the capitalist countries of Europe.

On the forced collectivization of the countryside, Stalin's detractors state that "the will of the peasantry was violated, the agrarian economy was destroyed and the social base of the revolution constituted by the middle and rich peasantry, the kulaks, was eliminated." The facts are diametrically different. The forced necessity of the NEP in the countryside naturally developed the rural bourgeoisie and dispossessed millions of poor peasants from their land, and deprived the population of grains. Taking up Marxism-Leninism and taking into account social reality, the Party set out to bring socialism to the countryside. Relying on the millions of poor peasants, a great social and political movement was promoted for the formation of the Cooperatives, the Kolkhozes. This meant the expropriation of the kulaks, in some cases popular trials and drastic sanctions. The international reaction spoke of repression and massacres. In reality, it was the socialist revolution in the countryside, the work of millions of poor peasants who assumed their role as protagonists in the life of the country of the Soviets. And, as we know, a revolution unleashes the initiatives and achievements of the masses, but also the fury of their enemies. As a result, agriculture and livestock flourished, the USSR became the main wheat-producing country, the mechanization and technification of agriculture reached unprecedented levels on an international scale.

It is a recurrent proposal to accuse Stalin of the bureaucratism that was certainly spreading in the party and State. Stalin was never a bureaucrat at any time in his life; on the contrary, his dynamism was always expressed in direct contact with the base of the party and with the masses; he himself was one of the leaders of the Soviets before the revolution. All his life he was in action.

Bureaucratism is a social phenomenon, a degeneration that arose in the bourgeois administration (remember that a good part of the Bolshevik administration had to resort to the old tsarist functionaries) that penetrated the revolutionary ranks, within the party and in the heart of the state. Bureaucratism, in fact, existed in the life of the Socialist State; it infected not a few militants and leaders. The responsibilities of power were transformed, in a few cases, into small and large perks that created a caste of bureaucrats who hindered the functioning of the party and the state administration, who separated the party from the masses.

Stalin did not encourage bureaucratism, but he did not have the ability or the experience to eradicate it. Several attempts of an ideological nature aimed at eradicating it followed, precisely, at Stalin's initiative. Political education, ideological struggle, the validity of democracy in the party, party elections, were all expressions of the struggle of the communists against bureaucratism. They cannot be dismissed as useless. They yielded results, they allowed, among other things, the upward course of the social and material achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the ideological, political and organizational purification of the party and the state, the isolation and expulsion of various groups of opportunists and traitors. But, in fact, they did not succeed in eradicating bureaucratism and opportunism. A number of opportunists and traitors dodged the ideological struggle and evaded it. They would return later, after Stalin's death.

It is clear that bureaucratism is an ideological excrescence that is persistently reborn and an incessant struggle against it is necessary to the end. Stalin did not promote bureaucratism; rather he was one of its victims.

The accusation of being a dictator, a despot and bloodthirsty foisted on Stalin alludes to ideological purification, to the revolutionary repression of counterrevolutionary outbreaks in the city and countryside, to the alleged extermination of the Bolshevik old guard.

It is necessary to understand that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a wedding party in which everything is rosy. No, quite the opposite. Against the dictatorship of the proletariat a whole armed, economic, commercial boycott, a campaign of ideological and political penetration by imperialism and the international bourgeoisie was orchestrated. In opposition to the new power of the workers, from the heart of society, the old ruling classes that had been overthrown by the revolution but not physically eliminated, unleashed again and again acts of sabotage, and attempted, not infrequently, to organize mutinies and uprisings, using mercenaries and deceived men and women of the people; they relied on religion and the popes, on feudal traditions, on liberal elements of the administration and on some occasions they infiltrated their agents into the Soviet party and state.

Within the party itself, in the new state and in the Red Army, decomposed elements appeared again and again, attacking the dictatorship of the proletariat in theory and practice, trying to divert the party, to assume its leadership, to organize coups d'état. Some of these elements had been in the past prominent militants and leaders

of the party and of the revolution and, for that very reason, they tried to take advantage of their positions to change the course of socialism.

The struggle to preserve and defend the Party's line, its ideological, political and organizational unity, was bitter and persistent; time and again, the counter-revolution intensified its attacks and, during Stalin's lifetime, it was again and again defeated by the force of reason, by the firmness of the Bolsheviks, by the support of the rank and file of the party and the army, by the connection with the masses of workers and peasants.

In fact, the Bolshevik old guard, those comrades who dreamed of and began the Great October Revolution, were left behind. Some fell in the fight for the revolution, others were killed by the counter-revolution. Others paid the physical tribute of their life. Some survived Stalin.

The old Bolsheviks, the veteran communists, knew how to face responsibilities; they learned how to solve, on the fly, unknown problems and questions; they put themselves at the forefront of the great feat of building socialism, and they were called "old Bolsheviks" not because of their condition of being old but because of their qualities, because of their militant and permanent adherence to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, for their quality as communist cadres and fighters.

The struggle against the opportunist factions within the Party and the State were real battles that put the Party, all its members, in tension; they were a manifestation of the proletarian steadfastness of Stalin and his comrades-in-arms; they produced one victory after another, which made it possible to guarantee the life of the Soviet State, the building of socialism and the continuation of the revolution.

Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin were the main leaders of the counter-revolution who were confronted and defeated, in theory and in practice, by the material and political achievements, by the correct policy of the party leadership, headed by Stalin.

The black legend of labor camps, of confinement, of psychiatric hospitals, of prisons overcrowded with workers and communists, of mass shootings and mass graves are nothing but infamous slanders of reactionaries and imperialism, of Nazis and Social Democracy, of Trotskyists and revisionists, of opportunists. They have not been proven by any archives and even less by the existence of concentration camps and mass graves. They fall under their own weight.

Much has been said about Stalin's incompetence in the conduct of the war. Nothing is farther from the truth. In fact, Stalin was not a

military man by training; he did not study in any academy and one could not consider him to be a master of the military arts, to have exhaustive knowledge of weapons and military strategy and tactics. But it is clear that he was a proletarian revolutionary soldier who learned this art in the very course of the revolutionary civil war in the first years of Soviet power, who was forged as such in the difficult years of the building of socialism and who played a leading role in the conduct of the Great Patriotic War, in the resistance against the invading Nazi hordes and in the great political and military offensive that led the Red Army to the capture of Berlin. No one has pretended that Stalin was a great military leader; all revolutionaries recognize him as the leader of the Soviet proletariat and people, the political leader of the international proletariat, the proletarian revolutionary, the communist.

The accusations that Stalin promoted and used for his prestige all the mass of flattery and exaggerations that has been called the “cult of personality” are nothing more than part of the anti-communist arsenal.

In fact, Stalin received daily praise and tributes from his comrades and friends, from the workers and peasants who carried them out from the heart, expressing gratitude and appreciation. The flattery of the opportunists who aspired to favors also existed. The first manifestations were sincere, the product of the generous spirit of the workers and the people, the second had a double intent, based on the facts; they intended to elevate Stalin above themselves, above events and in this way, to personally take advantage of that situation.

The cult of personality was, in fact, a defect of the first experience in the building of socialism. It began with good intentions, but eventually degenerated, harming Soviet power and Stalin himself. This is an uncontestable question. But there is a great distance to maintaining that Stalin himself encouraged these campaigns, that he became an egomaniac, a narcissist, the same distance that exists between truth and lies.

Many pages and books can be written about Stalin. In fact, there are thousands of publications about his life and work. There are those of his comrades and friends, as well as of his enemies and detractors. In reality, Stalin’s life is the very life of the first proletarian revolution. Stalin did not make the revolution to his measure, the revolution highlighted in Stalin one of its best sons and leaders.

Ecuador, 2003.

*Alejandro Ríos*

## **STALIN: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **His Early Years**

Tsarist Russia at the end of the 19th century was one of the most backward countries in Europe, whose population, mostly peasants and illiterate, lived in extremely difficult conditions. Its economy was dominated by a system of serfdom at the service of the tsar and the noble landowners, which was also based on a police system in charge of defending the exploitation exercised by the landowners and capitalists. The workers and peasants lacked the most elementary political rights; the tsarist autocracy was their worst enemy. After the abolition of serfdom (1861) there was a fairly rapid industrial development, which clashed with the residues of the feudal system. In the 1880s, workers had a working day of no less than 12 hours; children, like women, worked the same hours, but with lower wages.

Moreover, Tsarist Russia was a veritable prison of the peoples. Its territory was inhabited by numerous non-Russian nationalities, deprived of rights and subjected to all kinds of outrages and humiliations. The tsarist autocracy inculcated the idea that the peoples of other nationalities were “inferior races”, deserving of hatred and contempt; it consciously aroused national discords and stirred up some peoples against others. Needless to say, it made every effort to smother the culture of these peoples and sought to “Russify” non-Russian nationalities by force. Russian was the only language recognized in all institutions; it was forbidden to publish books and newspapers or to teach in schools in the mother tongues.

These circumstances fed the desire of the working class and peoples to achieve a system of freedom. The Russian workers’ movement led the first strikes in the 1870s and ‘80s, giving rise to the first workers’ organizations, which were the object of violent tsarist repression. The first Marxist groups also emerged, which were preceded by populist groupings that caused great damage to the revolutionary movement. The first Marxist group was created in 1883 by George Plekhanov and took the name of “Emancipation of Labor”, developing an intense activity to spread the ideas of Marx and Engels

in Russia. However, in Lenin's words, this group "*only laid the theoretical foundations of Social Democracy and took the first step to build the workers' movement.*" It was precisely Lenin who fulfilled the mission of merging Marxism with the workers' movement and built the political vanguard of the proletariat, the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia.

### **In Tbilisi, Georgia**

That was the scene when Joseph Vissarionovich Dzugashvili (Stalin) came into the world on December 21, 1879, in the city of Gori, Tbilisi province. Stalin was Georgian, one of the oppressed nationalities in Russia.

His childhood friends, with whom he played happily in the fields near the small town or inside his room with a brick floor, that had just one small window that barely let in light, could never have imagined that this humble dwelling sheltered one of the greatest political strategists in the world, a teacher of the international proletariat.

Stalin's father, Vissarion Dzugashvili, was a freed former serf, who moved to Tbilisi to work in a leather factory. His mother, Ekaterina Geladze, was also a serf. While his father remained in Gori he opened a shoe workshop. The marriage produced several children, but only Stalin reached adulthood.

At the age of 14 he entered the seminary of Tbilisi, an institution that prepared people for the priesthood and that – according to Stalin himself – was a nest of espionage and pettiness. It is there that his inclinations for socialist ideas emerge. Despite the rigorous control that existed in the seminary, he always looked for a way and time to read forbidden works, Marxist literature. A tireless reader, a quality that he instilled in his companions, he accumulated a vast knowledge that served him enormously for his revolutionary work. In the first years of his conspiratorial activity we see him forming study circles with the workers, whom he instructed in various subjects, from those related to literature, economics or physics.

At the seminar he joined a Marxist circle called *Messame Dasi* (Third Group), a name adopted to differentiate itself from previous groups of a liberal and populist nature. It was made up of students and workers who analyzed and propagandized Marxism. However, its main leaders were not willing to carry out open political action that would encourage the confrontation of the workers against their oppressors and the regime in general. Stalin was against the dominant

line and soon found himself on the left wing of the group.

In 1899, at the age of 18, he was expelled from the seminary for his links with illegal activities. From then on, Stalin devoted himself entirely to revolutionary activity, much of it under conditions of absolute secrecy.

### **At the Beginning of the Party**

When Stalin joined the *Messame Dasi* group, he raised the need to publish a clandestine newspaper that would serve as an instrument for open political agitation among the workers, which a legal newspaper such as the one supported by that group could not do. The proposal also established the need to move from internal study to intense activity among the workers, in order to mobilize the masses against the tsarist government.

The first attempts to produce the clandestine newspaper, organized between 1898 and 1900, failed; however, they carried out intense political propaganda in the factories with leaflets calling for combat. This was unprecedented and even more so the first mobilization organized on May 1, 1900. The marchers carried red flags and portraits of Marx and Engels, where Stalin gave his first political speech in public.

In 1901 Viktor Kurnatovsky arrived in Tbilisi with the mission of finding support for Lenin's initiative to create an illegal party, which could ideologically and politically unify the Russian Social Democrats and build the party of the proletariat. Kurnatovsky made contact with the group led by Stalin. The long-awaited newspaper required a clandestine printing press that was established in Baku, an important industrial center. The printing press, known as "Nina," printed the newspaper *Brdzola* (The Struggle) in Georgian, reproduced the *Iskra*, a newspaper published by Lenin abroad, and also published manifestos, leaflets, works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other revolutionary materials.

The printing press played an important role; its publications were distributed throughout Russian territory, so the tsarist police directed its investigations to St. Petersburg in order to locate it. Lado Ketskhoveli, who was in charge of the printing press, was arrested in 1902 and tortured to obtain information about it. Given his refusal, he was shot dead in August 1903. The "Nina" continued to operate for years.

In 1901, sent by the Tbilisi Committee, Stalin went to Batum, a small but important industrial center with several refineries, bottling

plants, and tobacco manufactures. In a short time, the structure of the Party grew, created a small clandestine printing press, carried out intense political propaganda, organized several workers' strikes and extended the organization to the countryside. The workers' struggle gained strength in that period and the repression intensified. On April 5, 1902, Stalin was arrested.

He remained imprisoned in Batum for a year, until he was transferred to the Kutais prison, one of the most terrible in Russia. He was then sentenced to exile in Novaya Uda, Siberia. However, in January 1904 he fled confinement, as he would do on several more occasions in the future. Soon he was seen again in Batum and Tbilisi.

During the period of his exile, two very important events took place. In July 1903, the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia, the RSDLP, met, which, under Lenin's plans, was to mark the beginning of a new revolutionary party. In the course of the congress, opposing positions were shown regarding its system of organization. There was a division between the Mensheviks (characterized by their opportunist policies, including Martov and Trotsky) and the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin. On his return from Siberia, and on learning of the events of the Congress of the RSDLP, Stalin took a decisive position on the side of the Bolsheviks.

While he remained in prison (1903) the First Congress of the Social Democratic Organizations of the Caucasus also took place, at which he was elected a member of the Committee. In November 1901 he was already elected to the Tbilisi Committee at the Conference of the Social-Democratic Organization of that region.

### **In the Prelude to the Revolution of 1905**

Until 1907, Stalin carried out his revolutionary activity mainly in the region of Tbilisi (Caucasus). After the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia (July 1903), which culminated in its division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the task was set to win the entire structure and the working class to revolutionary positions, towards Bolshevism headed by Lenin.

The intense work carried out throughout the Transcaucasian region obtained positive results; it was not an easy task, because, at the same time as combating the tsarist regime, it was necessary to isolate from the mass movement the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the anarchists who with their pernicious influence were doing serious damage to the revolutionary movement.



On this level, Stalin's works covered aspects related to the organizational problems of the Party, the leading role that the working class must play in the democratic revolution, the Marxist analysis of the national question, the armed insurrection as a path that the proletariat must follow for the seizure of power, the philosophical foundations of Marxism-Leninism. In short, his contribution to the theoretical development of Marxism-Leninism was complete.

As he did earlier for the politicization of the working class, Stalin devoted great efforts to propaganda action. He organized legal and clandestine newspapers, published leaflets and proclamations, books and Marxist texts for which he installed a new clandestine printing press, this time in Avlabari.

From a newspaper article that appeared in a bourgeois newspaper of the time (1906), which recounted the discovery of the printing press by the police, we can learn about the conditions in which it operated. The note reads as follows: *"... in an isolated and uninhabited house... a well about 20 meters deep has been found in the courtyard, which is lowered by means of a pulley. At the bottom of the well, through a gallery, about 14 meters deep, you can pass to another well, in which there is a ladder about 10 meters high. The staircase leads to a second basement, located below the first basement of the house. A complete printing press has been discovered there... The printing press was lit with acetylene lamps and had a system of electric signals... the objects found in the printing press have been transported in five carts"*.

In that period, and specifically in 1904, Stalin led the Baku workers' strike, which lasted from December 13 to 31 and ended – for the first time in the history of the workers' movement in Russia – with the signing of a collective agreement with the bosses of the oil industry. This event marked the beginning of a revolutionary upsurge in Transcaucasia and had great significance in the workers' movement throughout Russia. This strike was, on the eve of the great revolutionary storm, like the lightning that precedes the storm, shown in the History of the CP(b) of the USSR. Under these conditions, the working masses went to the first revolution of 1905, guided by the slogans of the Bolsheviks.

### **His Personal Encounter with Lenin**

For several years, we already observe a full identity of ideas and action in Lenin and Stalin; however, it was not until December 1905

that they had their first personal meeting, which took place at the Conference of the Bolsheviks in Tammerfors (Finland), in the midst of the revolutionary vivacity and shortly after the insurrection began. They had known each other through their works, articles and through letters.

Stalin had hitherto developed his activity in Transcaucasia. There his prestige as an astute and tireless revolutionary was well known. His work transcended that region, both because of the repercussions produced by the action of the workers' movement organized by the Bolsheviks, and because of the intense literary and political production created and circulating throughout Russia. For his part, Lenin was already recognized as the main leader of the Bolsheviks throughout Russia and Stalin admired him as a clear strategist of the revolution. Stalin was already a convinced Leninist.

Regarding Lenin, Stalin produced what often happens in the new militant or the young in relation to the political leader or chief: an over-dimensioning of the personality. This is what he stated about his first personal meeting with Lenin. *"I was hoping to see the mountain eagle of our Party,"* said Stalin, *"the great man, great not only politically, but, if you will, physically, because in my imagination I had pictured Lenin as a giant, stately and imposing. What, then, was my disappointment to see a most ordinary-looking man, below average height, in no way, literally in no way, distinguishable from ordinary mortals..."*

*"It is accepted as the usual thing for a 'great man' to come late to meetings so that the assembly may await his appearance with bated breath; and then, just before the 'great man' enters, the warning whisper goes up: 'Hush!... Silence!... He's coming.' This ritual did not seem to me superfluous, because it creates an impression, inspires respect. What, then, was my disappointment to learn that Lenin had arrived at the conference before the delegates, had settled himself somewhere in a corner, and was unassumingly carrying on a conversation, a most ordinary conversation with the most ordinary delegates at the conference."* (Stalin. Lenin, the Mountain Eagle). That simplicity characteristic of Lenin must be taken up by every communist.

The Tammerfors Conference had to be promptly closed because the insurrection had broken out in Moscow, at the head of which were the Bolsheviks. The attendees left for their respective areas of activity with the instruction to generalize the insurrection.

In Moscow the workers had their own militia and fought heroically. For nine days, a few thousand workers in arms fought against the tsarist army, which brought reinforcements from Petersburg and other cities to subdue them. The insurrectionary movement was reproduced in other cities and the oppressed nationalities of Russia took part in the armed struggle. Virtually all of Georgia rose up with the insurrection. All these actions were crushed cruelly.

In the days leading up to the insurrection, Stalin was stirring up a call for revolutionary struggle among the workers. Confronting and exposing the Mensheviks, at a meeting in Tbilisi, he exclaimed: “*What do we need to achieve a real victory? We need three things: weapons, weapons and more weapons.*”

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution, the Mensheviks whined and reproached the Bolsheviks for having resorted to the use of arms to defeat tsarism and preached peaceful action, an attitude opposed by the Bolsheviks who reproached themselves for not having wielded the arms more energetically.

The proletariat and peoples of Russia suffered a defeat, but they did not renounce the revolution. Stalin had a real battle cry: “*No, comrades! The proletariat of Russia is not defeated, it has only retreated and is now preparing for fresh glorious battles. The proletariat of Russia will not lower its blood-stained banner; it will yield the leadership of the uprising to no one; it will be the only worthy leader of the Russian revolution.*” (Stalin, *Two Clashes*. January 1906)

### **Between Two Revolutions**

The hopes of the working class and peoples of Russia that arose with the revolution of 1905 were drowned in blood; it took more than 10 years for the proletariat to conquer victory in the revolution. The Bolshevik mettle was evident in these circumstances: it did not bow down. Lenin and Stalin were at the forefront of the work to organize the revolutionary forces, to preserve and strengthen the revolutionary party, to activate the mass movement and lead it in the struggle against tsarist domination. Those were the years of the “Stolypin reaction” characterized by the presence of murderous gangs that acted against the working class, by the bosses’ offensive against the workers’ movement, by the execution – by hanging – of thousands of revolutionaries.

Back in Baku, Stalin was at the forefront of building the Party and organizing the struggle of the working class. Lenin testified to

this when he wrote: “*In 1908, Baku Gubernia topped the list with 47,000 strikers. The last of the Mohicans of the mass political strike!*”

Stalin’s intense and audacious activity made him a target of tsarist repression. From 1902 to 1913 he was arrested seven times, deported six times, and on five occasions he escaped from his place of confinement.

A new arrest took place on March 25, 1908, but by June 1909 he was already seen in Baku after escaping from exile. However, he was barely able to remain free for eight months; in March 1910 he was again arrested and deported, for the third time, this time to Solvichegodsk, where he remained until July 1911, carrying out intense political activity among the deportees.

In exile he conceived the need to have a legal press organ, which later appeared under the name of *Zvezda* (The Star). He also devised the need to form a kind of Bureau of the Central Committee in Russia, with the purpose of strengthening the Bolshevik organization, which he made known to Lenin through a letter.

At the June 1911 Conference he was appointed as part of the “Organizing Committee” in charge of convening an all-Russia Bolshevik Conference, but he was arrested soon again and taken to deportation in Vologda, where he remained until he learned that the January 1912 Conference had elected him a member of the CC and appointed to head the Russian Bureau of the CC. He immediately set out to fulfill this responsibility, escaping in February of that year.

The Party Conference of January 1912, held in Prague, had a historic significance, since it expelled the Mensheviks and laid the foundations for the formation of a party of a new type, the Leninist-type party, the Bolshevik Party.

In Petersburg, together with other comrades, Stalin organized the publication of the newspaper *Pravda*, which would see the publication of its first issue on May 5, 1912, a date that coincided with a new arrest, his fifth. This time, the government deported him to Western Siberia for three years. His commitment as a member of the CC led him to escape, and he succeeded in the autumn of 1912.

*Pravda* was a powerful weapon for strengthening the Party’s organization and expanding its influence over the masses; it was born with the new rise of the revolutionary movement. Stalin himself wrote in 1922: “*The Pravda of 1912 was the laying of the cornerstone of the victory of Bolshevism in 1917.*”

Throughout this period the relationship between Lenin and Stalin

was strengthened; the latter was already one of the leaders of the Bolshevik movement throughout Russia.

Abroad he wrote his work “Marxism and the National Question”, which became the theory and programmatic statement of Bolshevism on the national question.

In February 1913 he was arrested again; the government confined him for four years in the secluded territory of Turukhansk, but in 1914, fearing his escape, he was transferred to Kureika, near the Arctic Circle. It was the most painful political exile that can be imagined, in distant Siberia. Nevertheless, he maintained his correspondence with Lenin.

In 1914 the imperialist war broke out and in 1916 Stalin was mobilized for the army and transferred in stages to two cities. In Achinsk he received the news of the February 1917 revolution and on March 12 he was already in Petrograd, the revolutionary capital of Russia. The Central Committee entrusted him as editor of the newspaper *Pravda*.

Lenin was still abroad and Stalin took over the Party to lead the struggle to transform the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one.

### **Leader of the October Revolution**

In 1914 the imperialist war began, which Russia joined in July. By 1917 it had led to the death of millions of human beings and particularly for Russia it meant the ruin of its economy. About 14 million workers were taken out of production to enlist in the army. Factories and workshops stopped production, the fields were abandoned and, in the cities, the rural areas and on the battlefield, hunger was ravaging.

Discontent against tsarism was growing rapidly; it had not only caught on among the workers and peasants, but even in sections of the bourgeoisie.

In such circumstances, the idea, propagated by the Bolsheviks, that the only way out of this situation was the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy, was gaining ground. The bourgeoisie prepared a plot for this, the people organized the revolution.

Social unrest spread. 1917, an unforgettable year for the workers' and revolutionary movement of the world, began with the strike of January 9, which took place in several cities and was the origin for

the combative demonstrations of February, in which soldiers and sailors took part along with the workers. On February 27, in Petrograd, the troops refused to fire on the workers and went over to the side of the people. That example was reproduced in several places.

*“The workers and soldiers who had risen in revolt began to arrest tsarist ministers and generals and to free revolutionaries from jail,”* reads the History of the CPSU(b). The bourgeois-democratic revolution of February triumphed and was the work of the proletariat.

With the experience of the 1905 revolution, the workers organized soviets, but now, on the initiative of the Bolsheviks, they were soviets of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies. Twelve years earlier, the soviets had emerged as *“organs of armed uprising and at the same time the embryo of a new, revolutionary power.”*

The Bolsheviks were at the forefront of all this agitation and revolutionary action of the masses and, at the head of the Bolsheviks, Lenin and Stalin.

The fall of the tsarist regime gave way to the emergence of a provisional government of a reactionary nature, headed by Kerensky, but at the same time the soviets emerged, producing dual power.

On the 14th of March of that year, in the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*, Stalin stated that: *“The rights won must be upheld so as to destroy completely the old forces and, in conjunction with the provinces, further advance the Russian revolution – such should be the next immediate task of the proletariat of the capital”*; that it was necessary to *“link them together under a Central Soviet... as the organ of revolutionary power of the people”*.

Four days later, in the same *Pravda*, he pointed out that it is necessary to put an end to the dual power, to form a real organ of revolutionary power, an organ *“which will mobilize all the vital forces of the people against counter-revolution. Only an All-Russian Soviet of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies can be such an organ. This is the first condition for the victory of the Russian revolution.”* The slogan raised to the fore, **“All power to the soviets!”** was thus outlined.

Petrograd became the center of the revolution, by decision of the Central Committee Stalin was there at the head of the Party and at the head of *Pravda*. Lenin was still in exile; he returned to Russia on April 16 and, since then, Lenin and Stalin would develop an unparalleled joint activity.

Together they participated in the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and led the Conference of Bolsheviks, members of the All-Russia Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. At that conference (April 1917), Stalin presented a report on the National Question, in which he defended the right of nations to self-determination. "*Our views on the national question,*" Stalin concluded at the Conference, "*can be reduced to the following propositions: (a) Recognition of the right of nations to secession; (b) Regional autonomy for nations remaining within the given state; (c) Special legislation guaranteeing freedom of development for national minorities; d) A single, indivisible proletarian collective, a single party, for the proletarians of all nationalities of the given state.*" The resolutions of this Conference had a formidable effect on the Party's struggle for the victory of the proletarian socialist revolution. After that Conference, specifically in May, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee was created, to which Stalin was elected a member.

### **At the Forefront of the Armed Insurrection**

The activity of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government against the workers' movement and the Bolsheviks was accentuated. In July, the workers' demonstrations were machine-gunned, the editorial office of *Pravda* was destroyed and the order was given to arrest Lenin, who had to go into hiding. Under these circumstances, Stalin successfully led the Party on the path of accumulating forces for the armed insurrection.

The Bolshevik press was the object of repression, but it maintained continuity under different names.

Under Stalin's leadership, the Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party met in August, which directed it towards the armed insurrection. In the main reports of the Congress, presented by Stalin, it was stated that "*the main task was to explain to the masses the necessity of the violent destruction of bourgeois power and the necessity of establishing the power of the proletariat and the poor peasants, and he spoke of the beginning of a period of clashes and explosions.*"

The Sixth Congress was the scene of a important ideological struggle against those who advocated that the revolution should not advance. Stalin exposed the opportunists (Bukharin and Preobrazhensky) who denied the possibility that Russia would be the first to victoriously carry out the socialist revolution. "*We must discard the*

*antiquated idea that only Europe can show us the way. There is dogmatic Marxism and creative Marxism. I stand by the latter,"* Stalin said.

Bukharin was not the only one who conspired against the revolutionary line. Kamenev and Zinoviev worked against the central line of organizing the insurrection; Lenin replied to them in his articles *"The Bolsheviks Must Assume State Power"* and *"Marxism and Insurrection."* Stalin pointed out that there were two lines in the Party: the one that is aimed at revolution and the second, that *"has no faith in the revolution and counts on being only an opposition."* Trotsky was part of the group of capitulators.

The Central Committee of the Party, meeting on October 10, decided on the formation of a Political Bureau, of which Stalin was a member, to lead the insurrection. On the 16th, the enlarged session of the Central Committee decided to place Stalin at the head of the Party Center in charge of leading the insurrection, which was the one that led the whole struggle in the October days.

Kerensky sought to silence the voice of the communists and to close the communist newspaper *Rabochi Put* (The Workers' Path), but detachments of Red Guards prevented this and guaranteed that its publication would continue. On November 6, in the middle of the morning, *Rabochi Put* published an appeal calling for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. At the same time, the Party Center in charge of leading the insurrection concentrated detachments of revolutionary soldiers and Red Guards in the Smolny Palace. The insurrection had begun.

In Lenin's letter to the CC – that same day – he pointed out that *"We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets... To delay action is fatal."*

That same night Lenin appeared in Smolny and, with Stalin, led the armed forces of the insurrection. On the morning of November 7, power passed into the hands of the workers and poor peasants. On November 9, the first workers' and peasants' government was organized, headed by Lenin and Stalin.

The great October Proletarian Socialist Revolution triumphed and a new era in the history of humanity was inaugurated, the epoch of the proletarian revolution and socialism, through which the people of the whole world will have to pass.



## The First Days in Power

When the Bolsheviks took power in Petrograd there were two days' worth of bread reserves, and after the most vigorous investigation they managed to obtain enough grain for just ten days. The internal and external enemies of the revolution wanted to strangle it in any way and were in cahoots to do so. The actions for this purpose were diverse, from hiding food and products to the organization of armed actions that gave rise to the civil war, to which must be added the imperialist war in which Russia had been involved for four years; this had meant the bankruptcy of the country's economy.

Surrounded by adverse conditions, the proletariat was preparing to build the society of the workers. Except for the short experience of the Paris Commune, the working class was facing a completely new phenomenon and had to use all its initiative to establish a new state, with institutions that did not exist in the past. At the head of this titanic task were Lenin and Stalin.

As in the period prior to the seizure of power, Stalin played a important role in the process of building socialism. On behalf of the Central Committee of the Party, and on many occasions at Lenin's request, he carried out the most delicate and difficult tasks in which the stability and development of the revolution was at stake.

During the years of the civil war, he was sent to the most dangerous and decisive war fronts for the revolution. An example is the leadership of the Southern Front, led until then by Trotsky and his front men, who had designed a plan that would have led to failure if implemented. Stalin, being an excellent strategist, devised a plan that ensured a rapid advance of the Red Army, control of railroad lines and supply bridges, while splitting the counter-revolutionary army in two. The success was resounding. Similar examples abound.

At Lenin's suggestion, due to his merits on the fronts of the civil war Stalin was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner in November 1919.

Before the revolution, Russia was a prison for non-Russian peoples and nationalities. The new power proposed to provide a solution to the national question; instead of tsarist colonies the Soviet Republics were formed, in which Stalin participated tirelessly, fulfilling his responsibility as People's Commissar of Nationalities.

At the same time, since March 1919 he fulfilled the responsibility of People's Commissar of State Control, which was later organized

as the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. This was of great importance in incorporating the workers into the administration of the State.

Perhaps one of the most difficult problems to solve at that time was the achievement of peace with the fascist entente (Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire). To continue the war would have been tantamount to suicide for the revolution; it was necessary to defend and strengthen the nascent revolution. "...*We get a truce or the revolution sinks,*" Stalin warned. At the end of February 1918, peace was agreed upon with Germany, an unfortunate peace as Lenin would describe it, due to the harsh conditions that the nascent proletarian state was subjected to.

During the process that led to the signing of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, a tenacious ideological struggle broke out within the Party with a group known as "*Left Communists*", who rose up against the Leninist line.

Initially, the Soviet government proposed "*to all belligerent countries and their governments to enter into immediate negotiations for a just and lasting peace.*" But the "allies" England and France refused to accept these proposals, forcing the Soviet government to start negotiations with Germany and Austria. On December 5, a temporary suspension of hostilities was achieved; during the talks it was noted that German imperialism was interested in seizing large areas of the former tsarist empire and turning Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic countries into vassal states of Germany. The existence of the Soviet Republic was in serious danger.

All the counter-revolutionaries rose up against the signing of the peace; they hoped that the Germans would continue their offensive to end Soviet power. This campaign was joined by Trotsky, Radek, Piatakov and the group of "Left Communists" who demanded the continuation of the war. Trotsky led the delegation to the signing of the Peace Treaty but refused to do so, telling the Germans that the Soviets would not wage war and would continue to demobilize their army. This led to the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty days later under harsher conditions for the Soviet republic. This behavior was one more element in the counter-revolutionary behavior that characterized Trotsky's activity. In March of the same year, the Seventh Congress of the Party met, which ratified the need to sign such a peace treaty.

## The Foundations of Socialism Are Created

The first years since the Soviet proletariat took power highlighted very important lessons for the international movement. The nascent revolution, as we pointed out above, was bombarded by internal reaction that, together with the governments of several capitalist countries, acted militarily to put an end to the proletarian power that was taking its first steps.

This situation led to the aggravation of the economic crisis in which the country was already in due to the effects of the imperialist war; because of this the Soviet power adopted a series of rigorous political and economic measures described by Lenin as “war communism”, aimed at guaranteeing the permanence of the workers and peasants in power.

At the end of the war, the population was exhausted, as it had made great efforts and sacrifices to emerge victorious. The peasants were not willing to continue handing over the surplus of their production to the State, which had used it to sustain the defense. Among the working class, which was always in the vanguard, unrest arose because industry was ruined and, therefore, jobs were diminishing and many workers sought to work in any activity, producing a dispersion of the working class. The political conditions having changed, it was urgent to put aside the regime of “war communism”, which had been imposed by circumstances.

The leadership of the Bolshevik Party adopted a series of measures aimed at reviving the economy and creating the conditions for the consolidation of socialism.

However, the definition of these measures and the precision of how to implement them produced an intense debate within the Party, which showed the existence of groups opposed to the defined policy. Trotsky’s group was one of those that contradicted the views formulated by Lenin and supported by Stalin and the majority of the Party.

The Trotskyists were in favor of continuing to tighten the screws under the policy of “war communism” on the one hand, and, on the other, they pointed out that the Party and the State should disengage from the restoration of the national economy, that this was the exclusive responsibility of the trade unions. Trotsky was opposed to the method of persuasion of the masses and sought to implement military discipline in the trade unions.

In March 1921 the Tenth Party Congress met. In the opening

speech, Lenin condemned the discord within the Communist Party because it favored the enemy; the Congress condemned all opposition groups and ordered their dissolution.

This Congress took the very important decision to initiate a period known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), described later by Stalin as *“a special policy of the proletarian state aimed at permitting capitalism while the commanding positions are held by the proletarian state, aimed at a struggle between the capitalist and socialist elements, aimed at increasing the role of the socialist elements to the detriment of the capitalist elements, aimed at the victory of the socialist elements over the capitalist elements, aimed at the abolition of classes and the building of the foundations of a socialist economy.”* A year after the implementation of the NEP was approved, at the Eleventh Congress of the Party, Lenin declared that the retreat was over and issued the slogan: *“Prepare for the offensive against private capital.”*

The Party entered a new period; on April 3, 1922, the Plenum of the Central Committee met in which, at Lenin’s proposal, Stalin was elected General Secretary of the CC of the CP(b) of the USSR. This was a responsibility that he fulfilled while maintaining his position as People’s Commissar of Nationalities and People’s Commissar of the Workers’ and Peasant Inspectorate.

In December of the same year, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed. Stalin had an enormous responsibility in it; it was he who drafted the first Constitution of the USSR, approved by the Second Congress of Soviets.

### **With Lenin’s Banner Held High**

On January 21, 1924, the factories and fields of Russia came to a standstill and the sirens of the whole country announced sorrowful news: Lenin, the leader of the Soviet and world proletariat, had died. It was a hard loss for the peoples of the USSR, for the Bolshevik Party, for the peoples and proletarian revolutionaries of the whole world.

When Lenin died, the Soviet Republic was just being formed, the country’s economy was facing serious problems, to the point that it had been necessary to take a step back, to make concessions to capital under NEP, to create the conditions that would allow progress towards the building of socialism. At the same time, within the Party,

the harmful action of opportunist groups (Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin) persisted, conspiring against the Leninist line that had led the revolutionary proletariat to victory. Under these conditions Stalin was placed at the head of the Party; he faced the vicissitudes of the moment and the tasks that the future demanded, and he did so with absolute success.

Stalin took up this responsibility, since he was a Bolshevik who, through his own political experience of many years, came to the assimilation of Leninism more than anyone else; together with Lenin they led the Bolshevik Party to the seizure of proletarian power.

On January 26 of that year, at the funeral session of the Second Congress of Soviets in homage to Lenin, Stalin, in the name of the entire Party, took the oath of honor to hold high and preserve in all its purity the great title of Party member; to ensure the unity of the Party as the apple of his eye; to preserve and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat; to strengthen with all forces the alliance of the workers and peasants; to strengthen and develop the Union of Soviet Republics; strengthening the Red Army and the Red Navy; to remain faithful to the principles of the Communist International.

In order to fulfill Lenin's legacy, several theoretical aspects had to be developed, a responsibility that Stalin fulfilled brilliantly. The building of socialism in the USSR, its theoretical foundation and the defense he made of it is his main contribution to the development of Marxism-Leninism. In a number of articles, speeches, interviews and books he deepened and developed these aspects in correspondence with the concrete conditions of the historical moment. We speak about texts such as *"The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists"*, *"Trotskyism or Leninism?"*, in which he unmasked the counter-revolutionary activity of Trotsky and his followers; *"The Foundations of Leninism"* and *"Concerning Questions of Leninism"* which masterfully define what Leninism is in all fields, are some of the materials from that period. Then come *"The Possibility of Building Socialism in our Country"*, *"Marxism and Problems of Linguistics"* and many more, works that enlightened the communists of the USSR to carry forward the building of socialism, which educated and continue to educate many generations of communists all over the world.

In those years, a discussion arose within the Party about the possibility or not of building socialism in the USSR, whether it was possible for socialism to triumph in a single country. Trotsky and his

group denied this.

The Fourteenth Conference and the Fourteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party discussed this aspect. The Congress overwhelmingly approved the Leninist thesis of the possibility of the victory of socialism in a single country. Later, the Communist International also adopted this view.

In that period, Stalin also pointed out the first steps that were required for the socialist industrialization of the country and for the collectivization of agriculture, on which the homeland of the proletarians would be built. *“My wish ... is that our industry may forge ahead, that the number of proletarians in Russia may increase in the near future to 20-30 millions, that collective farming in the countryside may thrive and bring individual farming under its influence, that a highly developed industry and collective farming may finally weld the proletarians of the factories and the laborers of the soil into a single socialist army....”* Stalin said in 1924.

### **Socialist Industrialization**

By the years 1924-1925 the Soviet economy had reached a level of recovery, but it had barely reached the levels existing before the war. This put to the Soviet power the question of how and in what direction the national economy should develop, which the Bolshevik Party answered with the orientation of initiating socialist industrialization. It was a question of finding a practical response to the building of socialism in an economically backward country beset by the hostile activity of the capitalist powers and even by the action of internal counter-revolutionary forces and opportunist elements, some of whom remained hidden within the Party.

At the head of the Bolshevik Party, Stalin drew up the parameters under which the process of industrialization should develop and carried out a control—sometimes meticulous—of its application and the progress that was being made on each of the work fronts.

This process of socialist industrialization responded to the application of the Leninist thesis of the possibility of the successful construction of socialism in one country; Stalin specified that this phenomenon had to be seen on two fronts. Externally, he understood that the definitive victory of socialism, against any interventionist action to re-establish capitalism, is guaranteed only by the overthrow of capitalism in the other countries. But from the point of view of internal

relations, in the USSR, he said, the conditions for the victory of socialism, for the construction of a classless socialist society, exist fully and completely.

The Fourteenth Party Congress (December 1925) discussed and approved the orientation of carrying forward the industrialization of the country which, in the words of Stalin, sought *“the conversion of our country from an agrarian into an industrial country able to produce the equipment it needs by its own efforts – that is the essence, the basis of our general line.”*

For the Soviet Union, this purpose was not easy to develop. No capitalist country in the world would have been able to achieve it under the conditions in which the USSR set out to do so, that is, on the basis of its own efforts and resources, knowing that at that time the USSR was not a rich country.

Industrializing a huge country required millions of dollars in investment, for which it could not count on loans that the capitalist countries refused to grant; it had to be undertaken using the country's own resources. This difficulty was successfully overcome, taking advantage of the earnings produced by the nationalized companies and factories, resources that were destined for reinvestment based on the development of the industry. On the other hand, the Soviet power cancelled the debts contracted by tsarism, which had bled millions of rubles annually as interest alone. It also took advantage of the fact that the expropriation of the land from the landlords and the elimination of private property created the conditions for socialist accumulation. By abolishing private ownership of the land, the peasants, who in the past had to pay millions to the landlords, were now willing to help the state build up a powerful industry. The industrialization of the country was carried out with all these resources, accompanied by a *“system of control of expenditures, rationalization of production, reduction of cost prices...”*

Two years later, the first successes were seen. Socialist industry had significant growth at the expense of the private sector, rising from 81% in 1924-1925 to 86% in 1926-1927. However, agricultural production did not show significant levels of growth, because it depended on production on small farms. To overcome this situation, it was decided to expand the size of agricultural holdings. It was oriented to work for the collectivization of agricultural production. In the first stage, they directed that the peasants should be grouped into

cooperatives and, later, to reach the level of the communes. The development of the socialist economy required modern agriculture, based on farms in which it was possible to use advanced technique, and this would be achieved with collectivization. The victory of industrialization and the first steps of the collectivization of agriculture ensured the mass passage of the peasants onto the road of collectivization, onto the road of socialism.

This entire successful period of progress in the building of socialism, at the head of which Stalin remained, was accompanied by an intense ideological struggle against ideologically degenerated elements, who, in fact, advocated preventing the process of building socialism behind theoretical pirouettes. After an intense ideological struggle, the Party crushed the anti-Bolshevik group led by Trotsky and Zinoviev, who were expelled at the Fifteenth Congress in 1927.

### **The Superiority of Socialism**

The political line drawn by Stalin for the building of socialism in the USSR proved to be correct. The result of the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan revealed a country whose economic base was a first-class socialist heavy industry and a mechanized collective agriculture that was on the rise.

While the Soviet Union was reaping successes in its economy, the capitalist countries were experiencing the reverse phenomenon. The second half of 1929 marked the beginning of a serious economic crisis that affected them until 1933, when it turned into a depression and a certain stage of resuscitation. However, this did not reach the level of prosperity, because the second half of 1937 marked the beginning of a new crisis of capitalism, mainly affecting the United States, England and France. In Germany, Italy and Japan, which had militarized their economies, by 1938 they were not yet affected by the crisis, but Stalin foresaw that they would soon be.

This was a period in which the superiority of socialism over capitalism was fully demonstrated. If we look at the statistics of industrial development between the years 1913 and 1938, we will see that the USSR was the country with the highest level of growth, at 908.8%, while the United States reached 120%, England 113.13%, Germany 131.6% and France 93%. The successes of socialism in industry were not the only ones; a similar picture was presented in agriculture, which, by 1937, had collectivized 93% of the peasant farms throughout the country, and, as far as the real wages of workers and



employees were concerned, during the Second Five-Year Plan they experienced an increase of more than twofold. In general, the material living conditions of the workers rose, along with great advances in the cultural level. General compulsory primary education in the languages of the nationalities was introduced, the number of schools and students in all grades increased, and the number of specialists from higher schools increased; all this gave rise to a new Soviet intelligentsia.

In several analyses of the political moment at the international level, Stalin anticipated that, due to the inter-imperialist contradictions and the eagerness of the capitalist powers to conquer new markets, the danger of a new imperialist war was approaching. Indeed, events were moving in that direction. In 1935 Italy attacked and occupied Abyssinia; in 1936, Germany and Italy organized armed intervention in Spain; in 1937 Japan, after occupying Manchuria, invaded China; in early 1938 Germany seized Austria and then the southeastern region of Czechoslovakia. The new imperialist war was a fact.

Stalin knew that at any moment the workers' homeland would be a military target of the aggressor countries, so for a long period the Bolshevik Party worked to prepare the USSR in every way for active defense. At the international level, it was intensely active in raising the banner of peace, while preparing for defense by strengthening the Red Army and the Red Navy. In 1934 the USSR joined the League of Nations, *"considering that despite its weakness the League might nevertheless serve as a place where aggressors can be exposed, and as a certain instrument of peace, however feeble, that might hinder the outbreak of war"*. In 1935 it concluded a pact of mutual assistance with France against a possible attack by the aggressors, as it did with Czechoslovakia and the People's Republic of Mongolia; in 1937 a non-aggression pact was reached between the Soviet Union and the Republic of China. Efforts to establish agreements with England and France to organize collective resistance to fascism were hampered by the governments of those countries.

In August 1939 it completed a non-aggression treaty with Germany; however, in June 1941, Hitler's Germany launched the invasion of the USSR. The period of socialist construction under conditions of relative peace was over; the period of the patriotic war, of the defense of the socialist state, was beginning.

## The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

In the period before the outbreak of World War II, knowing that the beginning of the war was imminent, the USSR launched an intense policy of peace. Stalin not only understood that this conflict had its origin in the inter-imperialist contradictions and thirst for expansion of Hitler's Germany; above all, he knew that, in the context of the contradictions on a world scale, the enemy of all the imperialist powers – including the adversaries of Germany – was the Soviet Union, which entailed a serious danger for the first socialist state. It was a fact that the fascist invasion of the USSR would take place with the approval of the Western powers, which would lead to the strengthening of Germany, but it would also cause problems for them. The Western powers acted with this criterion, which is why time and again they took steps backwards in the face of the pressure and blackmail of the fascist Nazi axis. This behavior was not due to its weakness, but to the interest – mainly of British imperialism – in avoiding a conflict with Germany before one between Hitler's forces and the USSR. That is why France and England were opposed to establishing agreements with the USSR, which would shape a policy of security and collective resistance against the aggressors, and adopted a position of *"neutrality"*. That did not prevent Japanese aggression against China or the Soviet Union, or Germany's war against European countries and the USSR itself. However, they planned to act in the conflict when the contending forces would *"weaken and exhaust one another; and then, when they have become weak enough, to appear on the scene with fresh strength, to appear, of course, 'in the interests of peace' and to dictate conditions to the enfeebled belligerents"*. (Stalin).

The proposals for alliance with France and England were continued until 1939. In April of that year, the British sought immediate intervention from the USSR in the event of German aggression against the two aforementioned countries, but they did not accept the same behavior if the aggression took place against the Soviet Union. If such was the behavior of those potentially targeted by German expansionism, it was clear that the Soviet Union would be the first target of Nazi aggression. Therefore, Stalin was inclined to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany. He knew that it was possible to achieve this because it was surrounded and pressured by Poland, and he also had an interest in the USSR maintaining a neutral position.

Thus the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was signed in August 1939. It was the result of a Marxist-Leninist class analysis of the political circumstances. All the opponents of the socialist state (the aggressive imperialist powers) were accurately assessed and they were warned that it was not possible to know exactly who would attack whom. The agreement sought: 1) to keep the USSR out of the conflict, if feasible; 2) to make the USSR, in case of being involved in the war, intervene under the best possible conditions. It sought, therefore, to gain time in order to confront the fascist aggression in better conditions.

On June 21, 1941, the fascist invasion of the USSR was unleashed. Germany, which was mobilized, concentrated on the borders of the USSR 170 armed divisions of thousands of tanks and planes that were suddenly launched against the homeland of Lenin and Stalin. Hitler hoped to defeat it in one and a half or two months, but in the end they bit the dust of defeat. At first, they invaded Soviet territory quickly; the Red Army applied an active defense tactic, which aimed to strike at the enemy, reduce its live forces and war material as much as possible and prepare the conditions for the passage to the offensive. A few days after the invasion began, Stalin, addressing the peoples of the USSR by radio, called for the formation of the people's militia in the threatened cities, the creation of guerrilla groups, combat groups, etc., the "scorched earth" of the enemy's rearguard, considering the people the first and fundamental factor of victory.

Prior to the invasion, and during it, all the industry that was in the western region had to be transported to the east, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy and, also, to guarantee the material and economic resources to sustain the war and provide subsistence for the population. It was a true epic, an unprecedented event in history. Only the conviction of the people, only the leadership of the dictatorship of the proletariat, made it possible to successfully carry it out. Hundreds, thousands of tons of industrial machinery and equipment were moved thousands of miles away and put into operation. To make matters worse, the working-age male population was mobilized for the battlefield, so women turned to production. Many industries were transformed in order to produce war materiel and at the same time an emergency industry was created. During the war years the Soviet country fought and built. Not a single day did the work of building new industrial enterprises, mines, blast furnaces, power plants cease. In the midst of the war, Soviet industry increased the

production of aircraft, tanks and means of fighting against them, ending the numerical superiority that the enemy had had in this regard, guaranteeing the success of the military offensive that was being prepared against the invaders.

### **The Triumph Over Nazi Fascism**

The offensive of the German army made it possible for it to seize a large territory of the USSR; however, the active defense tactics deployed by the Red Army wore down the adversary until, practically, at the gates of Moscow, the counter-offensive could be launched.

In the midst of a besieged capital, on November 7, 1941, Stalin gave a speech at the commemorative parade of the October Revolution, in which he acknowledged the gravity of the moment but demonstrated that the situation was favorable. The enemy had moved away from its own bases and the action of the guerrilla groups was of great importance; During the fascist invasion, the vigor of the Soviet system was evident and, despite the sacrifices and sufferings of the Soviet people, they trusted their government and confronted the occupiers. *“The German invaders want a war of extermination against the peoples of the U.S.S.R.,”* Stalin said. *“Well, if the Germans want a war of extermination, they will get it.”*

For Stalin, the war would be won by incorporating all the people into defense and action in all fields, and this happened. The communist youth mobilized to defend the socialist homeland. In Moscow, where most buildings were built of wood and caught fire in bombardments, young people remained on rooftops during enemy air strikes to make them pay for the fire.

The German army’s “definitive” offensive on Moscow began on November 16 and, in some places, reached 10 km from the capital. Stalin himself led the defense of Moscow and guided the operations of the Red Army, which began its counter-offensive on December 6. As he had pointed out on many occasions, the solidity of the rear-guard became a decisive factor.

In 1942 the Battle of Stalingrad was unleashed, which was fought street by street, building by building, and marked the beginning of the end for Nazi-fascism. The entire German Sixth Army and part of the Fourth Army were captured there, taking more than 100,000 prisoners, including Marshal Ernst Von Paulus and 20 generals. Stalingrad was the largest battle recorded in the history of warfare.

This epic feat not only fueled optimism in the Soviet army and

peoples, it gave a great impetus to the resistance movement against Nazi-fascism and to the national liberation movements in Europe and Asia. Once again, the imperialist war had created the conditions for the advance of the proletarian revolution.

The Red Army marched, liberating the peoples. On April 16 it began its offensive on Berlin, which fell on May 2, 1945. On May 9, Germany capitulated. The imperialist aggression against the first socialist state failed and the proletarians and peoples of the whole world won an enormous victory.

At the end of the Second World War, the USSR was strengthened, the socialist camp was expanded and the international communist movement was also strengthened.

### **It Is Impossible to Forget His Legacy**

After the Second World War, the prestige of the Soviet Union and the affection of the peoples for the first socialist state was strengthened in breadth and depth. It was the result of the heroism shown by its people to defend the gains of socialism, by the millions of Soviets who gave their lives to defeat the fascist beast and restore and guarantee freedom for the peoples. In several countries, the working class and the laborers correctly linked their national liberation struggle with the struggle for social liberation and governments of people's democracy emerged, expanding the socialist camp. In general, as we have already said, the international communist movement was advancing and strengthening.

The Soviet Union, with Stalin at its head, adopted a just peace policy on the international level in order to counteract the warmongering characteristic of the imperialist powers. For their part, the United States and the rest of the capitalist powers began the Cold War, which sought to isolate and confront the socialist camp and prevent it from expanding further; internally, the USSR was advancing rapidly in the building of socialism. While the capitalist countries faced the problems typical of this system of exploitation, the economy of the USSR was recomposed and developed, becoming a great power at the service of the workers and peoples of the whole world.

Progress covered all areas of society: education, health, recreation, culture, collective rights for the working class and people, the nationalities, women, and others all guaranteed by the State. Technological and scientific development was one of the important areas on which action was taken, so that, to cite just one example, the Soviet

Union was the first country to put human beings into space, ahead of the United States.

The USSR became a safe rearguard for the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peoples of the whole world; they had in it not only a reference point that inspired their actions, but also a State that fully applied the principles of proletarian internationalism. Thousands of workers from all corners of the planet were welcomed by the homeland of Lenin and Stalin and there they learned about the progress of socialism and its superiority over capitalism.

The successes achieved in the building of socialism and in the defense of the fatherland were the work of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the working class and peoples who acted under the correct Marxist-Leninist policy defined by the Communist Party. This is how Stalin understood and proclaimed it. Hence his constant concern to keep the Party firm in the ideology of the proletariat, Marxism-Leninism, combating the outbreaks of bureaucratism that arose in party activity and in the state administration. Defending unity, party integrity, the fidelity of the Soviet communists to the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin were among Stalin's priorities. However, the great efforts made in this direction ran into difficulties, with barriers that did not allow ideas foreign to the ideology of the proletariat to be completely annihilated and to remain hidden, until they acted openly to subvert socialism, when Khrushchev seized power and began the process of capitalist restoration, which we all know where it led in the former Soviet Union.

Since the Russian workers seized power, the USSR had been the object of an intense anti-communist campaign, carried out by the imperialist powers and the international bourgeoisie. They spoke of the end of democracy, of the crimes and mistakes committed by the communists, of intolerance towards the opposition or dissidence. In short, socialism was described as a real hell. The leaders of the revolution, Lenin, Stalin and the Bolshevik Party, were held responsible for all this. It was logical that the bourgeoisie and the imperialists would act in this way, since they thus sought to throw dirt on the advances of socialism and hide a window through which the working class could look to its future. That anti-communist attack on Stalin was echoed by revisionists of all kinds, and continues today. But the correctness of the Stalinist policy is unquestionable. While he was at the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, socialism advanced, a policy of brotherhood between peoples was applied, and encouraged and

contributed to the struggle for social and national liberation throughout the planet. When the revisionists seized power, they turned the USSR into a social-imperialist power, affected by the problems and crises of the capitalist system, gradually putting an end to the benefits that socialism granted to the working class and peoples. Today, when the workers and peoples of the former USSR protest, they hold up portraits of Stalin, because they witnessed how much humanity advanced during the Stalinist period.

Stalin, that eminent figure who was at the forefront of the most important political and social events that humanity has known in the last century: the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Great Patriotic War in World War II, the building of socialism in the USSR, took his last breath on March 5, 1953, mourned by the proletarians and communists of the whole world. But we Marxist-Leninists hold high his banner, the commitment to lead the social revolution of the proletariat to victory.

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*Alejandro Ríos*

## **Stalin's Cult of Personality: Did It Really Exist and Was It Allowed?**

### **I**

Barely three years after the death of J.V. Stalin (1953), the international communist movement and, without any exaggeration, the whole world were shocked to learn that, within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a “report” circulated that threw dirt on the personality of the one who had led the USSR along the path of the victorious building of socialism and the annihilation of the Nazi-fascist army in the Second World War, thus ensuring world peace.

Nikita Khrushchev, who, on the basis of obscure movements and even the physical elimination of his political opponents within the Party, became the first secretary of the CPSU. At the end of the work of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in the framework of what they called a “secret session” (February 25, 1956), presented on behalf of the Central Committee a report entitled “*On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*”, in which he asserted that “*the cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person.*” The report was not debated, nor were questions and even less assessments accepted.

What is “strange”, or simply part of the stratagem of the revisionists who seized power, is that Khrushchev’s secret speech was not published in the USSR, but was immediately known in the State Department of the United States and published in a magazine in that country. That is how it became known to the world.

With alleged “evidence” coming from the Soviet Union itself, the anti-communist campaign intensified, not only around the “cult of personality”, but also around the “horrors” committed at that time against the Soviet people and communist militants who dissented from the line “imposed” by Stalin. It was a campaign in which the Khrushchevite revisionists and the Trotskyists set the same tone together with the international bourgeoisie.

The infamous cult of personality was not promoted by Stalin, as we will show later, it was created by Nikita Khrushchev himself and



other rotten elements who, in this way, tried to gain positions within the Party or maintain those that they had already achieved.

In his biography of Stalin, Roy Medvedev<sup>1</sup> noted that the former Trotskyist Karl Radek published in *Pravda*, in January 1934, an article full of praise for Stalin, in which he described him as “*Lenin’s best pupil, the model of the Leninist Party, bone of its bone, blood of its blood*”, that he was “*as farsighted as Lenin*”. It was apparently the first newspaper article expressly devoted to Stalin’s adulation.

But Khrushchev was not far behind in flattery. It was he who introduced the term *vozhd* (leader) to refer to Stalin. At the Party Conference in Moscow in January 1932, Khrushchev ended his speech by saying: “*The Moscow Bolsheviks rallied around the Leninist Central Committee as never before and around the vozhd of our Party, Comrade Stalin, are cheerfully and confidently marching toward new victories in the battles for socialism, for the world proletarian revolution.*”<sup>2</sup>

When the treason trial of Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev took place (August 1936), Khrushchev stated as follows: “*Miserable pygmies! They lifted their hands against the greatest of all men... our wise vozhd, Comrade Stalin!... Thou, Comrade Stalin, hast raised the great banner of Marxism-Leninism high over the entire world and carried it forward. We assure thee, Comrade Stalin, that the Moscow Bolshevik organization – the faithful supporter of the Stalinist Central Committee – will increase the Stalinist vigilance still more, will extirpate the Trotskyite-Zinovievite remnants, and close the ranks of the Party and non-Party Bolsheviks even more around the Stalinist Central Committee and the great Stalin.*”<sup>3</sup>

In the same vein, in the treason trial of Grigori Piatakov and Karl Radek (January 1937) he referred to him in these terms: “*By lifting their hands against Comrade Stalin, they lifted them against all the best that humanity possesses. For Stalin is hope; he is expectation; he is the beacon that guides all progressive mankind. Stalin is our*

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<sup>1</sup> Medvedev is a Russian historian with well-known anti-Stalinist positions.

<sup>2</sup> ‘*Rabochaya Moskva*’, January 26, 1932, quoted in: L. Pistrak: *The Grand Tactician: Khrushchev’s Rise to Power*; London; 1961; p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Pravda*, August 23, 1936, quoted in: L. Pistrak: *ibid*; p. 162.

*banner! Stalin is our will! Stalin is our victory!”<sup>4</sup>*

That minion who initiated the process of capitalist restoration, culminated by Gorbachev, was precisely one of the promoters of the so-called “cult of personality”, against which he later claimed to rise up. In reality, by striking at Stalin’s political authority, the Khrushchevite revisionists threw their darts against Marxism-Leninism, against the international communist movement and the struggle of the workers worldwide for revolution and socialism.

*“You speak of your ‘devotion’ to me. Perhaps it was just a chance phrase. Perhaps.... But if the phrase was not accidental I would advise you to discard the ‘principle’ of devotion to persons. It is not the Bolshevik way. Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals.*

*With communist greetings,  
J. Stalin.”*

*Letter to Comrade Shatunovsky,  
August 1930.*

## II

For years, ideologically and politically rotten elements within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had worked their way up to positions within it and, to this end, they spread a discourse within and outside its ranks in order to show their supposed attachment to the revolutionary policy that it implemented and, at the same time, their alignment with J.V. Stalin, its main leader.

Nikita Khrushchev and others carried out this campaign, after Stalin’s death, to accuse him of not only allowing the cult of personality but even promoting it. This was stated by Khrushchev in the so-called report entitled “*On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences*”.

Stalin never had attitudes or points of view that, consciously or unconsciously, imposed the role of personalities above the activity and importance of collectives. In 1931 he analyzed the role of individuals in the following terms: “*Marxism does not at all deny the role*

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<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, January 31, 1937, quoted in: L. Pistrak: *ibid*; p. 162.

*played by outstanding individuals or that history is made by people.... But... great people are worth anything at all only to the extent that they are able correctly to understand [real] conditions, to understand how to change them. If they fail to understand these conditions and want to alter them according to the promptings of their imagination, they will land themselves in the situation of Don Quixote... Decisions of individuals are always, or nearly always, one-sided decisions.... In every collegium, in every collective body, there are people who may express wrong opinions. From the experience of three revolutions we know that out of every 100 decisions taken by individual persons without being tested and corrected collectively, approximately 90 are one-sided.... Never under any circumstances would our workers now tolerate power in the hands of one person. With us personages of the greatest authority are reduced to nonentities, become mere ciphers, as soon as the masses of the workers lose confidence in them....”*

It is a fact that Stalin was an exceptional personality; he knew how to rise to the level of historical conditions to the point that political opponents had to recognize him. Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister who with President Truman of the United States at one point plotted to launch a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union, did not fail to recognize that Stalin’s “*power was so great.. that it seemed unique among the leaders of all times and peoples.... Such stories and peoples do not forget.*”<sup>5</sup>

Others who were not at all communists, in statements and memoirs about Stalin, deny that Stalin was a “tyrant” or that he himself sought to “deify himself,” as the official propaganda of imperialism and Khrushchevite revisionism presented him. Joseph Davies, a U.S. diplomat, described his meeting with Stalin: “*I was startled to see the door... open, and Mr. Stalin come into the room alone.... His demeanor is kindly, his almost deprecatingly simple... he... greeted me cordially, with a simple dignity.... His brown eye is exceedingly kind and gentle. A child would like to sit in his lap.*”<sup>6</sup>

A biography by Isaac Don Levine (also a critic of Stalin) states that “*Stalin does not seek honours. He loathes pomp. He is averse to public displays. He could have all the nominal regalia in the chest of*

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<sup>5</sup> Winston Churchill, on December 21, 1959, on the 80th Anniversary of Stalin’s birth. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

<sup>6</sup> J. E. Davies: *Mission to Moscow*; London; 1940; p. 222, 230

*a great state. But he prefers the background.*"<sup>7</sup>

In turn, Eugene Lyons, a journalist who, after being a correspondent for the UPI press agency in Moscow for several years and upon returning to the United States was openly opposed to the USSR and communism, when describing the way the main Soviet leader lived, says that *"Stalin lives in a modest apartment of three rooms... in his everyday life his tastes remained simple almost to the point of crudeness.... Even those who hated him with a desperate hate and blamed him for sadistic cruelties never accused him of excesses in his private life... Those who measure 'success' by millions of dollars, yachts and mistresses find it hard to understand power relished in austerity... There was nothing remotely ogre-like attitude in looks or conduct, nothing theatrical in his manner. A pleasant, earnest, aging man... 'He's a thoroughly likeable person,' I remember thinking as we sat there, and thinking it in astonishment.*"<sup>8</sup>

Stalin never agreed with those flattering speeches – as he himself described them – that sought to show him as a superior person. As a Marxist-Leninist, he always sought the collective action of the Party and understood that it is the masses who push forward the political processes of change.

The anti-Stalinist discourse was pronounced by the enemies of the revolution to strike at a personality who, in fact, had great influence not only in the international communist movement but in the revolutionary movement in general. Damaging Stalin's image was in the interest of striking at the effort that the workers and peoples of various countries were carrying out to build socialism and of others who were fighting to seize power.

*"I must say in all conscience, comrades, that I do not deserve a good half of the flattering things that have been said here about me. I am, it appears, a hero of the October Revolution, the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the leader of the Communist International, a legendary warrior-knight and all the rest of it. That is absurd, comrades, and quite unnecessary exaggeration. It*

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<sup>7</sup> J. D. Levine: Stalin; London; 1931; p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> E. Lyons: Stalin: Czar of all the Russias; Philadelphia; 1940; p. 196-200. Lyons was the first foreign journalist to conduct an interview with Stalin.

*is the sort of thing that is usually said at the graveside of a departed revolutionary. But I have no intention of dying yet... I really was, and still am, one of the pupils of the advanced workers of the Tbilisi railway workshops.”*  
*Stalin, Works, Vol. 8, p. 182.*

### III

Marxism, as no other philosophy, recognizes the fundamental role that the peoples play in social historical development. The personal or individual will, no matter how strong and well-intentioned it may be, is not capable of exercising the function of a motive force of social change unless it is one of the thousands that must act together to have the ability to rise as a fundamental force in a process.

The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Stalin, understood this perfectly and that is why they made every effort, first to unite the broad masses in the struggle against the autocratic tsarist power and, later, to initiate and develop the building of socialism in what would be the first Motherland of the proletariat in power, the USSR.

But just as the role played by the masses in history is determined, political personalities, leaders as they are also called, have important roles or functions to fulfill; if they do not fulfill them they would be surpassed by events and by other people who do have that ability and willingness to live up to the demands. The strength that these people have comes from the support that social groups give them. No matter how talented and intelligent they may be, without the support of the masses, these men or women would not have the ability to exert influence on the course of events.

Stalin was one of those personalities who had the ability not only to influence the former Soviet Union, but also the world. His greatness was due to the fact that he represented the ideological and political thought of the proletariat, he had the support of the workers and peoples, his strength was that of the revolutionary working class convinced of the need to fight to build socialism and put an end to the power of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Stalin lived up to the political demands of humanity at specific periods, such as: to bring the proletariat to power for the first time, to begin the first experience of building socialism, to confront and defeat Nazi-fascism in the Second World War.

Why could this personality, so attacked by revisionists and the

bourgeoisie, play such an important role in history? Historian Mikhail Kilev notes eight vital traits of Stalin's personality, summarized from testimonies of close collaborators, comrades and friends of the former USSR:

1. Deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism;
2. Devotion to the revolution, socialism and the interests of the workers;
3. Unshakeable principles;
4. An iron logic, great intellect, farsighted spirit and understandable language;
5. Decisiveness, firmness and demand without compromises;
6. Colossal organizing talent;
7. Exceptional ability to work;
8. Simplicity and modesty in work, in his way of life, in his relationships with people

There is no doubt about his mastery of Marxism-Leninism, nor about his contribution to its development through his writings. His theoretical work, collected in several volumes, was not published in its entirety due to the action of the Khrushchevite revisionists, especially the debates within the leadership of the Party in his later years have not been made available, because knowledge of them would reveal the ideological struggle between Stalin and his comrades against the attitudes and political positions of those who later seized power to begin the process of capitalist restoration.

It is not possible for lack of space in this article to explain each of the eight features mentioned above, but all of them show Stalin's great authority. He earned it; the militants of the CPSU and the working class repaid him with their trust.

Stalin placed this political authority at the service of the building of socialism and the development of the revolutionary struggle worldwide. *"Whoever speaks to me of authority and centralization as two things that should be condemned in all circumstances,"* F. Engels pointed out, *"then it seems to me that those who speak of this are either revolutionaries who only pay lip service to it, or they do not know what a revolution is... It was precisely centralization and authority that the Paris Commune lacked."*

The revisionists describe this authority as "Stalinist totalitarianism", which the international bourgeoisie has used to oppose it to so-

called Western democracy. Stalin's authority spread hope and optimism and gave courage to the masses, who were willing to sacrifice themselves to carry out the plans of the Bolshevik Party.

*“It is very fortunate for Russia in her agony to have this great rugged war chief at her head. He is a man of massive outstanding personality, suited to the sombre and stormy times in which his life has been cast... Above all, he is a man with that saving sense of humour and sarcasm, and the ability to accurately capture our thoughts. Stalin's strength was so great that he has established himself as the only one among the leaders of state of all times and of all peoples....*

*Winston Churchill*