

# **The Defeat of Fascism**

**An Analysis of the Results of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International**

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*This pamphlet contains the opening speech and the reply to discussion at a symposium sponsored by International Correspondence held in the fall of 1985 in Harlem in New York. This symposium was held to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of fascism, the sixty-eighth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and the ninetieth anniversary of the death of Frederick Engels.*

*The symposium was participated in by revolutionaries from Africa, the Black Nation in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Iran, Quebec, Canada and the United States. The symposium consisted of these speeches, a speech on the history of the U.S. communist party, and a speech on the National and Colonial Question, focusing on Africa and the Black Nation in the U.S. International Correspondence has also published an intervention in the discussion on Bordiga and "left" communism, which was considerably expanded for publication.*

*There was also lengthy discussion, some of which may be published in the future. All of the speeches at the symposium have, or will be, published in English, French and Spanish.*

1986

*International Correspondence  
Paris, France*

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# The Defeat of Fascism

## An Analysis of the Results of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International

We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 7th Congress of the Comintern somewhat belatedly. The Congress opened on July 25th of 1935. But we are sure those who were in attendance might forgive us for this, for the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern itself was more than a year late. Although the reason that we are late in making the preparations for the celebration of it did not directly relate to the reasons they were late in holding the Congress. They were late in holding the Congress because of the debate that went on prior to the Congress on the nature of fascism and what the international working-class movement and the international Communist movement should do in the face of the fascist offensive against the working class. We are late because of the tremendous work required to reconstruct the actual history of this Congress.

We are holding this celebration on another important and very related anniversary, the 69th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It was the defense of this revolution that was a major preoccupation at the Seventh World Congress; it was the victory over fascism in 1945 that preserved the fruits of this revolution, and today we also celebrate the 40th anniversary of the defeat of fascism.

### A New Epoch of Struggle

In discussing the Seventh World Congress we should first consider just exactly *who* was the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. To hear many people talk of the Comintern today one gets the impression that it was somehow only a small collection of KGB agents from various countries who gathered together in the name of the international proletariat. At the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, in comparison to the 6th Congress, the sections of the Comintern had grown and

become stronger.

“Since the 6th World Congress of the Comintern the membership of the Communist World Party has increased from 1,676,000 to 3,148,000, of which, despite repression and bloody terror, the numbers in the capitalist countries have grown from 445,300 to 758,500.” This despite the decimation of the German Communist Party after Hitler’s ascension to power in 1933. “The number of parties affiliated with the Comintern has grown since the last Congress from 65 to 76. The total membership of the Communist parties and the Young Communist Leagues (including the CPSU and the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union) was 3,835,000 at the 6th Congress and 6,800,000 at the 7th.”<sup>1</sup>

So, the Seventh World Congress was indeed a World Congress of the revolutionary proletariat in the world and of their representatives and delegates. I want to describe a bit of the opening of the Congress to give you the flavor of what was happening then.

The Congress started at 7:30 pm on July 25, 1945. The description given of the scene in the international press goes like this: “Already on entering the Moscow House of Trade Unions, in the Hall of Columns in which the Congress is taking place, one senses an atmosphere of historic happenings. The facade of the building bears an immense electric display board reproducing in electric lights the slogan, *Workers of the World, Unite*, in 16 different languages.

“Passing the main staircase decorated with flowers, the delegates reach long corridors, along the walls of which the individual sections have displayed in artistic fashion the most important episodes of their work and the struggle of the working class in their respective countries.

‘To the side, a large hall has been transformed into an imposing exhibition of revolutionary books and the revolutionary press in general.

‘The delegates take their seats in the splendidly decorated Hall of Columns. The wall behind the *Presidium* is draped with huge red flags, on which are immense portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The portraits bear the inscription, *Long Live the Great, Invincible Banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.*

“Along the entire length of the side walls streamers have

been hung, bearing in six languages the following slogan: *A United Proletarian Front Against the Offensive of Capital, Fascism and Imperialism*. The streamers on the back wall read: *Long live the Soviets in China*.

"After the applause has died down comrade Willhelm Pieck commences his opening speech amidst solemn silence. This speech is immediately translated, and, through an ingeniously constructed listening apparatus, made available to the delegates. The delegates from almost every country on die five continents – white, yellow, brown, black delegates, Europeans, Americans, Australians, Negroes, Indians, Chinese, Japanese – all are imbued with one will: to overthrow odious capitalism and to establish throughout the whole world socialism, the living example of which they are witnessing here in the Soviet fatherland. A real International. Among the delegates may be noticed the leaders of the victorious Communist Party of the Soviet Union. One sees the heroes of the struggle against fascism, especially Dimitrov's outstanding head; one sees the glorious fighters against imperialist war and intervention, among them the energetic features of Marty. One sees the fighters of Soviet China and numerous delegates from the land of bloody Hitler fascism. The best and foremost protagonists of the proletariat of all countries are present.

"The great moment has arrived – the Seventh World Congress begins its work and inaugurates a new epoch in the struggle of the workers and toilers of the world."<sup>2</sup>

This new epoch, the Seventh World Congress came to symbolize, led to tremendous transformation in the international working-class movement. It led to tremendous consequences. It led to tremendous struggles. There was a whole period of struggle against fascism leading to the outbreak of WWII. That struggle was waged internationally by the proletariat on the basis of the line set out at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern.

The accomplishment of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in that period of time was in fact to defeat fascism in a number of countries. There were a number of attempts for fascism to gain victory, there were a number of struggles by the united front to defeat those attempts by fascism. There were also a number of heroic struggles but important losses, as

the civil war in Spain was. But ultimately on the eve of WW II it has to be said that the united front against fascism, the popular front against fascism, did not prevent Hitlerite Germany from launching the fascist WW II.

### **New Tactical Line**

The important question to address is, was this in fact a failure of the tactical line of Comintern or not? There are those today who say that it is, but if we look a little farther in history, despite the German *blitzkrieg* rolling across Europe, despite its tremendous subjugation of the peoples of the world at that time, it failed. Hitlerite fascism failed. Why did it fail? It failed because it was defeated by the same popular front called for at the Seventh World Congress. It failed because fascism was defeated by the international proletariat, principally the proletariat of the Soviet Union but also by proletarian elements in many other countries who united in the struggle against fascism and in the armed struggle against fascism during the war. Also, WWII resulted in the realization of a popular front that went beyond the united front of the working-class movement all the way to include certain imperialist countries who engaged in the war against fascism on the side of the Soviet Union.

So, 40 years ago this year, and 10 years after the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, the Red Army rolled into Berlin. One of the first acts of the Red Army was to raise the flag of the Soviet Union over the Reichstag (the German Parliament); this had a symbolic importance that went beyond just being the seat of the government of Germany. It was in 1933 that the fascists burned down the Reichstag and blamed it on the Communists and then proceeded with the repression of the German working class and used that as the excuse and the pretext that the Communists are terrorists burning down Germany's national institution. One Communist in particular, who became well known in this period, Georgi Dimitrov, was put on trial by the fascists along with several others for burning the Reichstag. He made a tremendous defense against the fascists, to the point that they were really compelled to let him go. In some ways the defense by Dimitrov was the beginning of the united front because there was tremendous support in



the international proletariat, not just in the Communist movement but amongst social-democratic workers, for Dimitrov's stand against fascism.

## **Two Erroneous Views**

There are today two prominent views of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern and the period of the popular front against fascism. Two that we think are erroneous. On the one hand there is the modern revisionist view of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern that we will discuss in more detail later. But essentially seeing the Seventh World Congress as representing a strategic shift in line applied to all times and to all situations and generally pursued since that time. In fact this revisionist interpretation of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern has its twin in the semi-Trotskyite interpretation of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, which is that since the revisionists take their view of the Congress as having been the change of line which justified the revisionists policies of the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's, it must be the source of modern revisionism. Which leads them right to the bourgeois-Trotskyite view that the Congress did not represent a step forward for the international proletariat, but that it represented the subjugation of the international proletariat to the national interests of the Soviet Union.

We think there is a third view of Seventh World Congress in the period of the united front against fascism and that is the view that is actually taken at the Congress, actually upheld by the Comintern, and actually put into practice. Which is neither the view of the present Soviet leadership, nor the view of the many Trotskyite or semi-Trotskyite interpretations of the reactions to it. But before we get to looking at those particular views, we have to look at the question of the historical context of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern.

## **The Historical Context**

The Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, despite what some critics would like to say, did not happen as the whim of Stalin deciding one day – enough with this Comintern; we are going to subordinate it to the foreign policy of the Soviet state and turn them all into agents of the secret police.

The necessity of a tactical shift at the Seventh World Congress by the world proletariat was the direct result of the development of the general crisis of imperialism from the time of WW I. With the first world war, an imperialist world war, the imperialist system went into a grave general crisis. The proletarian movement split. It split between those who upheld reformist social democracy, those who upheld supporting their own bourgeoisie in that imperialist war, and those revolutionary social democrats who opposed supporting their own bourgeoisie in the imperialist war, who called for the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. It was these forces, and principally amongst these forces were the Bolsheviks in Russia, that were instrumental in the foundation of the Communist International, and the October Revolution.

Nevertheless, the proletariat internationally remained split after the period of revolutionary upheaval at the end of WW I, which was not confined to Russia. There were revolutionary struggles in a number of other countries, most importantly in Germany. But with the defeat of the German revolution, with the defeat of the revolution in a number of other countries, defeated principally by the capitulation of social-democracy to the bourgeoisie, social democracy became the gendarme, the police agents of the bourgeoisie, in the sense that in Germany they went into the government and proceeded to eliminate revolutionaries and to do the work of the police and the army. This left a situation where, in the second period of the general crisis, a relative stabilization of capitalism occurred during the 20's, and the proletariat remained split.

### **The Second Period – The Beginning of the United Front**

In that period of time, starting with the Third World Congress of the Comintern, it was Lenin who formulated the first united front tactics with social democracy, and that was united front tactics in the working-class movement around the immediate needs of the working class and an attempt in the process to win over those workers who are influenced by social-democracy. Also during that time, the Comintern waged a campaign for the bolshevization of the parties and the key to the bolshevization of the party was the question of winning over the majority of the working class.

It was principal to the views of the Communists at that time, to Lenin and to all his contemporaries at that time, with some exceptions, that it was necessary to win over the majority of the working class in order to make revolution. That it was not possible for a minority to seize power and maintain power without the support of the mass of the working class and that, despite the bourgeoisie's view of Russia, the Bolsheviks did win over a majority of the working class, and that majority of the working class did win over the masses of the peasants to the side of the October Revolution. But despite the Comintern taking a number of very concrete steps and waging a number of very sharp struggles in order to win over the majority of the working class, it has to be said that in the second period, the Comintern was not successful. In other words, the majority of the working class was not won over.

### **The Third Period – Inability to Pass to the Offensive**

This led into a period when there was a development of the crisis of imperialism once again – a deepening in the crisis, what is referred to as the third period. That was the end of the relative stabilization of capitalism, and the opening up of the objective factors for revolution. The Communist parties were not sufficiently prepared in order to meet that situation to transform it into revolution.

Stalin gives an analysis of this phenomenon in 1934 at the 17th Congress of the CPSU. What Stalin put forward at the 17th Congress was quoted at the Seventh World Congress because it was key to the change in tactics of the Congress. Stalin said: "But while the bourgeoisie chooses the path of war, the working class in the capitalist countries, brought to despair by four years of crisis and unemployment, is beginning to take the path of revolution. This means that a revolutionary crisis is maturing and will continue to mature. And the more the bourgeoisie becomes entangled in its war schemes, the more frequently it resorts to terrorist methods of fighting against the working class and labouring peasantry, the more rapidly will the revolutionary crisis develop.

"Some comrades think that, once there is a revolutionary crisis, the bourgeoisie is bound to be in a hopeless position, that its end is therefore a foregone conclusion, that the victory

of the revolution is thus assured, and that all they have to do is to wait for the fall of the bourgeoisie and to draw up victorious resolutions. That is a profound mistake. The victory of the revolution never comes of itself. It must be prepared for and won, and only a strong proletarian revolutionary party can prepare for and win victory. Moments occur when the situation is revolutionary, when the rule of the bourgeoisie is shaken to its very foundations, and yet the victory of the revolutions does not come, because there is no revolutionary party of the proletariat with sufficient strength and prestige to lead the masses to take power. It would be unwise to believe such *cases* cannot occur.

“It is worth while in this connection to recall Lenin’s prophetic words on revolutionary crisis, uttered at the Second Congress of the Communist International: ‘We have now come to the question of the revolutionary crisis as the basis of our revolutionary action. And here we must first of all note two widespread errors. On the one hand, the bourgeois economists depict this crisis as mere ‘unrest’, as the English so elegantly express it. On the other hand, revolutionaries sometimes try to prove that the crisis is absolutely hopeless. This is a mistake. There is no such thing as an absolutely hopeless situation. The bourgeoisie behaves like an arrogant plunderer who has lost his head; it commits folly after folly, making the situation more acute and hastening its own doom. All this is true. But it cannot be *proved* that there is absolutely no chance of its gulling some minority of the exploited with some kind of minor concessions, or suppressing some movement or uprising of some section or another of the oppressed and exploited. To try to *prove* beforehand that a situation is *absolutely* hopeless would be sheer pedantry, of juggling with concepts and catchwords. In these and similar questions the only real proof is practice. The bourgeois system all over the world is experiencing a most profound revolutionary crisis. The revolutionary parties must now ‘prove’ by their practical actions that they are sufficiently intelligent and organized, are sufficiently in contact with the exploited masses, are sufficiently determined and skillful; to utilize this crisis for a successful and victorious revolution.”<sup>3</sup>

This was Stalin’s position in 1934. It was not the position of the entire Soviet party, it was not the position of the entire

Comintern. The debate waged in 1934 into 1935 was on the question of what to do in the face of the victory of fascism in Germany.

### **Failures in the Bolshevization of the Comintern**

Despite gains as a result of the campaign for bolshevization, the parties of the Communist International were weak. There still remained a tremendous amount of social-democratic and anarchist prejudices from people who rallied to Communism straight from social-democracy, straight from the anarchist movement. Within forces that came from colonial and semi-colonial countries, there was a lack of Marxist traditions. In this period of time and because of this situation there were sharp factional struggles inside the Comintern and inside all of its Communist parties that weakened the Comintern and the Communist parties.

Constantly, petit bourgeois elements were splitting out of the parties going off to the arms of social-democracy and denouncing the Comintern and the Soviet Union. Trotsky is the most famous one, but there were quite a number of others. For example, it was not until 1928 that the leadership was consolidated in the German Communist Party. There is combined with this situation, the treachery of social-democracy and despite numerous attempts by the Comintern to work with social-democratic organizations, there was a refusal by social-democracy to engage in any kind of united front activities against the rise of fascism. There were also many important sectarian mistakes by parties in the Communist International. This is the way the report of the Executive Committee of the Communist International at the Seventh World Congress described the situation:

“The Communist Parties in most countries before the crisis were numerically weak organisations and exerted influence on a relatively thin stratum of the workers.

“The rapid change in the situation, the tremendous growth of discontent among the masses, and the growth of the fascist danger and the danger of war required that the Communists should constantly examine the situation and the role played by the various parties, groups and persons and launch in proper time the slogans that corresponded to the changed situation.

This complexity of the situation also required tremendous organisational work. In fulfilling these tasks the Communists gave many splendid instances of exemplary work. But with regard to the rapid and politically complicated development, they were often too late with their slogans, did not always correctly estimate the relationship of class forces and many times persisted in slogans and fighting methods which a short time ago were correct, but which had become antiquated with the change in the situation.

“It is true that the Communist Parties had grasped the important points recorded by the Sixth World Congress to the effect that a new revolutionary upsurge was developing. But they often were not sufficiently aware of the fact that a revolutionary upsurge was not separated from a revolutionary crisis by a Chinese wall. They often entertained extremely simplified conceptions of the manner and means by which the masses of the workers would break with their old reformist leaders and come over to the side of the revolutionary struggle.”<sup>4</sup>

This problem was further intensified with the kind of sectarian mistakes that were made, for example equating social democratic workers with their leaders and the failure to develop the united front in the working-class movement from below even around day-to-day issues with social-democratic workers. Communist work was characterized at that time as being principally propagandist and not of leading the masses. In fact during that period of time, in some important respects because of these errors, the Comintern lost influence to social-democracy and even to fascism. A couple of examples were given at the Seventh World Congress. One is the example of the struggle around the question of the unemployed where Dimitrov talked about how the German Communist Party spent too much time doing propaganda about unemployment and the crisis capitalism etc., meanwhile the fascists were opening up soup kitchens. This, of course, does not mean that the solution was merely to open up soup kitchens, but the kind of propagandist approach that was taken allowed the fascists to address the day-to-day interests of the unemployed strata and rally them to the cause of fascism and certainly rally them against Communism.<sup>5</sup>

Another example is given by Dimitrov on this question

which is quite interesting and I think people can probably relate to it. It's not just something that happened then, but the kind of thing that many people have seen in their experience in the left-wing movement today. Dimitrov says, "I remember a meeting of unemployed workers which took place in Berlin before Hitler came to power. At the time the trial of the swindlers and rogues, the Sklarek brothers, was proceeding, a trial which lasted several months. The national socialist representative who spoke at the meeting exploited the trial dexterously for his own demagogic ends. He enumerated the rogueries, corruptions and other crimes of the brothers Sklarek, pointed out that the trial had already lasted months, reckoned up how many hundreds of thousands of marks the proceedings had already cost, and then declared amidst loud applause from the assembled unemployed workers, that corrupt bandits like the Sklarek brothers should be shot out of hand and the money wasted on their trial used instead to assist the unemployed.

"A Communist then got up and demanded the floor. At first the chairman refused to let him speak, but he was finally compelled to do so under the pressure of the workers who wanted to hear what the Communist would say. The Communist mounted the platform and the whole hall grew silent and all the workers listened to hear what the Communist speaker would have to say to them. And what did he say? His powerful voice thundered through the hall: 'Comrades, the plenary session of the Communist International has just concluded its meetings. It has shown ways and means of saving the working class. The chief task which it has placed before us is the winning of the majority of the working class. (Laughter.) The plenary session pointed out that the unemployed workers movement must be politicized. (Laughter.) The plenary session called on us to raise the movement to a higher level' (Laughter.)

"And in this way the speaker continued, obviously under the impression that he was 'explaining' the real decisions of the plenary session.

"Could such a speech enthuse unemployed workers? Could they possibly be satisfied with the information; that first of all they must be politicized, then revolutionised and then mobilised in order to raise their movement to a higher level?

(Laughter and loud applause.)

"I sat in a corner of the hall and observed with dismay how unemployed workers who had at first been so obviously anxious to hear what the Communist would have to say to them and what practical advice he would have to give them, now began to yawn and show obvious signs of disappointment. And I was not surprised when a little later the chairman of the meeting was able to deprive our comrade of the floor brusquely without a single protest from the assembled workers.

"Unfortunately, that is by no means an isolated instance. Such things happened not only in Germany. Comrades, agitation of that sort means agitation against ourselves. It is about time that we put a stop once and for all to such childish (in order not to use any stronger word) agitational methods."<sup>5</sup>

It is a small example, it is one incident, but you combine those many incidents into a pattern and then you have a problem in terms of rallying even a minority, let alone the majority, of the working class against fascism.

This is not to negate the good work done, because after all in 1932 the German Party had some 6 million votes in the election out of a total of slightly less than 30 million—approximately 20% of the vote—over 1/3 of the proletariat. The proletarian struggle was gaining strength from Germany to Spain, to the bourgeois democratic revolution in Spain of 1931, to the Chinese Soviet movement, which was gaining tremendous strength with the numerous defeats of the Kuomintang. As the crisis deepened the bourgeoisie grew more desperate. The German bourgeoisie played its last card and gambled on Hitler and struck the first blow. Stalin said at the 17th Congress that the victory of fascism in Germany, "must be regarded not only as a symptom of the weakness of the working class and as a result of the betrayal of the working class by Social-Democracy, which paved the way for fascism; it must be regarded as a symptom of the weakness of the bourgeoisie, as a symptom of the fact that the bourgeoisie is already unable to rule by the old methods of parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, and as a consequence, is compelled in its home policy to resort to terroristic methods of administration—it must be taken as a symptom of the fact it is no longer able to find a way out of the



present situation on the basis of a peaceful foreign policy, as a consequence of which it is compelled to resort to a policy of war."<sup>6</sup>

This, as we shall see later, formed the common basis for the unity of action of the Soviet Union and the international proletariat, both Communist and social-democratic, petit-bourgeois strata and even certain bourgeois forces to unite against fascism. To understand this, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of fascism.

### **What is Fascism?**

The concept of fascism has been trivialized by overuse by modern day leftists. Any scientific conception of it has been abandoned for emotionalism that obscures the development of correct tactics. This of course is not a new tendency, as Dimitrov said at the Seventh World Congress, "there is a tendency in our ranks to generalize too widely with regard to fascism, to ignore the concrete peculiarities of the fascist movements in the various countries and to regard erroneously all the reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie as fascism, and even regard erroneously the whole non-communist camp as fascist. The result was not a strengthening, but on the contrary a weakening of our struggle against fascism."<sup>7</sup>

The American Party denounced the New Deal as fascist. The German Party denounced the government that preceded Hitler as fascist. (Of course, we are all familiar today with a number of those who quite literally called the whole non-communist camp as fascists or the whole non-Progressive Labor Party camp as fascist. Of course, now there are many bourgeois parties coming to power, many right wing parties, who are always called fascist etc.)

We must return to the scientific definition of fascism. It is the open terroristic dictatorship of the most chauvinist, and most imperialist elements of finance capital. It is not only bourgeois nationalism, it is bestial chauvinism. It is a government system of political banditry — a system of provocation and torture practiced upon the working class and the revolutionary elements of the peasantry, the petit bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. It is medieval barbarity and bestiality. It is unbridled aggression in relationship to other nations and countries. The

ascension to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another. But a substitution of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie, bourgeois democracy, by another form—open terrorist dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> Fascism did not cease to exist when this definition was made, nor did many of its worse features yet manifest themselves.

We need to add to this Stalin's further refinements of the definition of German fascism in the course of WWII. Stalin said, "The Hitler party is a party of medieval reaction and blackguard pogroms."<sup>9</sup> "Who are they, our enemies, these fascists? What sort of people are they? What does the experience of war teach us in this respect... the German fascist are not nationalists but imperialists who seize other countries and bleed them white to enrich German banks and plutocrats." They do this by introducing "the slave and serf system.... In actual fact, the German fascists are reactionary feudal barons and the German army is an army dominated by feudal barons and shedding its blood to enrich the German barons and re-establish the rule of landlords. That is what the experience of the war shows.... In actual fact, the German fascists are enemies of European culture and the German army is an army of medieval obscurantism, employed to destroy European culture and implant the slave-owners 'culture' of the German bankers and barons. That is what the experience of war shows. Such is our enemy in his true colors, exposed and brought to light by the experience of war."<sup>10</sup>

In the war against the Soviet Union, German fascism was "out to restore the rule of landlords, to restore tsarism, to destroy national culture and the national state existence of the Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Letts, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Moldavians, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanians, and the other free peoples of the Soviet Union, to Germanize them into slaves of German princes and barons. Thus, the issue is one of life or death for the Soviet State, for the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall remain free or fall into slavery."<sup>11</sup>

On a world scale: "The program of action of the Italo-German coalition may be characterized by the following points: race hatred; domination of the 'chosen' nations; subjugation of

other nations and seizure of their territories; economic enslavement of the subjugated nations and spoliation of their national wealth; destruction of democratic liberties; universal institution of the Hitler regime."<sup>12</sup>

The principal character of fascism in power, initially, was the attack on the working class and its organizations, the deprivation of any form of political liberty. Auschwitz and Dachau were first built, not for Jews, but for Communists (many of whom were Jews). Those that were not executed were introduced to slave labor. If you want to talk about the *real gulag* for workers and communists, this is the place to look, it is the Hitlerite fascists who tried to restore the political system of Solzhenitsyn's preference, Tsarism. "The Hitler regime", as Stalin said, "is a counterpart of the reactionary regime which existed in Russia under Tsarism."<sup>13</sup>

### **The Choice – Democracy or Fascism**

So, before you judge the tactical wisdom of the Seventh World Congress, you should think long and hard about the choice that faced the international proletariat in 1935. As Dimitrov said, in closing his final speech at the Congress: "Today the working masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the immediate choice between bourgeois-democracy and fascism, and not, unfortunately between the proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois- democracy."<sup>14</sup>

The aim of fascism was to destroy the democratic liberties of the working class and enslave it, to make war on the base of the world proletariat, the Soviet Union, to crush all allies and potential allies of the proletariat – the oppressed nations, the peasantry, the intermediate classes and even the imperialist countries with strong democratic traditions.

The Seventh World Congress symbolized the tactical shift of the Comintern, it adopted it on a world-wide scale, but it is incorrect to look at the Congress as the beginning of this change. This is a view that is promoted by those who claim that the Comintern was just a puppet of Moscow.

Shortly after the 13th plenum of the ECCI in 1933 and the 17th Congress of the Soviet Party (January of 1934), on February 6, 1934, the fascists attempted a coup in France. The Communists called for demonstrations against the fascists, and tens

of thousands of workers, including social-democratic workers, against the directives of their leadership, heeded the call and this was the beginning of the united front, which resulted in a general strike a few days later, that resulted in the defeat of fascism. In summing up the work of the Seventh World Congress, Manuilsky in a report to the Soviet party talking about this period, speaks of how "these February days represented a turning point in the history of the working-class movement in Europe; during these days the transition took place from the offensive of fascism to the counter-attack of the proletariat. These February days undermined the confidence of the bourgeoisie and increased the belief of the proletariat in its own forces. They marked the sharp turn of the socialist and reformist workers towards the positions of class struggle. In the fire of battle the basis of that unity of action was laid...

"Unity of action assisted the French proletariat to repulse the first attacks of fascism in France, to liquidate the Doumergue government, the government of the preparation of the fascist dictatorship, and to weaken the attack of capital against the standards of living of the masses, and in particular the State officials of the workers in the State and municipal undertakings. The establishment of a united fighting front served to stimulate a powerful movement in favour of trade union unity which led to the unification of a number of trade union organisations, particularly the organisations of the railwaymen, and prepared the way for the unification of the two national federations into a united federation. The united front was the basis for the general people's front in the struggle against the offensive of capital, against fascism and war, the peoples front which succeeded in becoming a centre of attraction for the anti-fascist forces amongst other sections and classes of the population. With its own experience the French proletariat enriched the experience of the whole working-class movement all over the world, because it demonstrated that prompt and speedy resistance to fascism (unlike Austria and Spain) spared the working class unnecessary sacrifices and the bitterness of defeat. And finally, the united front movement in France has put the question of unity on the agenda of the whole of the international working-class movement. Today the international social-democracy cannot avoid the problem of the united front

because it is now the loud demand of millions of workers throughout the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Now it is important to realize that the counter-attack of the proletariat on those fateful days in France was not directed by Moscow. One can even say that probably the leadership of the Comintern wasn't even really aware of it. In the sense of the events that immediately developed, they didn't get telegrams and send back the orders. The working class itself, after seeing what happened to the German working class, said no, this is not going to happen in France, and it didn't.

Now think for a moment how history might have changed on that fateful day if the fascists had actually seized power in France. Because in all the countries of Europe there were strong fascist movements. Fascism had existed for a long time, it dates back to the immediate post WWI era, Italian fascism coming to power in the early '20s. With the growth of German fascism, etc. there was a corresponding growth of fascist forces in other countries. They saw what the German bourgeoisie managed to achieve. The bourgeoisie, the most reactionary sections of it, looked for the same sort of solution to their problems in the face of the crisis. In France they tried but they failed. This led to a number of other struggles in other countries that also blocked the advance of fascism to some degree. This led to a situation that the only way that German fascism could institute fascism on a European wide-scale was by war.

With the lessons of the German rise of fascism, the attempted coup in France, six days after the events in France, in Austria the fascists seized power. In Austria at this point the Communist party was miniscule. The social democratic party was by European standards generally more leftist than the average party. The Austrian social democratic party at that time also had an armed wing to it, a militia. That militia, those social democratic workers and the Communists fought back with arms in Austria but lost. Nevertheless, the united front was further developed on those barricades because much of the Austrian social democratic party rallied to the Austrian Communist Party to form a united party of the working class to struggle against fascism and for the national independence of Austria.

## The United Front – born of Struggle

These events were not long after Dimitrov's heroic struggle in Leipzig, the trial that I referred to before. It is at this time that Dimitrov is liberated from the fascist prisons and comes back to Moscow and wages a struggle to get the Communist International to change its line. Even one of the principal bourgeois historians of the Comintern has to admit that "it was the pressure of the external events rather than the pressure from above in Moscow which eventually drove the Comintern along the path of united and later popular front."<sup>16</sup>

It was the objective needs of the European proletariat and the Russian proletariat to not be crushed by fascism. It was this need that forced the change in tactics which was resisted by important leaders of the Communist International and the CPSU (B).

Unlike the stereotype image the bourgeoisie likes to paint, international communism is rooted in the struggle of the masses. The Bolsheviks did not create the Soviets in Russia, they were created by the masses as a necessary vehicle of their struggle; the Bolsheviks took over the leadership of the Soviets and led them to victory. Somewhat analogously, the united front against fascism was more the spontaneous creation of the working class in the face of fascism than a resolution of the Comintern. Those that think the united front was imposed by Moscow have turned history on its head and repeat the calumny of the fascists trying to prevent the growth of the united front.

The change in tactics was not confined to the policies of the Comintern. At the same time historically, there was a change in emphasis in Soviet foreign policy. This change became known as the policy of "collective security." The response to the victory of fascism in Germany, the response to what Stalin laid out in the 17th Congress in 1934 as clearly being the imminent danger of fascist aggression and war against the Soviet Union, was to make alliances of collective security with other countries that were threatened, whose national independence was threatened by German fascism, and also with certain imperialist powers who had no objective interests at that time to wage a war to struggle for the redivision of the world. In other

words, the certain imperialists powers who, in a war with Germany, knew they would get redivided and who had little possibility to gain. So there were certain powers that had an interest, as it was characterized, in preserving the status quo.

The Soviet Union attempted to work on the level of state diplomacy in order to struggle for peace and to prevent the imminent outbreak of war by the fascists. The Soviet Union proceeded from the fact that it was possible to defeat fascism through not only the struggle of the proletariat in the world but even with certain other countries in the world. The position that was taken in this regard, if you were going to categorize it in terms of personalities and parties, in the Soviet party it was principally Stalin working with Dimitrov and Manuilsky that waged a struggle against the sectarian and dogmatic line that existed in the Comintern. Generally, the people who upheld that line in the course of the struggle abandoned it and rallied to the correct line. But nevertheless there was a severe struggle over this question. This struggle does not come out sharply at the Seventh Congress because by that time the struggle was by and large resolved.

### **Who Criticizes the Seventh Congress and Why?**

Now there are other views of what was behind the tactical shift of the Communist International at this time. Those views are common today and they existed at the time. I'm going to read a few of them to you from then and from now to give you a flavor of that point of view. This comes from an open letter to revolutionary groups by the founders of the 4th International in that period of time. "The Communist International is the sower of the worst illusions of reformism and pacifism, gives actual support to the right wing in the Socialist Party against the left, demoralizes the proletarian vanguard for a fascist takeover.... The Stalin-Laval communique is its death warrant.... Against the reactionary lie of 'national defense' it is necessary to advance the slogan of the revolutionary destruction of the national state. To the madhouse of capitalist Europe it is necessary to counterpose the program of the Socialist United States of Europe, as a stage to the United States of the World."<sup>17</sup>

Besides this rather small grouping of Trotskyites, I want to remind you who was the principal bearer and carrier of this

program. Whose program was it in 1935 to destroy the national state of every other country in Europe. Which political force in Europe at the time tried to rally the people of Europe against the madhouse of capitalist Europe to establish one united *Reich*, first in Europe, then all over the world, a fascist *Reich* to last a thousand years?

Another view in that period of time comes from an M. Florinsky. Some of you may have heard of him – he’s from Columbia University, and has written many, many books on the Soviet Union. He is one of the great ideologues of the bourgeois point of view about the Soviet Union. But I want to go back to a book that he wrote at that time. The same time that the Trotskyites were saying what they were saying, this is what he was saying: “It seems clear that in spite of all the revolutionary phraseology of its Program and Resolutions the Comintern had itself largely degenerated, or grown, from militant and uncompromising general staff of world revolution into an international organization for the defense of the USSR. But what really matters is the aim of the policy of the USSR... this policy is stated with sufficient clearness by the 6th Congress of the Comintern, it was a policy that consisted in the prevention at any price of largely imaginary intervention in Russian affairs by capitalist nations, and in striving for the creation of a complete socialist state within Russian frontiers under the aegis of the Red Army and the protection of the world proletariat.”<sup>18</sup>

Well, we know how imaginary that intervention turned out to be! Again a unity of views, of course he cites at that time Trotsky to prove his points. But nevertheless, a unity of views. Number one, there is nothing to fear from German fascism. Number two, we have to attack the national state of Europe from the left; and number three, we have to oppose the Soviet Union and its nationalistic attempts to build socialism in one country.

Another bourgeois ideologue from Oxford University, and a member of the British foreign service said: “From the Seventh Congress onwards there begins to take place a marked revival of nationalism, Soviet power became not simply a means to a revolutionary end, but an end in itself; and Soviet power was very much the same as ‘Russian power,’ so that the ‘Soviet state’ and the ‘Soviet idea’ – nationalism and communism –



merged to form an ardently nationalistic communism."<sup>19</sup> This was the ideological basis for arguing that fascism and communism were the same thing.

In terms of the views of the euro-communists, shall we say, the former professor of the University of Warsaw, and after problems with the modern revisionists, now of Oxford University: "In the natural course of things, Stalinization spread throughout the world communist movement. For the first decade of its existence the Third International was still a forum of discussion and conflict between the different forms of Communist ideology, but thereafter it lost all independence and became an instrument of Soviet foreign policy completely subordinated to Stalin's authority. In fact the German Communists, who represented a powerful political force, turned their fire against the socialists was a major cause of Hitler's accession to power."<sup>20</sup>

So here we have it, the Comintern is a force of world revolution as long as there is a conflict among the "different forms of Communist ideology." Precisely the period when the Comintern was weakened by this struggle unable to rally the majority of the proletariat, unable to decisively take advantage of the world intensification of the general crisis in the development of the great depression. It's precisely this kind of struggle that weakened and sapped the Comintern. This is, supposedly, in the interest of the world revolutionary movement. But at the precise moment when the Comintern can turn that situation around and define a clear policy to act on a mass level against the offensive of capitalism and fascism, it's at that point that the Comintern loses all its independence and becomes an instrument of Soviet foreign policy.

Then Fernando Claudin, who is probably the number one self-proclaimed "authority," on the Communist International (in other words he wrote the book that most leftists that criticize the Communist International read, it is their bible) said: "Why did Stalin give the signal for the turn at this time? To judge by the information available the explanation lies—as with other turns made by the Comintern—in Soviet policy, more specifically in Soviet foreign policy."<sup>21</sup> Claudin in fact does not discuss in his book in terms of what was discussed above; what happened in France, what happened in Austria,

what happened in the internal struggle in the Comintern, he glosses it all over and merely talks about the changes in that time of Soviet foreign policy. And then he concludes that since the Soviet Union is changing its foreign policy and after that the Comintern adopts a different line then therefore isn't it a cause and effect relationship?

But in order to understand the nature of this criticism and what is really at issue you have to go back before the Seventh Congress, you have to go back to previous struggles inside the Soviet Union, previous struggles inside the Bolshevik Party. It is not Claudin that came up with these ideas. It is not in fact the Trotskyites that came up with these ideas in 1935 in the face of the Seventh Congress, or in 1933 in face of the victory of fascism. In fact we have to go back to the debate about socialism in one country in the Soviet Union. But not the debate that occurred between Stalin and Trotsky. We have to go back to the debate that occurred between Lenin and Trotsky.

### **Socialism in One Country**

It is a typical Trotskyite technique to say that at a particular time in history a certain policy was adopted, condemn it, and ignore the history of its development. The charges of nationalism against the Soviet Union and the CPSU(B) did not start in the 1930s, as some like to pretend today. It is like Trotsky who said that until 1925 whoever heard of socialism in one country, that it was Stalin's invention to transform the party and destroy the world proletarian revolution. Stalin, speaking at the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI in 1926, with this one example shows what an absolutely dishonest and opportunist element Trotsky was. He goes back to an article Lenin wrote in 1915, "the United States of Europe Slogan" (which in 1935 was the central slogan around which the "Fourth International" was founded).

Stalin quotes Lenin, "As a separate slogan, however, the slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, firstly, because it merges with socialism; secondly, because it may give rise to a wrong interpretation in the sense of the impossibility of the victory of socialism in a single country and about the relation of such a country to the rest.

"Uneven economic and political development is an

absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, *having expropriated the capitalists and having organised its own socialist production*, would stand up against the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, raising revolts in those countries against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states." For "the free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states."<sup>22</sup>

Then Stalin quotes Trotsky's reply in 1915 to Lenin's article: "'Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism.' From this the *Social-Democrat* (the central organ of the Bolsheviks in 1915, where Lenin's article was published — *J. St.*) draw the conclusion that the victory of socialism is possible in one country, and that therefore there is no reason to make the dictatorship of the proletariat in each separate country contingent upon the establishment of a United States of Europe. That no country in its struggle must 'wait' for others is an elementary thought which it is useful and necessary to reiterate in order that the idea of concurrent international action may not be replaced by the idea of temporising international inaction. Without waiting for the others, we begin and continue the struggle nationally, in the full confidence that our initiative will give an impetus to the struggle in other countries; but if this should not occur, *it would be hopeless to think* — as historical experience and theoretical considerations testify — that, for example, *a revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of a conservative Europe, or that a socialist Germany could exist in isolation in a capitalist world.* To accept the perspective of a social revolution within national bounds is to fall a prey to that very *national narrow-mindedness* which constitutes the essence of social-patriotism."<sup>23</sup>

So, for all of those that want to talk about how the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, how the line of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, became nationalist, became social-patriotic talk about the patriotism of the Soviet Union — all of this is throwing dust in peoples' eyes. The debate occurred a long time ago.

The debate is fundamental to the question whether or not there should have even been an October Revolution or what that revolution was even made for. The Bolsheviks should have gone to the workers and peasants and said, "Rise up in revolution! We are going to be defeated and crushed unless those people in Germany do something. But meanwhile we can have some fun and be called proletarian internationalists."!

### **The National and International Tasks of the Proletariat**

In this it raises the fundamental question, which was also addressed in the same speech by Stalin. The question of the national versus the international tasks of the proletarian revolution in particular: "The Party holds that the 'national' and international tasks of the proletariat of the USSR merge into the one general task of emancipating the proletarians of all countries from capitalism, that the interests of the building of socialism in our country wholly and completely merge with the interests of the revolutionary movement of all countries into the one general interest of the victory of the socialist revolution in all countries.

"What would happen if the proletarians of all countries did not sympathise with and support the Republic of Soviets? There would be intervention and the Republic of Soviets would be smashed.

"What would happen if capital succeeded in smashing the Republic of Soviets? There would set in an era of the blackest reaction in all the capitalist and colonial countries, the working class and the oppressed peoples would be seized by the throat, the positions of international communism would be lost.

"What will happen if the sympathy and support that the republic of Soviets enjoys among the proletarians of all countries grows and intensifies? It will radically facilitate the building of socialism in the USSR.

"What will happen if the achievements of socialist construction in the USSR continue to grow? It will radically improve the revolutionary position of the proletarians of all countries in their struggle against capital, will undermine the position of international capital in its struggle against the proletariat, and will greatly heighten the chances of the world proletariat.

“But it follows from this that the interests and tasks of the proletariat of the USSR are interwoven and inseparably connected with interests and the tasks of the revolutionary movement in all countries, and, conversely, that the tasks of the revolutionary proletarians of all countries are inseparably connected with the tasks and achievements of the proletarians of the USSR in the field of socialist construction.

“Hence to counterpose the ‘national’ tasks of the proletarians of a particular country to the international tasks is to commit a profound political error.

“Hence anyone who depicts the zeal and fervour displayed by the proletarians of the USSR in the struggle on the front of socialist construction as a sign of ‘national isolation’ or ‘national narrow-mindedness,’ as our oppositionists sometimes do, has gone out of his mind or fallen into second childhood.

“Hence affirmation of the unity and inseparability of the interests and tasks of the proletarians of one country and the interests and tasks of the proletarians of all countries is the surest way to victory of the revolutionary movement of the proletarians of all countries.

“Precisely for this reason, the victory of the proletarian revolution in one country is not an end in itself, but a means and an aid for the development and victory of the revolution in all countries.

“Hence building socialism in the USSR means furthering the common cause of the proletarians of all countries, it means forging the victory over capital not only in the USSR, but in all the capitalist countries, for the revolution in the USSR is part of the world revolution – its beginning and the base for its development.”<sup>24</sup>

Now the fundamental question raised here is: does the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union in fact contribute to the international proletarian struggle for revolution, or does it destroy it? The main line of argument of the Trotskyites, and of all the derivations of the Trotskyite theory since then, is basically that the preservation of the socialist revolution in a country by itself leads to the degeneration of the revolution into nationalism. It leads to the subordination of the international proletarian revolution to the existence of that state. It leads to that

state deforming its economy to build an internationally autarchic economy. Ultimately, in the Maoist point of view of things, it leads to socialism degenerating itself, socialism being the source of the revival of capitalism, rather than being a force to destroy capitalism.

We have no shortage of people today that have gone out of their minds or who have fallen into their second childhood, and those who never left their first.

We have to ask ourselves: if what the Soviet Union did in the 1930's helped or hindered the development of the world proletarian revolution. But again before we jump to the 1930's, let's jump back again a little bit. This debate wasn't new in the Soviet Union—this debate was intrinsic to the foundation of the Soviet state and the divisions that existed in the Soviet party of what to do after they seized power. Before the question came up of making an alliance with France or with Czechoslovakia; with Britain and the United States against German fascism; before the question of concluding non-aggression pacts and collective security arose, a more fundamental question arose in the history of the Soviet state and that was after they seized power in 1917. Would there be peace or would there be war?

### **The First Struggle for Peace with Capitalism**

The Bolsheviks came to power on a platform of peace. Their slogan was "Peace, Land and Bread." Nevertheless, there were those in the party who said they should continue a revolutionary war to liberate Europe. An interesting thought—as Lenin said: we have no army but we were going to liberate Europe. They wanted to abandon peace, the redistribution of land to the peasants in the army and bread for the starving, this was the practical implications of continuing the war effort. The popular support of the revolution would have been lost for the sake of a promised European revolution, that has yet to arrive to this day.

What was the task at that time vis-a-vis the world proletarian revolution? To look at that, I'm going to look at a number of things that Lenin said on that question. Because actually a lot of things that people criticize Stalin for, criticize the Soviet Union for in the 1930's, are just a mere reflection of the

criticisms that the “left” communists made of Lenin and his response to them at the time of the Brest- Litovsk Treaty.

Those who want to attack the foreign policy of the Soviet state in the 1930’s should have the honesty and the courage to address the origins of that policy. And there are a few who do, and they end up abandoning Leninism. Lenin in that period denounces those that use the revolutionary phrase of revolutionary war as being consistent essentially with the imperialist point of view – the view that Russia should remain in the imperialist war. There was a left version of essentially the same line.

The bourgeoisie in Russia wanted Russia to continue in the war. Of course, the left communists wanted to continue in the war for the sake of the revolution, or that is what they said. Lenin characterized this kind of thinking, this slogan of “revolutionary war” in a way that maintains its relevance far beyond the immediate circumstances in 1918. The cry of “revolutionary war” has been the cry of the “left” oppositionists throughout the period of socialism in the Soviet Union. It is a slogan against the building of socialism in one country and for the forcible export of revolution by means of the Red Army. In every crisis situation the solution is supposedly this revolutionary war: in 1918 against Germany, in 1927 in China, in 1936 in France, in 1937 in Spain, and after WWII in France, Italy, Greece, Iran, etc.

The struggle against this kind of thinking reached a decisive stage as early as 1918, and this struggle deserves some attention and I will quote a number of passages from Lenin, to establish that if one is to take a stand against the policies of the Comintern and the Soviet Union in the 1930’s and 1940’s this cannot be done while trying to drape oneself in Lenin’s cloak.

“When I said at a Party meeting that the revolutionary phrase about a revolutionary war might ruin our revolution, I was reproached for the sharpness of my polemics. There are, however, moments when a question must be raised sharply and things given their proper names, when there is a threat that irreparable harm may be done to the Party and the revolution.

“The revolutionary phrase, more often than not, is a disease from which revolutionary parties suffer at times when

they constitute, directly or indirectly, a combination, alliance of, intermingling of proletarian and petty-bourgeois elements, and when the course of revolutionary events is marked by big, rapid zigzags. By revolutionary phrase we mean the repetition of revolutionary slogans irrespective of the objective circumstances at a given turn in events with the given state of affairs obtaining at the time. The slogans are superb, alluring, intoxicating, but there are no grounds for them; such in the nature of the revolutionary phrase."<sup>25</sup>

Lenin explains how in the conditions of 1918 the revolution had resulted in the demobilization of the army and its disintegration and the Soviet Union had no army to fight this revolutionary war. This, combined with the expectations of the masses for peace, made it impossible to mobilize such an army. "Anyone who does not want to comfort himself with mere words, bombastic declarations and exclamations must see that the 'slogan' of revolutionary war in February 1918 is the emptiest of phrases that has nothing real, nothing objective behind it. This slogan today *expresses* nothing but desire, deep feeling, indignation and resentment. And a slogan with such a content is called a revolutionary phrase."<sup>26</sup>

"It is one thing to be certain that the German revolution is maturing and to do our part towards helping it mature, to serve it as far as possible *by work*, agitation and fraternisation, anything you like, but help the maturing of the revolution *by work*. That is what revolutionary proletarian internationalism means.

"It is another thing to declare, directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, that the German revolution is *already mature* (although it obviously is not) and to base your tactics on it. There is not a grain of revolutionism in that, there is nothing but phrase-mongering."<sup>27</sup>

This has been historically, however, the perpetual call of the Trotskyites, that the Soviet state should base its tactics on the imminent revolution in Germany, in France, in Iran, in Greece, etc., etc. They have always castigated the Soviet state for not opposing anything and everything done by any imperialist country as necessary for the revolution and if the Soviet Union, in any way, deals with the realities forced upon it by the absence of real revolution in these countries, it is



supposedly abandoning the revolution.

“Does any sort of ‘resistance’ to German imperialism help the German revolution? Anyone who cares to think a little, or even to recall the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia, will quite easily realise that resistance to reaction helps the revolution only when it is *expedient*. During half a century of the revolutionary movement in Russia we know and have seen many cases of resistance to reaction that were not expedient. We Marxist are always proud that we determine the expediency of any form of struggle by a precise calculation of the mass forces and class relationships. We have said that an insurrection is not always expedient; unless the prerequisites exist among the masses it is an adventure; we have often condemned the most heroic forms of resistance by individuals as inexpedient and harmful from the point of view of the revolution:

“To help the German revolution we must either limit ourselves to propaganda, agitation and fraternisation as long as the forces are not strong enough for a firm, serious, decisive blow in an open military or insurrectionary clash, or we must accept that clash, *if we are sure* it will not help the enemy.

“It is clear to everyone (except those intoxicated with empty phrases) that to undertake a serious insurrectionist or military clash *knowing* that we have no forces, *knowing* that we have no army, is a gamble that will not help the German workers but will make their struggle more difficult and make matters easier for their enemy and for our enemy.”<sup>27</sup>

Oh how terribly “opportunist.” To put in the forefront the expediency of the Soviet state. For the Soviet state to decide whether or not a revolutionary crisis is mature or whether or not it is necessary to call for different tactics in that situation. This is exactly what Stalin was attacked for by the Trotskyites who have always wanted to sacrifice Soviet Power for the sake of the “world revolution.”

### **Must We Preserve Soviet Power?**

Lenin polemicized in his day against those who argued “that in the interests of the world revolution *we must* accept the loss of Soviet power.... Why should the interests of the world revolution demand that?... Perhaps the authors believe that the

interests of the world revolution forbid making any peace at all with imperialists? It is clear that this opinion would lead to a denial of the expediency of the Brest negotiations and to a rejection of peace, 'even' if accompanied by the return of Poland, Latvia and Courland. The incorrectness of this view is as clear as day. A socialist republic surrounded by imperialist powers could not, from this point of view, conclude any economic treaties, and could not exist at all, without flying off to the moon."<sup>28</sup>

This was the Trotskyite ultra-left view of Lenin's peace efforts and it has been their view of every action by the Soviet Union afterwards, be it economic or on the level of state diplomacy. Every economic agreement with the imperialists is treated as abandoning the revolution, every peace treaty is denounced as narrow nationalism, even if that treaty expands the Soviet base of world revolution, as the Brest treaty did, as the Soviet-German non-aggression agreement did in 1939, and as the Yalta agreements led to after WWII. The Trotskyite attitude has always been that the Soviet Union should fly off to the moon, and in this they only have the "left" sentiments of the bourgeoisie.

In contradiction with necessary compromises with imperialist reaction, against choosing the expedient time and means, the ultra-leftists have always demanded that the Soviet Union "push" the revolution forward in other countries, and have always cited particular cases of Stalin's lack of "pushing" the revolution as proof of abandoning the revolution. They conveniently ignore what Lenin said about them and try to disparage Stalin while wrapping themselves in Lenin's cloak. "Such a 'theory' would be completely at variance with Marxism, which has always been opposed to 'pushing' revolutions that develop with acuteness of the class antagonisms engendering revolutions. Such a theory would be tantamount to the view that armed uprising is a form of struggle which is obligatory always and under all conditions. Actually, however, the interests of the world revolution demand that Soviet power, having overthrown the bourgeoisie in our country, should *help* that revolution, but should choose a *form* of help which is commensurate with its own strength. The German revolution is ripening, but it has evidently not reached the stage of an explosion

in Germany, of civil war in Germany. By 'accepting the possibility of losing Soviet power', we certainly would not be helping the German revolution to reach maturity, but *would be hindering* it. We would be helping German reaction, playing into its hands, hampering the socialist movement in Germany and repelling from socialism large masses of German proletarians and semi-proletarians who would have not yet come over to socialism and would be scared by the defeat of Soviet Russia, just as the English workers were scared by the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871."<sup>28</sup>

The ultra-leftists have always clamored from Spain to France, from Germany to China, from Greece to Iran that the Soviet Union should risk all to "push" the revolution, when the result is more likely to have been at least partial, if not total defeat for the Soviet Union by the imperialists, and no actual revolution in these countries where the class struggle was not yet ripe enough for socialist revolution. Even in the face of the German Blitzkrieg the Soviet Union was supposed to "push" the revolution, instead of making even a tactical alliance with certain imperialist countries to preserve the socialist camp. Not only "push" the revolution in European countries under the boot heel of fascism, but to "push" the revolution in colonies that had no independence movements, save those sponsored by the fascists.

As at the time of Brest, the Trotskyites clamored about how the Soviet Union betrayed the German workers, but their are important parallels between the situation Lenin described and the situation in the 1930's. There are important parallels to what happened in the 1930's because despite the development of the revolutionary crisis in Germany, despite the development of the Communist Party, despite the fact that it had 6 million votes, it was not yet the revolution, the proletariat was not strong enough to make the revolution. All that could have happened was an attempt at a putsch from the left to counter the fascist putsch, that at that point, when the fascists had the initiative, would have led to the total and complete destruction of the German Communist Party and a substantial section of the proletariat. Would the cause of the world revolution have been served by that?

## Lenin's Patriotic War

There are those today who argue that it would. There are those who polemicize against the Soviet Union in that period, those who polemicize against what the Soviet Union did in WWII, as promoting the concept of the national struggle of the Soviet Union against the imperialist powers and that they were not struggling for socialism, but struggling on a national and patriotic basis, which is alien to socialism. "Why shouldn't the most crushing military defeats in struggle against the giants of modern imperialism steel the national character in Russia too?... Russia is making for a new and genuine patriotic war, a war for the preservation and consolidation of Soviet power. It is possible that another epoch will – like the epoch of Napoleonic wars – be an epoch of liberation wars (not one war but wars) imposed by conquerors upon Soviet Russia."<sup>29</sup> This is not Stalin speaking in 1941, but Lenin in 1918, at the height of revolutionary upsurge in Europe. Even at that time Lenin could see the eventuality of the Second World War, and speculate on its possible character, not as an imperialist war but as a genuine patriotic national war of the Soviet Union in an epoch of liberation wars.

The objective of the social democratic Trotskyite bourgeois ideological offensive against the Soviet Union during the 1930's on this question, was precisely to create despair and phrase-mongering. Lenin spoke of a new and genuine patriotic war. A war for the preservation and consolidation of Soviet power. But what was the Second World War? Was it not called by Stalin the Great Patriotic War? What did Lenin once again foresee as a possible development of the revolutionary process in the struggle of the Soviet Union for survival and did Lenin denounce this? No, he welcomed it, because he saw in it the possibilities of eventually prevailing over the conquerors and prevailing over imperialism. Did he counterpose this to the necessity of making world revolution? Did he say that the Soviet Union should lay down and wait for the German proletariat? If the Soviet Union had sat and waited for the German proletariat it would be dead, destroyed by a fascist army made up of many German proletarians. The German proletariat failed. We can talk about the reasons why that is true, we can talk

about the objective factors and the subjective factors. We can talk about the role of social democracy. We can talk about the role of the mistakes of the Comintern. But nevertheless, the class forces just did not exist and come into play in order to stop it.

Speaking to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1918 Lenin declared: "The Russian Soviet Federative Republic, having unanimously condemned predatory wars, from now on deems it its right and its duty to defend the socialist fatherland against all attacks by any of the imperialist powers."<sup>30</sup>

The criticism of the Soviet Union on the basis that it was nationalist and social patriotic was that it didn't have the right to defend the socialist fatherland. That world revolution precludes that right. So only the bourgeoisie has the right to defend its fatherland. Once the proletariat takes power it abandons that right. It's obvious which class benefits the most from that point of view. "For, until the world socialist revolution breaks out, until it embraces several countries and is strong enough to overcome *international imperialism*, it is the direct duty of the socialists, who have conquered in one country (especially a backward one), *not* to accept battle against the giants of imperialism. Their duty is to try to avoid battle, to wait until the conflicts between the imperialists weaken them *even more*, and bring the revolution in other countries even nearer. One must be able to calculate the balance of forces and *not help* the imperialists by making the battle against socialism easier for them, when socialism is still weak, and when the chances of the battle are manifestly *against* socialism."<sup>31</sup>

This was the policy of the Soviet Union until World War II. They faithfully followed that policy. They avoided war, they avoided confrontation with the imperialist powers, even going so far as the necessity in 1939 of making a non-aggression pact with Germany in order to avoid that war. Can we seriously say that the Soviet Union would have been better off fighting the imperialists in the 1920's during the New Economic Policy, the lack of consolidation of socialism, the lack of building heavy industry to produce armaments, having capitalist elements within the country who would rally to the cause of imperialism? Was this a time to make war or was this a time to avoid war? With the defeat of the proletariat by fascism in the 1930's,

is it a time to make war or is it time to struggle for peace? What was it that created the material basis for the defeat of fascism? It was the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union and the building of a socialist economy, the defeat and routing out of all antagonistic class forces in the Soviet Union, and the defeat and the destruction of the fifth column of Trotskyite agent provocateurs. This allowed the Soviet Union to do what nobody thought could be done.

### **Soviet Patriotism Defeated Fascism**

When the German army was at the gates of Stalingrad, Hitler was convinced that there was no more Russian army, and that the war would be over in two weeks. Then out of the Ural mountains came thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Russian troops. They didn't come with sticks and hoses, they came with more sophisticated weaponry than the Germans had. They had better rifles, better guns, better tanks, better everything. Above all they had better organization and morale because they were defending their country, their socialist fatherland. Because there were those there who opposed the defeat of their nation, those who did not want to live under the rule of the fascists, whose one objective was the destruction of Slavic peoples as people, never mind socialism, to destroy all of them for being Russian. Was it a concession to nationalism for Stalin to call on patriotic feelings of people to struggle against German fascism? I think Stalin would have called upon anything in anybody to help with the struggle. I think that we can only support that.

The last thing that I want to cite from Lenin in this period of time is something that is particularly pertinent because it was a letter to American workers explaining the position of the Soviet Union. Lenin says: "The Anglo-French and American imperialist vultures 'accuse' us of concluding an 'agreement' with German imperialism. What hypocrites, what scoundrels they are to slander the workers' government while shivering with fear because of the sympathy displayed towards us by the workers of 'their own' countries! But their hypocrisy will be exposed. They pretend not to see the difference between an agreement entered into by 'socialists' with the bourgeoisie (their own or foreign) *against the workers*, against the working

people, and an agreement entered into *for the protection* of the workers who have defeated their bourgeoisie, with the bourgeoisie of one national colour *against the bourgeoisie* of another colour in order that the proletariat may take advantage of the antagonism between the different groups of the bourgeoisie." The Trotskyites always denounced Stalin for doing this while ignoring their historic differences with Lenin. Many semi-Trotskyites of today refuse to look at the history of these issues and realize that their difference is with the entire experience of proletarian revolution.

Lenin continues: "When, in February 1918, the German imperialist vultures hurled their forces against unarmed, demobilised Russia, which had relied on the international solidarity of the proletariat before the world revolution had fully matured, I did not hesitate for a moment to enter into an 'agreement' with the French monarchists. Captain Sadoul, a French army officer who, in words, sympathised with the Bolsheviks, but was in deeds a loyal and faithful servant of French imperialism, brought the French officer de Lubersac to see me. 'I am a monarchist. My only aim is to secure the defeat of Germany,' de Lubersac declared to me. 'That goes without saying (*cela va sans dire*),' I replied. But this did not in the least prevent me from entering into an 'agreement' of which every class-conscious worker would approve, an agreement in the interests of socialism. The French monarchist and I shook hands, although we know that each of us would willingly hang his 'partner'. But for a time our interests coincided. Against the advancing rapacious Germans, *we*, in the interest of the Russian and the world socialist revolution, utilised the equally rapacious counter-interests of *other* imperialists. In this way we served the interest of the working class of Russia and of other countries, we strengthened the proletariat and weakened the bourgeoisie of the whole world, we resorted to the methods, most legitimate and essential in *every* war, of manœuvre, stratagem, retreat, in anticipation of the moment when the rapidly maturing proletarian revolution in a number of advanced countries *completely matures*.

"However much the Anglo-French and American imperialist sharks fume with rage, however much they slander us, no matter how many millions they spend on bribing the Right

Socialist- Revolutionary, Menshevik and other social-patriotic newspapers, *I shall not hesitate a second* to enter into a *similar* 'agreement' with the German imperialist vulture if an attack upon Russia by Anglo-French troops calls for it. And I know perfectly well that my tactics will be approved by the class-conscious proletariat of Russia, Germany, France, Britain, America – in short, of the whole civilised world. Such tactics will ease the task of the socialist revolution, will hasten it, will weaken the international bourgeoisie, will strengthen the position of the working class which is vanquishing the bourgeoisie." <sup>32</sup>

That wasn't Stalin talking about the tactics with Germany in 1939. So those who want to criticize the Soviet state for its activities, in this period of time should take up the question with Lenin. But not just to take up the question with Lenin, but should fundamentally decide which side they are on. Are they on the side of proletarian revolution, not only happening but then consolidating its success, struggling to build socialism in one country, struggling to help the proletariat in other countries make revolution and to achieve socialist development, ultimately on a world scale. Or whether or not to follow tactics that lead to the demoralization, the demobilization of the proletariat in the face of the imperialist offensive.

### **Do Workers Have a Country?**

It's very common among those that put forward these views to harken back to Marx and say after all working men have no country. Didn't Marx say that? To dredge out and beat an old formula to death. Let's drag this one out, the working men have no country. Then, therefore, the proletariat in the Soviet Union shouldn't have a country, the proletariat in any other country shouldn't have a country. They always forget to read the rest of the quotation. "The working men have no country. We can not take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far national, but not in the bourgeois sense of the word." <sup>33</sup>

What did the Soviet proletariat do, but constitute itself as a nation? Let us remember that there is a distinction here



between the Soviet proletariat and the Russian proletariat. It's often equated at this time, looking at the Soviet Union — oh, this is just Russian nationalism. But Soviet patriotism was not Russian nationalism. The Soviet Union was not just composed of the Russian nation. It was composed of many other nations, and the proletariat of all those nations constituted itself as the Soviet nation. Not that those nations disappeared, but as we know, as part of Marxist theory, that over a historical process the ultimate consequence of which is the proletariat constituting itself as one nation and the disappearing of national boundaries. So why then do those that say that the working men have no country attack the proletariat of Soviet Union for constituting itself as a nation?

Furthermore, even the question of the proletariat of different nations, as in the case of the Soviet Union, what attitude should they take to national oppression. Lenin said that even before the conquest of power, he says, "Is the feeling of national pride foreign to us great-Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country. It pains us more than anyone else to see and feel the deeds of violence, the oppression, the yoke to which the henchmen of the Tsar, the landowners and the capitalists subject our beautiful country. We are filled with feeling of national pride because the great-Russian nation has also bought forth a revolutionary class, has *also* proved that it is capable of showing mankind great examples of the struggle for freedom and socialism, not only of fierce pogroms, of rows of gallows-trees, of torture-chambers, of great famines and of servile, groveling at the feet of the priests, the Tsar, the landowners and the capitalists. We are full of a feeling of national pride and precisely for that reason we hate especially our own slavish past and... our slavish present..."<sup>34</sup>

What should happen to this national pride when the proletariat constitutes itself the nation and against all odds constructs a strong socialist society that repels the most barbarian forces of history? Why is it that there are those who want to isolate their criticism of the Comintern and the Soviet Union to the period of the 1930's and instead of quoting Lenin they choose to quote Thorez speaking at the 7th Congress, speaking of the revolutionary traditions of France, or they quote

Browder speaking at the 7th congress talking about the revolutionary traditions of the American proletariat and the American nation, the revolutionary war, the civil war, the war of independence? We can find a quote too from Lenin which phrases the same revolutionary traditions of the American proletariat on a national level.

What was coming into play in the 1930's that brought the national question more to the fore was the bestial chauvinist nature of German fascism. It was not bourgeois nationalism in the traditional sense, it was a different variant of it. It wasn't the bourgeois nationalism of Germany facing the bourgeois nationalism of France with the two imperialists wanting to fight a war to divide some colonies. It was a war of revenge, of *revanchism*, waged by the most reactionary sections of German imperialism against the Versailles treaty at the end of WWI. Their objective only superficially represented a nationalist interest to re-establish Germany. The real objective was to subordinate the other countries of Europe to the point of abolishing their national independence; abolishing their national states; abolishing their national institutions; and in some cases abolishing the people themselves from the face of the earth.

Does the proletariat have an interest in that question? Does the proletariat care what happens to the nation under such circumstances? Of course it does. Because it means the destruction of its own existence as a class. Because it is a class within that nation. In the face of that destruction, in the face of the superior ability of the fascists at that point to institute their program, what should the proletariat do? Refuse to ally with the other national forces that are willing to fight against fascism because they're bourgeois nationalists? The choice, as Dimitrov highlighted at the 7th Congress, was not a choice between proletarian revolution and bourgeois democracy; not a choice between the proletariat forming its own national state versus the old national state, which was the choice in 1917 and 1918. It was now a choice between bourgeois democracy and fascism.

It is somewhat amazing at this point historically that people can fail to understand this question. It was more understandable at the time of the Comintern in 1934, because fascism was a new phenomenon, particularly German fascism. The

program German fascism was going to carry out in power was just beginning to reveal itself to many people. There was some confusion on how much of a threat it was. There was some confusion and debate about the political nature of fascism – was it a different form of bourgeois rule or was it similar to Bonapartism or absolutism? But after the experience of WWII how can that be a question?

What did German fascism do to the German proletariat? In the election of 1932 the German proletariat cast 6 million votes for the Communists and 11 million for the social democrats compared to about 10-11 million votes for the fascists, which included some proletarian votes. But the proletariat voted overwhelmingly for the Communists and the social democrats. The German working class was the most advanced politically in Europe: its institutions, its traditions, what it had won in the struggles for bourgeois democracy, for expanding democracy, for making reforms within the system, etc. The traditions of the German working class included being the principal party of the Second International; the heritage of Marx and Engels; the heritage of the revolutions of 1918 and 1922. This is what was destroyed by the fascists. (What is left of it? Go to Germany today and you will see how little remains of those historic traditions.)

The traditions of that past have been so severed – the extent of decapitating the proletariat was remarkably effective. And that is why other countries wanted to emulate it at that time. The French bourgeoisie said that it was a good idea. Other bourgeoisies said, "Let's try it." What was the proletariat to do in the face of that? Put yourself in that situation. What would you do? If you were in the Communist Party of Germany, what would you want that party to do? What would you want the International to do? What would you want the Soviet Union to do in the face of that situation? Issue propaganda leaflets about the necessity of proletarian revolution, socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat? Something had to be done concretely. That's why the Comintern developed the tactics that it did. That's why the Soviet Union proceeded the way it did in matters of foreign policy.

## **The Soviet Union Was Every Worker's Fatherland**

Next I want to look at what the Soviet Union did and the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, the kind of effect it had on the international proletariat and the reality during that period of time. Manuilsky reporting on the Seventh Congress to the Soviet Party said: "Now that our party and our government is able to place the character of the well-being of our people in the center of our activities, those great tasks of socialism are now brought into the foreground upon whose successful fulfillment the winning of the great masses of humanity for socialism finally depends.

"Up to the present, the difficulties on the one hand, and the unsatisfactory rate at which the material well-being of the masses of the people of our country was increasing, on the other hand, have retarded to a certain extent the acceptance of socialism by the working masses, but in the new phase of our development which is now opened up the attractive force of socialism will greatly increase and it will win over to its banner millions of working people all over the world at an ever increasing speed."<sup>35</sup>

That is how they looked at the question of the victory of socialism in one country and socialism was victorious in that period of time, the 17th Congress marking the consolidation of socialism. "On the field of international relations, the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union weakens the position of capitalism because it increases the share of our socialist economic system in the whole system of world economy. As this victory at the same time strengthens the proletarian State, it also greatly increases the power and importance of the Soviet Union in the field of world politics. The importance of the Soviet Union as a factor of peace amongst the nations thereby also increases. The policy of peace pursued by the Soviet Union is the policy of the whole of the international proletariat and of all the toiling masses who hate imperialist war and fight against it. Thanks to this policy the Soviet Union is becoming the rallying center for all those classes, nations, peoples and States who do not want war and who have nothing to gain by war. The role of the Soviet Union as the bulwark of freedom amongst the peoples is also increasing. All anti-fascists forces

throughout the world are instinctively drawn to the Soviet Union as the home of highly developed proletarian democracy. The eyes of the people in those States in which remnants of bourgeoisie democratic freedom have still been maintained are drawn towards the Soviet Union. The peoples held down by the fascist tyranny see the hope of their emancipation in the Soviet Union. All those who defend the cultural achievements of humanity and fight against the fascist barbarism have pinned their hopes on the Soviet Union. The consciousness that there is a country in which the working class has built up a powerful working-class State increases the power of the international working class and intensifies its fighting capacities.

“Comrade Stalin declared in 1927 that the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union would produce a powerful movement for socialism in all capitalist countries and that in this sense it would not be the victory of socialism in one country alone but a victory for socialism on a world scale. Comrades, we have the good fortune to live in an epoch in which this movement for socialism is rising throughout the whole world, a movement which no fascist terror and no imperialist war will be able to defeat. Therefore, the resolution of the Seventh World Congress connects up the new stage of development of the proletarian world revolution with the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, and therefore the perspective of the whole development of the proletarian movement throughout the world is indissolubly connected with the further victories of socialism in the Soviet Union. And therefore the main question of this movement and all its tactical tasks revolve around one central axis—the consolidation of the Soviet Union as the basis of the proletarian world revolution.”<sup>36</sup>

Is that nationalism or is that proletarian internationalism? Did the consolidation of the Soviet Union represent a defeat for the proletariat in Europe and in the rest of the world or did it in fact represent a tremendous victory for proletarians of every country?

### **The World Proletariat Rallied to the Seventh Congress**

What are the objective facts about the reaction of the international proletariat to the tactics of the 7th Congress of the Comintern and to the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union?

Tremendous growth in the Comintern—numerous sections of social democracy rallied to the Comintern. The experience of the struggle against fascism in Austria led to a situation where most of the social democratic party rallied to the very small Communist Party.

In 1931 the Communist Party in Spain was an insignificant sect of sectarians, dogmatists, Trotskyists, semi-Trotskyists, anarchists, which was totally ineffective. History would change that very quickly. Eventually the Communist Party of Spain would be the main party of the proletariat in Spain and led the struggle against fascism in the Spanish Civil War. Did it lose that struggle because of the tactics of the 7th Congress of the Comintern? If it hadn't been for the tactics of the 7th Congress of the Comintern the Spanish party would have continued to be an insignificant sect. The Trotskyists were the same in Spain as they were in every other country. Their argument was that the Comintern should become a bunch of insignificant sects—propagandizing for the theory of permanent revolution in the United States of Europe, the destruction of the national state and the destruction of the Soviet Union, the destruction of socialism, etc., etc.

### **Who Defeated Fascism?**

But the gains that were made were not enough—it did not prevent Germany from attacking. What then prevented us from living under the third Reich of a thousand years? What allows us here today, no matter how few we are, to even be discussing this question? It was the Soviet Union, it was the proletariat of the Soviet Union and it was those thousands and millions of people in the world who rallied to that banner of struggle and even forced their own imperialist governments to continue in that struggle until fascism was defeated.

In the defeat of fascism, in the great patriotic war waged by the Soviet Union, did that defense of the national interest of the Soviet state compromise our revolutionary interests? Did its all-out effort to defeat fascism compromise our revolutionary interests? Should the Soviet Union have propagated turning the war into a civil war in all of the countries involved in the war including the U.S., France and Britain? Germany at that point had a very ineffective Communist Party, so in fact,

such a call would really have meant struggling in France, Britain, U.S. and the allied countries for civil war rather than the defeat of fascism. Should the Soviet Union have driven the allied countries to united action with Germany to destroy the Soviet Union, or should it have followed a policy to take advantage of the contradictions, to keep those contradictions going even during the war so as not to allow for a separate peace and force a relatively democratic and progressive peace on the face of the earth on the ruins of the German fascist state?

### **Where did the Struggle Against Fascism Lead?**

What did the 7th Congress lead to, what was the result of the Second World War? It was not just the victory of the Soviet Union, not just the defeat of fascism, but the creation of a socialist camp, the creation of a profound movement of struggle for national independence in the colonies and semi-colonies which is still being felt today, despite whatever one thinks of what happened in the Soviet Union. Yes indeed, Stalin had to sit down at the peace table with the imperialist powers at the end of the war. Should Stalin have refused and stayed home?

Should he have refused to influence the fate of millions who suffered under the yoke of fascism and refused to negotiate with imperialists on principle? Should he have refused to make any deals with imperialism on behalf of the world's peoples and demanded immediate war with imperialism? Or should he have struggled at Yalta, Potsdam and Tehran as much as possible for a democratic, non-imperialist peace to a democratic, liberating anti-fascist war?

Despite whatever the imperialists were going to do after the war, they were going to be imperialists and they're going to do what they're going to do. Should the Soviet Union have consolidated the expansion of a socialist camp, should it have defended the national independence and liberties of people in Europe against American imperialism after the war, or should it have withdrawn and gone home and said — "No, we're not red imperialists, we do not want to recreate the empire of the czar. We are going to abandon the peoples of Eastern Europe to the American Army"?

The question also arises: what should the Soviet Union have done in that situation *vis a vis* the proletarian struggles

that were outside the socialist camp? This is another source of criticism directed at the Soviet Union. For example, it is said that in France, the French party could have seized power and made the proletarian revolution in France. But it was sabotaged by Stalin who made a deal with Roosevelt, Truman and Churchill to sabotage the revolution in France. But how could there have been a revolution in France? Are Communists putschists? Why was the French party in a position that this could even become a question? Because it led a united and popular front against fascism. It had rallied the French people to that struggle. Then was it is going to turn around and say — oh, we fooled you, you really thought you were struggling for democracy, for national independence and the destruction of fascism. Really you were struggling for socialism. And we just seized power and now you are all socialists. Marxism-Leninism has always rejected this kind of putschist approach to revolution without the masses of people. There was no material basis to lead to a socialist outcome of a war that was an anti-fascist national liberation war.

The conclusion of the war had to have some relation to what the war was fought over. Even in the countries of Eastern Europe, the People's Democracies, there was not immediate socialization, etc. There was a struggle to win over the masses to a transition to socialism. There were also revisionist deviations, talking about a peaceful transition to socialism and all of that, the Titoites, etc., and there were many struggles around this question. But nevertheless, in the process, the Soviet Union and the international communist movement managed to transform the struggle against fascism, the struggle for bourgeois democracy against fascism, the struggle for national independence against fascism, into a victory and consolidation of socialism, in a process of rallying the people in the People's Democracies to the camp of socialism.

What policy should the Soviet Union have pursued in relation to those peoples who lay languishing under the yolk of imperialism after the war in other countries? Should it have done what the Soviet Union and Lenin refused to do at the end of WWI? Should it have engaged in that old slogan of a revolutionary war? Because that is what modern day Trotskyites are putting on the table. A number of putschist activities could



have occurred, and some did. There were several incidents of it. It happened in France and it happened in some other countries, it happened in Greece. What should the response of the Soviet state have been if some Trotskyite elements had been leading the French party at the time and engaged in “revolution”, maybe even successfully seized parliament buildings, and whatever else?

What should the Soviet Union have done when the American army occupying Europe put down this putsch? Should it have come to the aid of it, and brought Europe back to a war? The Soviet Union had just fought a war to destroy fascism and to stop the war from destroying the peoples of Europe, it had just rallied the peoples of Europe to that cause. Now the imperialists were trying to say the Soviet Union was trying to deceive the people of Europe and institute Communism in all countries with the bayonets of the Red Army and “Bolshevize Europe”. The imperialists accused the Soviet Union of instituting Trotskyite tactics for the sake of provocation against the Soviet Union.

Once again the leftist elements did exactly what the reactionary elements wanted. There are those who argued for the confrontation with US imperialism, who argued for war in Europe, revolutionary struggles, etc. There’s somebody else who had the same line. Did you ever hear of General George Patton? He didn’t want to stop at Germany—he wanted to continue the war. The German fascists wanted the US to continue the war. Many reactionaries in the world wanted the US to continue the war and defeat the Soviet Union. We can leave aside the question of what would have been the exact result of that war. It might not have turned out so well for the US and they probably knew that. But nevertheless, what were the people of Europe, what were the people of the Soviet Union yearning for peace and for the reconstruction of socialism to do? Fight another war for the sake of a “revolutionary phrase”? The people who think that revolution could have been made in France, Italy and other countries at that time live in the same fantasy world about the European revolution that the left communists Lenin struggled against did toward the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution.

I aim fire today principally at the Trotskyite, semi-

Trotskyite theories about the Comintern and the Seventh World Congress because those are the dominant theories pushed by the bourgeoisie. Either from the side of openly Trotskyite views or from the side of the learned intellectuals at the universities who held the same views about the Soviet Union, that its nationalism, patriotism that led to the abandoning of a Europe revolution etc. There is on the other hand another view of the Seventh World Congress and that is the view taken by the Soviet Union presently. Often this view is used as a reason to justify the Trotskyite view because in the view of the revisionists it is an erroneous view. Dimitrov clearly states at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern that the tactics being pursued were a change in tactics of the Comintern, not a change in aims or change in purpose or basic change in strategy. In the revisionist history of the Comintern they say this was not only a new tactic, this was also a new strategic line arising from the change alignment of class forces in Europe.

Essentially they try to justify a continuation of the kind of tactics put forward for the defeat of fascism to be applied to all cases in all places to the struggle in every country *vis-a-vis* the attitude taken to the question of national independence, the attitude to the question of struggle against or for bourgeois democracy in certain cases. Instead of viewing those as tactical questions it raises it to a strategic level where you always struggle for bourgeois democracy, you always struggle for national independence, and you always struggle for a government of transition to socialism of the type of a popular front government, in other words class alliance etc. In fact what the revisionists do is turn what was considered a tactic at the time into a social democratic point of view of participating in coalition governments with the bourgeoisie under all circumstances in order to peacefully transform somehow to socialism, make changes and reforms and somehow that lead to socialism.

And this, as we've seen if you look at the history of the revisionist parties in the last 30 years has been the principal strategic line. It is either to participate in coalition governments or to try to persuade the bourgeoisie to accept them in coalition governments even if the bourgeoisie does not have the slightest interest. The way they put it when they look at the Seventh

World Congress of the Comintern is to say: "The Seventh Congress developed a policy of Communist parties for parliamentarism under conditions of a general democratic struggle. The working out of a policy of the popular front, and especially the problems of a government of the popular front as a possible transitional form to the dictatorship of the proletariat, was a further creative elaboration of Lenin's teaching about the paths of the socialist revolution, about combining the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialism, about the alliance of the working class with other strata of the working people. Important doctrinal conclusions on these issues were arrived at as a result of the collective efforts of the communist parties.

"The conception developing Lenin's teaching about the interdependence between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism took into account the fact that the revolutionary process in the capitalist countries would not go forward immediately and by way of the anti-fascist general democratic stage of the struggle.

"This road did not by any means imply that the socialist aims were overshadowed. On the contrary, the united workers' and popular front drew the broadest masses into the struggle against fascism, for the victory of new democracy, thereby preparing the necessary preconditions for a socialist revolution. This was the sum and substance of the policy of the popular front. The new orientation thus opened up new prospects for the movement towards the socialist revolution."<sup>37</sup>

### **The Seventh Congress and Right Opportunism**

There are people who criticize the Comintern and look to this kind of material and say this is revisionism. But we have to look at what in fact was said at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern on the question, which is not exactly what the revisionist say was being said.

When Dimitrov addressed the question of the government of the united front he says, "I am not speaking of a government which may be formed after the victory of the proletarian revolution. It is not impossible, of course, that in some country, immediately after the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie, there may be formed a Soviet government on the basis of a government block of the Communist Party with a definite

party (or its Left wing) participating in the revolution. After the October Revolution the victorious party of the Russian Bolsheviks, as we know, included representatives of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in the Soviet government. This was a specific feature of the first Soviet government after the victory of the October Revolution. I am not speaking of such a case, but of the possible formation of a united-front government on the eve of and before the victory of the Soviet revolution. What kind of government is this? And in what situation could there be any question of such a government? It is primarily a government of struggle against fascism and reaction. It must be a government arising as the result of the united front movement and in no way restricting the activity of the Communist Party and the mass organisations of the working class, but on the contrary taking determined measures against the counter-revolutionary financial magnates and their fascist agents."<sup>37</sup>

Dimitrov makes it clear, at some length, how the Comintern had seen this question as a tactical one dependent on certain conditions and not as a permanent change in line as the revisionists claim today. At the Seventh World Congress Dimitrov waged a struggle against both left and right opportunist deviations on this question, the same left and right deviations we are struggling against here today. Dimitrov continues: "The fact that we are bringing up this question for discussion at all today is, of course, connected with our evaluation of the situation and the immediate prospects, also with the actual growth of the united front movement in a number of countries during the recent past. For more than ten years the situation in the capitalist countries has been such that it was not necessary for the Communist International to discuss a question of this kind.

"You remember, comrades, that at our Fourth Congress, in 1922, and again at the Fifth Congress, in 1924, the question of the slogan of a workers', or a workers' and peasants' government, was under discussion. Originally the issue turned essentially upon a question which was almost analogous to the one we are discussing to-day. The debates that took place at that time in the Communist International concerning this question, and in particular the political errors which were committed in connection with it, have to this day retained their importance

for sharpening our vigilance against the danger of deviations to the Right or 'Left' from the Bolshevik line on this question. Therefore, I shall briefly point out a few of these errors, in order to draw from them the lessons necessary for the present policy of our Parties.

"The first series of mistakes was determined precisely by the circumstance that the question of a workers' government was not clearly and firmly interlinked with the existence of a political crisis. Owing to this the Right opportunists were able to interpret matters as though we should strive for the formation of a worker's government, supported by the Communist Party, in any, so to speak 'normal' situation. The ultra-Lefts, on the other hand, recognised only such a workers' government as could be formed exclusively by armed insurrection, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Both views were wrong. In order to avoid a repetition of such mistakes, we now lay such great stress on the consideration of the specific, concrete circumstances of the political crisis and the upsurge of the mass movement, in which the formation of a united front government may prove possible and politically necessary.

"The second series of errors were determined by the circumstance that the question of the workers' government was not interlinked with the development of the militant mass united front movement of *the proletariat*. Thus the Right opportunists were enabled to distort the question, reducing it to the unprincipled tactics of forming blocs with Social-Democratic Parties on the basis of purely parliamentary arrangements. The ultra-Lefts, on the other hand shouted: 'No coalitions with the counter-revolutionary Social-Democrats!' regarding all Social-Democrats as counter-revolutionaries at bottom."<sup>38</sup>

Then he polemizes against the view of uniting with social democracy in the government by pointing out that there are two different camps of social democracy; that there is a reactionary camp of social democracy alongside which exists a growing camp of left social democrats. It has to be understood that in the period of the united front the communists did not go to the point of view of social democracy. Social democracy came to the point of view of the communists, not all of social democracy, not even the majority of it. But a substantial section of the left wing rallied to a popular front, to a united front of

the working class, a popular front against fascism, against the wishes and the will of the leadership of the Second International. It is raised by Dimitrov the possibility of forming a united front government with these kinds of social democrats.

Then he polemizes against right and left opportunist views on this question: "The 'Left' doctrinaires have always evaded this precept of Lenin. Like the limited propagandists that they were, they spoke only of 'aims,' without ever worrying about 'forms of transition.' The Right opportunists, on the other hand, tried to establish a special 'democratic intermediate stage' lying between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the purpose of instilling into the workers the illusion of a peaceful parliamentary procession from the one dictatorship to the other. This fictitious 'intermediate stage' they also called the 'transitional form,' and even quoted Lenin on the subject! But this piece of swindling was not difficult to expose; for Lenin spoke of the form of transition and approach to the 'proletarian revolution,' i.e., to the overthrow of the bourgeois dictatorship, and not of some transitional form between the bourgeois and the proletarian dictatorship."<sup>38</sup>

History, however, has shown us that we have not seen the end of such swindling. As we have seen, the revisionists have performed this swindle in their history of the Comintern and it is the common swindle of revisionists of many stripes. For Mao, it was New Democracy as a stage, this was the rallying cry of Titoites and it is the basic point of view of modern revisionists. The Trotskyites and modern Trotskyites point to this to justify their ultra-Left views.

### **The Seventh Congress and Sectarianism**

The struggle was waged at the Seventh World Congress on this question against left and right deviations. This was a feature that was in fact developed out of the Soviet Union in the struggle coming out of the period of the early successes of industrialization, the early successes of collectivization of the peasantry and it was also developed inside the Comintern, which was the struggle on two fronts, against left opportunism and against the right opportunism. Unfortunately, what we have existing today on the question of the Comintern is the

continuing existence of those two fronts, the left opportunist front and the right opportunist front. In the particularities of the time that Dimitrov polemized against: "Sectarianism satisfied with its doctrinaire narrowness, its divorcement from the real life of the masses; satisfied with its simplified methods of solving the most complex problems of the working class movement on the basis of stereotyped schemes; sectarianism which professes to know all and considers it needless to learn from the masses, from the lessons of the labor movement. In short, sectarianism, to which, as they say mountains are mere stepping-stones.

"Self-satisfied sectarianism will not and can not understand that the leadership of the working class by the Communist party cannot be attained by a process of spontaneous development. The leading role of the Communist Party in the struggles of the working class must be won. For this purpose it is necessary, not to rant about the leading role of the Communists but to merit and win the confidence of the working masses by everyday mass work and correct policy. This will only be possible if we Communists in our political work seriously take into account the actual level of the class consciousness of the masses, the degree to which they have become revolutionized if we soberly appraise the concrete situation, not on the basis of our wishes but on the basis of the actual state of affairs. Patiently, step by step, we must make it easier for the broad masses to come to the positions of Communism. We ought never forget these warning words of Lenin so forcefully expressed: 'This is the whole point – we must not regard that which is obsolete for us as being obsolete for the class, as being obsolete for the masses.'

"Is it not a fact comrades that there are still not a few such doctrinaire elements left in our ranks who in all times and places sense nothing but danger in the policy of the united front? For such comrades the whole united front is one unrelieved peril. But this sectarian 'stickling for principle' is nothing but political helplessness in face of the difficulties of directly leading the struggle of the masses."<sup>39</sup>

"Thus sectarianism has to a considerable extent retarded the growth of the Communist Parties, has impeded the prosecution of a real mass policy, prevented our taking advantage

of the difficulties of the class enemy to strengthen the positions of the revolutionary movement, hindered the winning over of the broad proletarian masses to the side of the Communist parties.

“While fighting most resolutely to overcome and exterminate the last remnants of self-satisfied sectarianism, we must increase to a maximum our vigilance in regard to and the struggle against Right opportunism and against every one of its concrete manifestations, bearing in mind that the danger of Right opportunism will increase in proportion as the wide united front develops more and more. Already there are tendencies to reduce the role of the Communist Party in the ranks of the united front and to effect a reconciliation with Social-Democratic ideology. Nor must the fact be lost sight of that the tactics of the united front are a method of convincing the Social-Democratic workers by object lesson of the correctness of the Communist policy and the incorrectness of the reformist policy, and that they are not a reconciliation with Social-Democratic ideology and practice. A successful struggle for the establishment of the united front tendencies to depreciate the role of the Party, against legalist illusions, against reliance on spontaneity and autonomism, both in the liquidation of fascism and in conducting the united front against the slightest vacillation at the moment of determined action. ‘It is necessary,’ Stalin teaches us, ‘that the Party be able to combine in its work the greatest adherence to principle (not to be confused with sectarianism) with a maximum of contacts and connections with the masses (not to be confused with tailism), without which it is not only impossible for the Party to teach the masses but also to learn from them, not only to lead the masses and raise them to the level of the Party, but to listen to the voice of the masses and divine their sorest needs.’”<sup>40</sup>

### **The Struggle on Two Fronts**

This kind of perspective and approach to what needs to be done is not unique and only applicable to the period of the united front against fascism. Some people think that as long as we are not engaging in the united front against fascism then it is permissible to be sectarian as hell. Then when we are engaging in a united front against fascism, a united front, a popular



front around the national question, or whatever, it is permissible to be right opportunist as hell, just simply tail after whatever was happening. Bolshevik tactics are tactics that don't make either mistake and thus can steer the proletariat through the actual development of world history, not the development of abstract ideas and cramming history to try to fit one's prejudices. There is a tendency today, because of some of the failures of international communism in recent history, because of the kinds of opportunist things that have been done in the name of communism in recent history, to essentially adopt the kind of ultra-leftist infantile views which existed at the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution which Lenin polemicized against at many times and which had to be continually polemicized against since.

While in the face of the fact that there was the necessity of certain compromises, certain compromises didn't work, certain struggles were lost, therefore we had no tactics, we only do propaganda for Communist revolution. On the other hand, there are those in the face of those problems, in the face of difficulties, in face of defeats, who capitulate to revisionism, capitulate back to the viewpoint of social democracy. The heritage of the 7th Congress of the Comintern is to struggle against both of those tendencies. Unfortunately, it can't be said today that there is a very large struggle against both of these tendencies on a worldwide scale. Although it's obviously necessary on a worldwide scale.

When looking back at the history in face of certain failures that were made because of the objective relationship of class forces, the objective development of the revolutionary crisis, the general crisis of imperialism, there are those who could capitulate, those who could fall under the doctrinarism and sectarianism in face of this situation. We prefer to look at it from the point of view as was put forward by Manuilsky reporting to the 18th Congress of the Soviet party in 1939 on the state of the world Communist movement. This was a time after the Munich pact when France and Britain sided with Germany for the destruction of Czechoslovakia. This was a time when the outlook for a broad popular front as was conceived at the Seventh World Congress was not as wide as it was before. In summing up the situation Manuilsky talks about: "In some of the

Communist parties the application and tactics, the united front, working class front, the anti-fascist peoples' front has been marked by certain tendencies of a right opportunist character. A tendency to minimize the importance of the struggle against the capitulators, to idealize the role of the so-called democratic states and to gloss over their imperialist character." (We'll find out later that he was talking about Earl Browder and the American party among others, which came out later much more openly with those kinds of theories.) "The appearance of such tendencies, if only in germ, points to the necessity of intensifying the struggle against opportunism.

"While there has undoubtedly been a general improvement in the work of the communists in the trade unions and some considerable achievements in this field, the majority of the Communist Parties have not yet been able to gain a firm foothold in the trade unions, to form an active following of militant trade unionists and to destroy the influence of the reactionary elements in the trade union movement.

"The Communists of the capitalist countries are not sufficiently prepared for abrupt turns of events and have not yet mastered the forms of struggle dictated by the tense international situation. It must however be noted that also in the mastery of these forms of struggle the Communist Parties have accomplished a great deal. The Spanish people will never forget the help the world Communist movement rendered them by the forming of the International Brigades.

"The International Brigades did not consist of Communists only, but it was on their initiative that these brigades were formed and organized. The French Communist Party assigned this work to its most capable workers, its finest organizers. It was no easy task to convey tens of thousands of men through closed frontiers, overseas and even across the Atlantic Ocean.

"The bourgeoisie raided the volunteers, persecuted and prosecuted them; but these men defied all obstacles, made their way through mountain paths, by night, waist deep in snow, and in fishing smacks, at the risk of being sunk any minute. The ranks of volunteers were joined by French proletarians—the descendants of the Paris Communards—by Italian refugees, German anti-fascists, Canadian lumberjacks, who proved to be marvelous snipers, and Polish workers, whose

battalion, the Dombrovsky Battalion, was the first to fall upon the enemy forces during the Ebro offensive, having swam the river without waiting for the pontoon bridges to be built.

"The Communist Parties of fifty-three countries were represented in the International Brigades, having sent, in addition to the others who were eager to join, quite a number of Central Committee members and leading Party workers. Among them were men like Hans Beimler, a member of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, who had been crippled in a German concentration camp, and who fell at Palasete crying, 'Rot Front!' There were men like the Hungarian Communist, old Hevesi, who led the Rákosi Battalion in an attack on one of the enemy's concrete fortifications at Huesca, captured it, but, like the battalion commissar died a heroic death. There were rank-and-filers like John, an English truck driver, who under heavy fire brought water to the men who were tormented with thirst; when mortally wounded he said: 'If Comrade Stalin saw this he would clap me on the back and say: 'Well done John, you're a fine comrade, John!' (Thunderous applause.)

"Who are these people? They are the men and women of the Stalin era, where heroism has become an inalienable characteristic of the Bolshevik Party and non-Party. They are men and women of the same Stalin breed who went into the attack at Lake Khasan with the war cry: 'For the fatherland, Communism and Stalin!'"<sup>41</sup>

It was these kinds of people, these people created in the struggle against fascism called for by the Seventh World Congress, who in fact waged that armed struggle for the defeat of German fascism. They in fact carried out what was described with a remarkable foresightedness of what was to transpire by Manuilsky in this report: "The working people of the capitalist countries, reduced to despair by crises, unemployment, poverty, fascist terror and imperialist wars, but stirred into movement by immense socialist victories of the Soviet people, want to live without fascism, without capitalism. *They want socialism.* That is the reason for the fury of the moribund capitalist world. It wants to save itself by fascism. But fascism will not save capitalism from destruction, for fascism only drives the discontent of the masses deeper underground and paves the way for an

explosion of enormous destructive power. Fascism will not be saved by imperialist wars, for its imperialist wars give rise to revolutions. Capitalism will not be saved by a new redivision of the world, for new redivisions of the world merely deepen the capitalist chaos.

“The moribund capitalist world will not save itself by a counter-revolutionary war on the Soviet Union, but will only hasten its own destruction. The armed resistance of the great Soviet people will stir up the whole world of labor, all those whose right to liberty, work, a better life and an independent country has been trampled underfoot by fascism. It will rouse proletarians and working people in all corners of the globe, who will realize that the hour of retribution for their centuries of suffering is at hand. It will let loose throughout the world a mighty movement of anti-fascist forces, heartened by the tremendous power of resistance offered by the Soviet people to fascism.

“It will spur on to struggle peoples who have hitherto avoided coming to grips with fascism. It will turn against fascism the peoples of the fascist states, who will have arms placed in their hands. For the fascist governments it will be a war not only against the Soviet Union, but also against their own peoples. For the Soviet people, for the working people of the world, for all advanced and progressive mankind, it will be the most just and sacred war ever waged in the history of humanity, a war which ‘will most certainly loosen a number of revolutionary knots in the rear of the enemy, disintegrating and demoralizing the ranks of imperialism.’” (Stalin.)<sup>42</sup>

It was this great historic war of liberation that opened wide the door to great historic victories in the expansion of the socialist camp, in the national liberation struggles, in the defeat of fascism and the liberation of all mankind from the barbarism of fascism.

It is the path of Lenin and Stalin, the path of the Bolsheviks, the path that leads from the 1905 Russian Revolution, through the Great October Socialist Revolution, to the establishment of the great Socialist Camp extending from Berlin to Peking that has held the most hope for mankind for emancipation from the barbarity of class society. It is this path that led to the greatest liberation of the proletariat in the world, and it is to that path

that we think that the proletariat has to return to today, however long it takes, however much slander is heaped upon Stalin's grave.

There is a purpose to all of that slander and that's to ideologically disorientate the proletariat and make it incapable of struggling. And look how marvelously successful from the bourgeois point of view that offensive has been. There is, despite the deepening crisis of imperialism, total confusion in the left, total lack of unity, total inability to even unite against the most basic attacks of the capitalist offensive even on a reformist basis. The lack, at this point, in many countries of even social democratic parties, let alone communist parties that have any mass influence, indicates the gravity of the situation today.

### **The Real Source of Revisionism**

We think that the way out of this situation is not to view Stalin, the Soviet Union and the Comintern as the source of modern revisionism. This is an excuse that's being used by people who cannot come to any other explanation for their own inability to advance the struggle of the working class. Stalin did not originate revisionism. Stalin struggled against revisionism. But what is the source of revisionism? Is the source of revisionism one individual? Can one individual change the course of history, all by himself? Can he turn a socialist country into a degenerate worker's state, can he deroute the international proletariat from revolutionary struggle, can he create revisionism out of that movement, as an act of personal will? Is this a Marxist point of view?

What is the material basis for revisionism? There are basically two points of view on that question that exist very commonly today. The first is that socialism itself generates degeneration; that socialism degenerates by itself creating capitalism, creating nationalism, creating patriotism that abandons the world revolution, etc. Then there is the Leninist point of view historically about what is the basis of opportunism. It is imperialism, it is the bribery and corruption of a stratum of the proletariat which goes over to the side of the bourgeoisie. Now a substantial section of the proletariat in Europe managed to be bribed and corrupted in different amounts, at different times historically in that period of time. Who are we going to

blame that on—is that Stalin’s fault? Did Stalin give up the struggle against that fact? Is it Stalin’s responsibility that there were opportunists in the parties in Europe who wanted to capitulate to capitalism? Is it Stalin’s fault that there were left opportunists who wanted to follow sectarian tactics? Stalin struggled against those people, struggled to get rid of those people.

Imperialism generates opportunism. The agent of imperialism in the working-class movement, social democracy, generates opportunism and revisionism. The Soviet Union and the Comintern were often fighting a losing battle against the effects of imperialism on the Communist movement. Does that mean their policy was wrong, does that mean that their line was wrong? What policy should have been followed, what line should have been followed, that would have had success against the imperialist offensive?

Now there is the other aspect of the imperialist offensive. Should we assume that there is a great Chinese wall between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp and that the imperialist camp is only capable of bribing and corrupting a stratum of the proletariat on its side of the wall? That it doesn’t do anything on the other side of the wall? In *On Mastering Bolshevism*, Stalin talks about what efforts the bourgeoisie goes through to illegally subvert other bourgeois governments. We know this. More recently, there are all kinds of stories about it now that the bourgeoisie is in the mood to expose this or that faction’s dirty work. People know what happened in Chile, there have books written about it and the role of ITT and other corporations with the US State Dept, subverting the government, backing reactionary elements, etc. We know about the assassination attempts on Fidel Castro. We know that the Kennedys went so far as to hire the mafia to try to knock out Castro.

What do you think the bourgeoisie was doing *vis a vis* the Soviet Union? Did imperialism say —“No, the Soviet Union is untouchable—we will only subvert other bourgeois governments, but we won’t subvert the Soviet Union”? But this question is never seriously addressed in bourgeois literature. It is always categorially dismissed; it did not exist. Only the Soviet Union sent spies — we are supposed to believe that imperialism is good and it does not do that to socialism. Well, it is obviously

an absurd view and what else would you expect the imperialists to say about what they are doing— are they going to come out and admit what they do? They don't do that generally, they try to cover it up, we all know about Watergate and the attempts to cover it up.

### **The Fifth Column**

But why does the left engage in complicity with the imperialists to cover it up? To say it is all a lie, to claim Trotsky, Bukharin and others were shot by Stalin because he didn't like them, because they had some views that he disagreed with. Nobody seriously considers the effort during the 1930's that imperialism went to overthrow socialism. Whom did it recruit to help in its work? Who was available for the job? Whose line was to call for political revolution in the Soviet Union to overthrow the "Stalinist bureaucracy"? We can come to one of two conclusions: either Trotsky and his followers were a bunch of hopeless windbags who never did anything but just talk, never meant a word of it, or they were serious about doing it. They can sort of take the 5th amendment, were they a joke, or were they serious? Were they serious about trying to overthrow the government in the Soviet Union? What is this, they call it political revolution, they can call it what they like, it can also be called counter-revolution.

Would it be in the interest of German fascism to see Stalin in that period overthrown? Some people may argue that the bourgeoisie wouldn't want Trotsky because he's a real revolutionary, he might make revolution and they wouldn't like that. But was that their concern at the time, Trotsky's ability to make revolution? It certainly wasn't being manifested any place in the world. What in fact was their concern was that the Soviet Union was building a popular front against fascism. They had to stop it. They tried to stop it externally; they tried to stop it internally. We are also coming up to the anniversary of the purge trials which were also an outcome of the 7th Congress of the Comintern and the response of fascism to the popular front, the response of imperialism to infiltrate the Soviet Union. The whole period that happened, the struggle in the Soviet Union was a struggle to eliminate that influence, to eliminate that fifth column in the Soviet Union, to eliminate those who

capitulated, for a variety of reasons, to capitalism and who went along with Trotskyite subversion.

One of the reasons the Soviet Union could win the war was that the fifth column was destroyed, and there were even a number of bourgeois commentators of the day who essentially admitted that it was true. That unlike all the other countries in Europe, there was no fifth column in the Soviet Union. That what happened when Germany invaded France when much of the French military capitulated to Germany, could not have happened in the Soviet Union. They routed out those elements in large numbers. As a consequence of that, we have the victory of the Soviet Union, the expansion of the socialist camp, and the Soviet Union standing there as even more of a threat to the imperialist world than prior to WWII.

### **The Imperialist Counter-Offensive**

What is the response of the imperialist world to that—to say let's have a peaceful coexistence, live and let live, peaceful competition of the systems, one of us or the other will bury each other economically? Interestingly enough, now that we are more than 30 years past those days, documents have come out in the US that have been largely ignored. The US rallied the fascist elements in Europe, trained them and sent them back into the socialist camp. Documents have come out that they did this at Fort Bragg—they took people from the fascist intelligence network out of Eastern Europe, trained them in sabotage, trained them in communism and sent them back. In a situation where there was a tremendous number of dispossessed peoples, you can imagine that many people's papers were not in order because of the war. They infiltrated thousands of agents into the socialist camp, into the Soviet Union. Then when the socialist camp put a few of them on trial, it was a great crime, slander, etc. But now the truth is beginning to come out about it. But nobody really wants to talk about it, nobody wants to draw the conclusions from it.

The US imperialists were willing to hire the mafia to assassinate Castro. Do you think they were willing to hire someone to assassinate Stalin? Do you think they were willing to have attempted to organize a change in the leadership of the Soviet Union so as to favor policies they would prefer the Soviet



Union to pursue rather than those outlined by Stalin in “Economic Problems of Socialism” in 1952? Even if they couldn’t actually totally overthrow the government, take over and institute an open capitalist imperialist regime, they’ve been trying to do it all along, they’ve been trying to affect the outcome of the leadership, they engaged in assassination plots, there were attempts at assassination, etc. I think there is a video tape here about attempts to assassinate Lenin in that period. Lenin was shot—he didn’t die from it, but he was shot. These kinds of attempts went on and they intensified. Ultimately it was imperialism that was the source of revisionism, the source of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. The struggle against that was the heritage of Stalin, the heritage of the Comintern. The success of that struggle was the popular front struggle that defeated fascism in WWII.

But great disruptions were caused as a result of that. The Soviet Union lost the most advanced section of its proletariat—it died in the war. The communist parties in Europe were flooded by social democratic elements, by anti-fascist elements. People that were struggling for democracy, etc., rallied to the banner of communism. All the countries where the proletarian organization had been destroyed by fascism both in terms of the parties and in terms of the trade unions etc. in Eastern Europe were a part of the socialist camp. There were tremendous problems facing the reconstruction of socialism and the consolidation of the socialist camp. Tremendous problems for the imperialists to take advantage of. A close study of the situation will show that the Soviet Union was not this great monolith of totalitarian dictatorship. Stalin wasn’t sitting there with one gun on Molotov and one on Malenkov, and they in turn took on a couple of other people, and on down the line—it wasn’t that everybody had to follow Stalin’s orders or be shot.

In fact, by 1952, at the 19th Party Congress where Stalin spoke briefly, Stalin ceased to be the General Secretary of the party. He became only a secretary of the party. When Stalin died, when he was assassinated, much of the top leadership in the Soviet party and other parties were either killed or purged, sent to prison, demoted, etc. The Stalinist guard of the socialist camp was destroyed. It lost—there are many lessons to be

learned from this loss but we don't think the lesson to be learned from it is to abandon the history that happened before, and whatever the details of it were, whoever was a revisionist, a modern revisionist, whoever was a Stalinist and was this party personality involved in this or that, this issue this way or that. There are many questions that have to be brought into it to reconstruct that history and of course it is difficult because of the availability of documents. Obviously the revisionists seek to cover up that period of history.

### **Which Side Are You On?**

But despite all of that we have to decide where we are going to take our stand. Do we stand for what happened before that or do we stand for what happened after it? Or do we stand for the new theories that try to explain it—those new theories being nothing but the old theories advanced by Trotsky, many of those theories advocated by the utopian socialists and anarchists who opposed Marx and Engels. The really “honest” probing, questioning semi-Trotskyite who will address those questions will go from Stalin right back to Lenin, they'll repudiate Lenin and they'll go back to Marx and Engels and they'll repudiate them. We obtained hundreds of pounds of documents from semi-Trotskyite elements who sat down with the task of discerning the history of the Comintern and the history of what happened in the Soviet Union. They went back further. You can see in what they note and annotate—the whole method of the degeneration of their thinking. It is interesting archeologically, but they go back and at least they went back further and further and they say it was really Lenin's fault, and then it was really Engels' and Marx's fault, and then they determine that Engels and Marx were petty bourgeois socialists. This was the problem. But they abandon the task of writing their great work on the subject because that would be an act of petty bourgeois socialism.

They disappeared into the pages of history. There are many people on that train, different people decide to get off at different stops or stay at a certain stop for a while and move on later. But it all leads to ideological confusion and the destruction of the possibility of reconstructing a communist vanguard that is going to lead the proletariat out of this mess and

back to a path of class struggle against the bourgeoisie, back to the path of launching an offensive against the attack of the bourgeoisie, back to the path of reconstructing socialism at least in one single country, that is the first step.

## Reply to the Discussion

When I first came here, I was unhappy that this map was not a map of Europe, because it would have been more useful yesterday. But today I am glad we have a map of the world here, because I think there is a basic problem and a basic defect revealed in this conference, and also revealed in the whole question of how to look at what happened in the Soviet Union, how to look at the Comintern, and how to assess these things and their relevance for today. There are a lot of people in the world who look at the world only through the eyes of their particular nationality or their particular struggle or their particular preoccupations.

We have heard discussion of American Exceptionalism historically. This problem is very much alive today. But particularly in relationship to the question of analyzing the role of the Comintern, and the 7th Congress, and the period of the war, there is a tendency today that calls itself "internationalist", that itself reveals the most basic forms of nationalism. They fail to see how the Soviet Union was looking out for the interests of the entire people of the world in settling World War II, and instead accuse the Soviet Union of neglecting their own particular interests, as they perceive them. It is a very common view. You can point to a number of places on the globe that have it.

Let's start in one of the fascist countries, Japan, and look at a not insignificant organization, the Communist Party of Japan (Left), which is still a part of the Albanian trend. Those who have sympathies in that direction should ask themselves this question: How is it that a party that attacks the 7th Congress of the Comintern as the origin of revisionism and that attacks Stalin as a revisionist, is accepted by the PLA within its movement? It has continued to be invited to all the events and affairs of the PLA and its trend of "staunch upholders" of Stalin.

This organization says that because (and their demarcation from modern revisionism was on this basis) the modern revisionists said that U.S. imperialism played a liberating role in the defeat of Japanese fascism, they reject that and say that it was an inter-imperialist war, that Japan was not fascist. They say that the Soviet Union contributed to the defeat of the

proletariat in Japan, by saying Japan was fascist. That is their preoccupation. With that they take the Comintern, the history of the international working class, and put it in the garbage. All of their theoretical precepts proceed from that point.

There are also the people previously referred to in France. It is the same with them. Their preoccupation is with the events in France, post-World War II, 1946-47, with the general strike situation that existed in 1936 in France. The French proletariat was betrayed by Stalin, they say. It was betrayed by the Soviet Union. All their analysis proceeds from that point of view.

Another example exists in the United States. People proceed from a narrow analysis of Browderism. They say, "oh my God, how could you support somebody like Roosevelt? Roosevelt was an imperialist." You have organizations like the Marxist Leninist Party (MLP), Bains' old gang here, who are supporting this Japanese trend inside the Albanian movement, who are linked to MAP in Nicaragua, and several other parties. Fundamentally, the reason why they are criticizing the Comintern today has nothing to do with what Stalin did on some occasion, or with what happened in Europe. It rests on one precept — that organization has always rejected the concept of self-determination for the Black Nation. To this day they will not address the position of the Comintern. They act as if it does not exist, as if it never existed. That is the theoretical root of their opposition to the Comintern and the Soviet Union because they know who is responsible for the line. All of these people talk about the nationalism of the Soviet Union, but they do not talk about their own nationalism.

There is a similar situation in Iran. It was partially expressed at this meeting. In consideration of the world situation during World War II, the Soviet army moved down into a part of Iran for a little period of time, and withdrew. The whole question of the analysis of what happens in the world turns on this small episode. In other words, a refusal to subordinate the democratic interests of one country to the general democratic interests of the proletariat on a world scale. Yet there are people from the Iranian movement who will give lectures about bourgeois nationalism, social patriotism, a narrow view from the Comintern, etc., etc., etc.

Stalin is not responsible for what happened in Iran. I

would suggest that the responsibility lies elsewhere. There is a problem, however, that you cannot properly understand the question of tactics against fascism on a world scale, if you have difficulty understanding the barbaric nature of Khomeini's regime (most of you will recall the IC Symposium on this question) and live in a fantasy world that this regime is somehow capitalist and it is at the stage of socialist revolution. On this basis you are never going to understand Hitlerite fascism. Because Hitlerite fascism was bringing back to the world the kind of barbarity that Khomeini represents and institute it on a world scale. That was part of its program.

### **The Fascist Re-division of the World**

Let us look at what could have happened to the world. The world was not like it is today in the time we are talking about. Germany was a united fascist Germany, Austria was fascist, Czechoslovakia was fascist. Fascism won in Spain, Italy, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Poland, Finland—all were fascist. Hitler goes to war. He takes over France. He takes over essentially all of Europe, all of Northern Africa. Essentially he puts other countries in the fascist orbit, like Turkey, even Sweden, taking a "neutralist" role in the war. He takes over Norway, he takes over everything except Britain and Switzerland.

Then the fascists attack the Soviet Union. They get to the gates of Leningrad, of Moscow, and of Stalingrad. This was the most European, the most industrialized section of the Soviet Union. In the siege of Leningrad, people were literally starving to death. They were carrying out the bodies. There was no food. At Stalingrad the Soviets fought for every inch of that territory. These terrible "social patriots and nationalists." What would have happened if Hitler had won? Let us take a serious look at that possibility.

Hitler thought at the gates of Stalingrad that in two weeks the war would be over. The U.S. and Britain also thought Germany would win at that point. They also did not know what socialism had up its sleeve. But anyway, let us consider the hypothesis that Germany defeated the Soviet Union. What was the German plan? It was to consolidate their control over eastern Russia and divide the Soviet Union with Japan, which

would invade from its position in Manchuria, in China. Japan would also be given all of China, South and South-East Asia and the Pacific. What was the rest of the plan?

The reason the Germans did not invade Britain was that there were a lot of fascist elements in Britain in the government, etc. Hitler's plan was that once the Soviet Union was defeated, he would say to the British, it is now time to make a deal. You are isolated, you have no possibilities. We will preserve the British Empire. And thus the plan was to incorporate the British Empire, that the sun never set on, into the fascist empire. So they would have had the French Empire in Africa, they would have had the British Empire in Africa, what the Portuguese had, what the Spanish had, India, the Middle East. All this would have been under German fascism, under the control of Hitler and his allies.

What would have happened to the peoples in this area? What was the program for European peoples? Hitler wanted to exterminate Slavic peoples. You can imagine what he would have done once they got to Africa. They were already doing it, in part, with the French fascists. But the French fascists compared to the German fascists were tame. What would have happened throughout the non-white areas of the world. The next objective was Latin America. A growing fascist movement, taking advantage of the national contradictions with U.S. imperialism. There were already a number of these countries that were closely linked. Paraguay was actually part of the fascist powers. Argentina was as well. Paraguay was an ally of Italy. It had a formal alliance with Italy. In some ways you can say that Paraguay is still fascist.

What's next? Let's get to home, the United States. The US can feel very comfortable – Well, we did not have to suffer the consequences of the war. It is true that the United States would have been sort of the last stop on the trip. And who can know what would have happened in world politics. But the United States either would have had to capitulate or would have been fighting a war alone against the combined reactionary forces of fascism of the entire world. Would the United States have won on a long-term historical basis? Not likely. What were the real prospects of establishing a German *Reich* of a thousand years over the face of the earth?

Of course there would have been rebellions against fascist rule, as there were rebellions against fascist rule as far as it did go. But what was the character of fascism in order to as much as possible prevent that kind of rebellion? It was to systematically and totally destroy the working class and its organizations and institute slave labor. Their plan for Europe was a system of controlling the heavy industries of the various countries under conditions of slave labor. Total destruction of the agrarian economy, except for what is needed for the German war machine. A total destruction of the national institutions of people, their identity, their pride, their consciousness as a people. In many cases, the physical extermination *en masse* of people the fascists wanted to get rid of. And they could turn their demagogy in whatever direction they found convenient at a particular moment, in terms of who they decided would be next on the list of enemies.

Because they had a "super race" theory of an Aryan race, a white race, they did not want to just put that white race in Germany in power over a bunch of colonies. It was not just a simple imperialist war. They wanted to insure, for the long-term historical run, the supremacy of the white race and the abolition, the physical extermination and abolition, of all other races. And even within the white race, the supremacy of what they considered to be an Aryan nation of basically Germanic peoples. Their theory included, and that is one of the reasons they did not attack England, by the way, is that as far as they were concerned they were Germanic peoples. They considered a lot of Americans to be Germanic peoples, because of their origins in immigration, etc.

### **Who Defeated Fascism?**

Now, who stood against that? Who stopped that? What tactic did they pursue to stop that? What are the historical origins of stopping that? What is the sake of stopping it? How can there historically be even any question today that the Comintern pursued correct tactics to stop fascism? I can understand how that debate could have occurred in 1934, or in 1935, leading up to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, because fascism had just taken over in Germany. A lot of its most barbaric features were not yet revealed. But we have the



experience of the war, and all it represented. All the destruction that was done in that war. Is this tactic the source of revisionism today? Is this tactic the source of our problems?

Believe me, if this line of rejecting the path of struggle against fascism had not been followed, we would have a lot more problems than we have now.

Despite how bleak the situation is for the working class, you have your organizations. How many of you appreciate having a trade union? If the fascists were in power, you would not have a trade union. How many of you appreciate being alive? And what kind of conditions would life be worth under such a rule for those who were alive?

Let us consider another historical possibility. The Soviet Union surprised many people. Why did they surprise these people? Why did they surprise the Germans? Why did they surprise the whole world? It was because of the victory of socialism in one country. They had the productive forces, a lot of which had even been built since 1941. Factories were carted off *en masse* behind the Ural Mountains. In anticipation of the war, there was also a fair amount of industrial development in that region. That was one of the things the 1939-41 period was used for.

The Soviet Union, by itself, turned the tables against fascism. And the rest of the world cannot take a whole lot of credit for it, although other people played their part. The Soviet Union literally saved our entire progress in terms of human civilization. As they advanced, the imperialists panicked, because they realized some of the consequences of it. Would the Soviet Union liberate the peoples under the fascist yoke, and what would happen to the imperialist system after that?

Some people wanted to make a separate peace. What would a separate peace have meant? A separate peace would have meant a deal with Hitlerite fascism, that it prosecute the war only in the direction of the Soviet Union, and that there would be a cease fire on the Western front. The industrial might of these powers would contribute to Germany attacking the Soviet Union.

Maybe in that situation the result would not have been Germany winning worldwide victory, because it would have been a concession by the German fascists. Their perspective

would have been on a much longer basis. But what it could have meant is the fact that many of the peoples who lived under the fascist yoke would not have been liberated from it. Possibly it could have meant a military stagnation. Possibly the Soviet Union would have had to accept a peace treaty as it had in the past with Germany, in order to not continue prosecuting the war against Germany, another Brest-Litovsk. There were a number of possibilities, even if the Soviet Union were not destroyed.

Under such circumstances, what then would have happened in countries like Iran? What was the plan? The plan on the part of the British to make a deal with the Germans was to reassert the British Empire, to invade through the Balkans, to invade in the Middle East, to invade Iran, and to invade Southeast Asia. And the plan was that the American Navy would take British troops to all of these regions for all of the invasions, combined with the Germans fighting here.

What did the Soviet Union manage to do to stop this plan? They managed to rally the peoples of the world to the total defeat of fascism. To do that, one of the things they did was to dissolve the Comintern. On this scale of things, this was a pretty minor event, not one of real decisive importance. They managed to mobilize public opinion and maintain the war. But part of maintaining the war effort was not just mobilizing public opinion; it was to make a deal with the U.S. and Great Britain over the question of what was going to happen after the war. Because at that time the U.S. and Britain knew that Germany was going to be defeated if the war continued the way it was going. They knew that even if they did not open up a second front, Germany would eventually be defeated. Although you do not find this in the public pronouncements, the question at that point really was: what kind of deal can we make with the Soviet Union so as to defeat Germany but come to an understanding of what happens to the world after that.

### **The Need for a Second Front**

The Soviet Union had to make a deal, for the sake of getting the U.S. and Britain to recognize what was going to happen in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. They made a deal on what

was eventually the partition of Germany, although it was not intended to be so at the time. It was a deal on the zones of occupation of Germany by the four armies. In that regard, maybe they withdrew here in Iran. But the Allied armies stopped at the Elbe River, as part of the agreement that was made at Yalta. The Red Army was not there yet. One of the big criticisms of the right wing is that the U.S. gave away part of Germany to the Russians.

A number of decisions were made on disposition of a number of different places. If this was an imperialist war, who was making the redivision of the colonies of the world, and for what? Was the Soviet Union at Yalta making a division of the world? What was its stand on the colonial question? That is one of the things we have been discussing here. Now that Europe was liberated, now that national independence was restored, that was on the agenda, everyone knew that was going to happen, what would be the disposition of the rest of the world coming out of the war? What was the stand of the Soviet Union? The Soviet Union stood for the dismantling of the previous colonial empires and the recognition of national independence. What was the position quoted here in terms of the Middle East? It was the withdrawal of foreign armies from the Middle East. At that point the American army, the French army, the British army, and the Soviet army were all in the region. So the Soviet Union withdrew from an area of Iran. The British army also withdrew from Iran.

The Soviet Union managed to get U.S. support in opposition to what the British wanted. Churchill's big preoccupation with Roosevelt at Yalta was to assure the interests of the British Empire after the war. Stalin very adroitly took advantage of the contradictions between U.S. and British imperialism. If you read the records of Yalta, you see that he did it brilliantly. Of course, Roosevelt did not care about the British Empire. What he cared about were the interests of the U.S. But what this managed to turn on was the fact that the U.S. did not have a formal empire, it did not have colonies, except a few. But on a world scale compared to the British and the French, it did not have formal colonies as they and the Germans had prior to the war. On that basis, Roosevelt supported decolonization. Now we can talk about what that led to, but at least it led to the formal

national independence of many countries in the world. The British and the French did not want to grant it, and to a degree struggled against it afterward. There were a number of struggles, like the one in Indochina.

The Soviet Union managed to make a deal with the imperialists so that most of these countries would be granted the possibility of national independence. For that they are called chauvinists, for that they are called nationalists, for that they are called patriotic, for that they are called red imperialists, for that they are accused of re-establishing the old czarist empire, and all other such nonsense. For that they are liquidating the interests of the revolution in this or that country, in this or that situation.

If we look at the situation on a world scale, what the Soviet Union did was to implement a strategy and tactics of world revolution that led to the expansion of what was at first one sixth of the world against the imperialists. They saw that it was a long historical process, not to be resolved in one war, in one struggle, in one revolution. It expanded so far with the capacities and material resources of the people. But they were depleted. Industry was destroyed. People wanted peace. They had to make a deal. And they made a deal. Was that deal in the interests of the peoples of the world, on the whole, or not? If it was, it has to be supported. If it was not, then condemn it, and say what you stand for. What was another resolution of that situation in the world, not some ideal situation you would like to talk about — “we should have had revolution everywhere.” That is just a bunch of petty bourgeois intellectualist twaddle. That was not the real world. What was the alternative in the real world? Propose an alternative! None of these people ever propose an alternative in the actual situation in the world. They do not want to deal with the situation in the world. They just want to talk about abstract formulations and principles. They have a few in their pocket to pull out for any occasion, about proletarian revolution, about the right of self-determination, about anything.

### **Against Dogmatism**

It was the principal objective of the Seventh World Congress to defeat the kind of thinking that is prevalent today.

Dogmatic, stereotyped thinking that did not allow the workers' movement to judge the real forces and maneuver within the real class situation, the real class struggle, the real struggle between the imperialists, taking advantage of those contradictions, and all the other contradictions of society, in order to move forward toward victory. Even in situations where the proletariat was put on the defensive, and even if the proletariat's seizure of power was not imminent, how was it possible to turn things around and start moving in that direction again? The principal objective of the reports at the Seventh World Congress (because this situation was already resolved inside the Comintern) was to wage a struggle on this question, to convince the international communist movement of the correctness of making this kind of tactical shift, and try to put in the garbage once and for all this kind of dogmatic, narrow, sectarian thinking that was a real problem for the Comintern. It was not a minor problem. It was a severe problem that inhibited their work, inhibited their ability to rally a majority of the working class. It inhibited their ability to do anything in the first place to have prevented the rise of fascism.

If we are going to speak to the question of what happened after that, what happened with the Soviet Union, what happened in the international communist movement, what happened that explains the mess that the working class is in today, ideologically and politically, we have to understand what happened before. It is impossible to even talk about it, it is impossible to even broach certain questions, because certain basics have to be laid down. If you do not recognize the right of a socialist country to defend itself, then the problem is not one of what happened in the Soviet Union in 1946. The problem is — which class stand do you stand for? Are you on the side of imperialism or are you on the side of socialism? This is the fundamental question. Are you on the side of the working class on an international scale, or on the side of the narrow particular interests of a certain stratum of workers or nationality in some particular situation in the world?

There are certain fundamental questions that cannot even be broached. There are certain questions that were not even debated at the Seventh World Congress, because they were a settled question a long time ago. Many of the objections that

are brought out now were not even dealt with at length at the time because no one had them. They went through the experience, they went through the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, they went through dealing with these idiotic petty bourgeois elements like Bordiga, with elements like Trotsky. That view was overwhelmingly rejected by the revolutionary proletariat in the world.

That point of view did not win in any party in the world. It did not win in any country in the world. But today, because we have a situation of the restoration of revisionism, however that is analyzed by different people, because of questions about what happened in the Soviet Union, about what happened in China, what happened in Albania, or wherever, we have a situation in which people are demoralized. Of course, they are going to look for answers as to why this situation happened. But where do they look for answers? Where can they get answers? The principal source of answers is bourgeois literature.

### **Where Do We Look for Answers?**

Every bourgeois book, all the bourgeois literature (better characterized as bourgeois-Trotskyite literature, because there is a merger between the two) on the subject authoritatively quotes Trotsky about how the Soviet Union was degenerating and how it became a degenerate workers' state and how it became nationalist, etc. This is their creed. It is never questioned. Trotsky is never questioned. The other person who is never questioned on one certain subject is Khrushchev. Khrushchev, whom the U.S. treated as a buffoon, was right on one thing. When Khrushchev gave his speech on Stalin, it was the Bible. Every word he said is treated as true. There are certain other books put in that category.

Most of the theories about what happened during the supposed purges in the Soviet Union on a mass scale, millions killed, etc., and most of the information on it comes from a couple of books, one of them written by a person who was a ranking officer in the Soviet secret police in Europe. He spent very little time in the Soviet Union, and wrote a book called *The Secret Crimes of Stalin*. He did not write the book when he defected to the West in the 1930s. He wrote it during the period

of the Cold War. The Cold War was the period when all those theories about what happened in the Soviet Union during the 1930s were principally developed. Before that there was great sympathy for the Soviet Union. What happened with the Cold War, and it originated in the U.S., was an ideological and political offensive to disorient the proletariat. Did they succeed? Look at what they did to the American Party. Talk about a bunch of disoriented people, totally incapable of dealing with the real events of the world! Of course they principally took care of their own Party, a good testing ground.

But they launched the offensive everywhere. At the end of World War II, Trotskyism was dead. There was no 4th International. There were no Trotskyite organizations. There were a few individual Trotskyites around. There were a few individual Bordigists, including Bordiga himself. They were rehabilitated, and their movement came to the fore, precisely because they were used to engage in the ideological offensive against the Soviet Union. That offensive went on prior to the death of Stalin.

Mountains and reams and roomfuls of books filled with slanders built upon slanders, and speculations about thousands killed, millions killed, and any sort of incredible slander you could think of about the Soviet Union, and about what happened historically. They mounted that offensive against the Soviet Union, they mounted it even much more skillfully in all areas of science and literature. These were the struggles in the Soviet Union against Western science and literature, and that is another whole discussion we could go into. But, in any case, there was an ideological offensive on all fronts to disorient the proletariat, both in power and out of power. Combined with the conspiracy we talked about, they managed to put into power, in the socialist camp, people who, for their own interests, would disorient the proletariat even further. And they succeeded. And it is a terrible thing. The position of the international communist movement has been lost. Stalin predicted that if the Soviet Union were defeated, that position would be lost, and it was lost.

But standing here today, we have a choice to make. We can choose to either continue to be confused, and continue to find intellectual pinprick reasons not to do anything, or we can take

a really pretty simple look back, despite all the complexities of what happened. We can then say, if we are in such a bad situation today, when was the proletarian movement in a better situation? Why was it in a better situation? Now, if theory is something other than a few abstract formulas learned by rote, if theory instead is the actual experience of the international proletariat struggling to liberate itself, and the lessons from this experience, it is time we relearned the lessons.

But we are not going to relearn the lessons if we get sucked into the trap of the intellectual twaddle of the petty bourgeois Trotskyite elements supported by the bourgeoisie. Their objective is precisely to come with a thousand questions, a thousand incredibly obscure historical details, in order to disorient people. Ever heard a Trotskyite or had to deal with one? What about this, what about that? What about what happened in France in 1936, and the German Party did something in 1933, and then they jump to China in 1927, and all around, continuously. You answer one question, they jump to another. They don't want to hear the answer. It is a common phenomenon, and it is being used now in what is left of this international communist movement. There are some fragments of it left.

This is a very serious situation. We are not very confident that it is easy to just turn the tables and make the offensive a counter-offensive. But for people who are interested in actually doing something, we say today there is only one way to recapture the positions of the international proletariat, and that is on the basis of the accumulated theoretical and practical experience of the international proletariat, as summed up and put forward in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Not them as individuals, but as what they represented as leaders of the workers' movement, and flowing out of them, the questions of the work of the Soviet Party, the work of the Comintern, the work that was done by Marx and Engels and the First and Second Internationals, etc. We have got to return to the roots of Marxism-Leninism in order to defeat revisionism, instead of succumbing to the revisionist-Trotskyite offensive to totally and permanently decapitate the consciousness of the international proletariat.



## Notes

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