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AVAKIAN'S STALINISM

(Letter from a young Spartacist
to her friend in the Avakian group)

Dear Rita,

I was very glad to hear from you so soon. But what disturbs me is that you say you and Barbara support the political line of the Avakian group because the last time I talked to you we agreed that Stalinism must be smashed, yet here you are supporting the RU a Stalinist group!

I am still very much against Stalinism; the reason I got turned off from PL about the same time you did, was for their Stalinist organizational maneuvering. Did Mamie tell you that just before I left the South I joined a Trotskyist group, the Spartacist League? I think if you read their literature you will see that the anti-"Trotskyite" propaganda is a lot of distortions.

Thank you for sending me the Red Papers. I read it carefully and jotted down some notes that may help to clarify the essential differences between the RU line and the Trotskyist theory.

Maoist Menshevism

To begin with, there are some points on which I agree with the RU: that is, the need for a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party; the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the supremacy of proletarian ideology over decadent bourgeois ideology and culture; and the struggle to build communism.

Now for the disagreements. It seems to me that every mistake in their ideology comes from the fact that they are Maoists. Whereas PL is skitzophrenic in that it often puts forth the correct line in spite of its Maoism, the RU, on the other hand, is more honest and consistent in following the thoughts of Mao to their logical conclusion. And they are also bright enough to realize that if

you are genuinely a Maoist then you must of necessity be a Stalinist.

This is because Maoism has its roots in Stalinism; is, in fact, nothing but a Chinese version of Stalinism. The RU recognizes this when they say, "Stalin is the bridge between Lenin and Mao." Their mistake is they pretend that Stalinism is an extension of Marxism-Leninism. But this is not the case. In the Second International, Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought constantly against the Mensheviks; I maintain that Stalinism represents the victory of Menshevism over Bolshevism; that although the Mensheviks were defeated by Lenin, they ultimately triumphed in Russia when Stalin came to power; and that Chairman Mao is also a Menshevik.

The Mensheviks were the first of the modern revisionists. They claimed that Russia could not have its proletarian revolution until after the bourgeois-democratic revolution had taken place. In practice, this means that a communist must collaborate with the national bourgeoisie, to help these dogs consolidate their own power after the defeat of feudalism and/or foreign imperialism. Lenin and Trotsky opposed this line, calling for an immediate proletarian revolution, which they led, and which actually succeeded, in Russia, in 1917. But Stalin, to the contrary, advocated the Menshevik line to the Chinese revolutionaries. He insisted that Mao should support Chiang's bourgeois Koumintang party instead of forming an independent workers' party. As a result of this deliberate error on the part of Stalin and Mao, Chiang was put in the position where he could betray the workers and conduct mass slaughter against proletarians and communists in 1927. Now after this, instead of building a new workers' party, Mao went out into

the countryside to organize the peasants, who are a petty bourgeois element. Even so, he did not break completely with Chiang, and if you read Red Star Over China, it is clear that he kept offering to subordinate the Red Army to the forces of Chiang, who was a proven traitor and a reactionary, in collaboration against the Japanese. If Mao and Stalin had had their way, the Reds never would have come to power, and Chiang, the bourgeois nationalist, would now be leading China. What thwarted this was that Chiang openly became a puppet of the U.S.

The errors of Menshevik theory are obvious. In the modern world there is no such thing as a "bourgeois-national-democratic" revolution. Either a nation is an imperialist satellite or it is socialist in the sense that it has a nationalized economy, as in China and Cuba. There is no such thing as a national bourgeoisie independent of American imperialism. There is no such thing as feudalism in the modern world, because monopoly capital is in control of all those countries that appear feudal on the surface. So an "anti feudal" revolution must of necessity be anti-capitalist.

So that Mao's peasant-led revolution, which Stalin supported, was based on a false Menshevik idea. So that Stalin and Mao were both revisionists, and Mao has supported bourgeois regimes like that of Sukarno, instead of calling upon the workers to overthrow their national bourgeoisie at the same time they kick out the foreign dogs.

The RU claims Stalin was a Marxist-Leninist so that when you criticize Stalin you are exposing yourself as a petty bourgeois. This is a fucking lie. Stalin in fact, represented the revisionist clique of technocrats and bureaucrats which smashed Bolshevism (Marxism-Leninism) in Russia, then proceeded to smash it in the rest of the world so that there never again occurred a genuine workers' revolution, as happened in Russia, in 1917, but every revolution after that was led by peasants or bourgeoisie.

The RU correctly identifies Khrushchev as a revisionist, but they fail to note that Khrushchev and his successors are Stalinists, that Stalinism is simply one kind of revisionsim, revisionism mean-

ing any doctrine that denies to the working class their proper role in the revolutionary struggle which is as leaders of the revolutionary struggle. Don't be fooled by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956: we see bourgeois politicians denouncing each other, but that does not mean they are class enemies! On the contrary, Khrushchev's idea was not only to consolidate his own power in the Party, but also to make Stalinism more palatable to the masses, to delude the Russian people, much as liberals in the U.S. pretend they are reforming capitalism, in order to suppress dissent.

But the RU valiantly tries to defend Stalin. He achieved agricultural collectivization, they say. True, but Trotsky proposed this earlier, and Stalin kept putting it off as long as he could--and when he finally did collectivize, it was at the cost of killing thousands of kulaks. Stalin defeated the fascists, they say. True, but he collaborated with Churchill and FDR and Chiang Kai-Shek, instead of encouraging the peoples of Britain, America, and China to overthrow their governments and fight the fascists at the same time. To support these "progressive" capitalists against Hitler was equivalent to supporting the left wing of the bourgeoisie against the right--and whose interest does that serve? Stalin never stopped trying to sell out every revolution that came along. The only new socialist nations he allowed were those that he thought would be Russian satellites.

Finally, in a calculated lie, the RU states that in Stalin's Russia the working class enjoyed "full democratic rights". This is so obviously untrue it needn't even be refuted. In fact, the working class never will enjoy democratic rights until it overthrows all the imperialists and all the Stalinists on an international scale. This includes Comrade Mao.

Russia and China

The RU, like PL and the ISC, say that Russia is a state-capitalist nation, that the Russian bureaucracy is getting rich at the expense of the working people and is planning for a full-blown "capitalist restoration" as soon as possible. They further talk about a "new Tsarist empire", and they condemn "imperialist aggression of

the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia". The truth is, Russia is not yet a capitalist nation, even state capitalist. The bureaucracy, although wealthier than the people (and, incidentally, the discrepancy was greater in Stalin's time) simply cannot be placed in the same category with the monopoly capitalists. Thus, it is a dangerous distortion to call them imperialists and to talk about a new Tsarist empire (and this is what the New York Times is also saying) because in any conflict between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as in the missile crisis or a dispute over the Berlin Wall--the fact is, revolutionaries in the U.S. would have no choice but to side with the Soviet Union, and any attempt at neutrality in the Cold War objectively aids the imperialists.

So Russia is not capitalist. It is, however, ruled by a ruthless clique of revisionists. In reality the Stalinist bureaucracy represents the interests of the technocrats and managers and party officials, who should be elected democratically by the people but are not, and all those elements with a petty bourgeois consciousness of themselves. This was accomplished by Stalin. The RU cannot deny that it was Stalin who reinstated nationalism and even the Orthodox Church during World War II. The Church had kept the people down in their ignorance for centuries, so Stalin reinstates the Patriarch and exhorts the people not to defend the revolution, but to fight for "Holy Mother Russia"--and the RU calls him a Marxist-Leninist! On the contrary, Stalin was a cynical petty bourgeois opportunist; even his nationalism was fake because he was storing money in Swiss banks in case the people should kick him out of the country! But it was this fake nationalism that led him to repudiate the Trotskyist theory of international revolution, and to make deals with imperialists like FDR to sell out revolutions in return for national security. Finally, the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia is only a continuation of Stalin's policy of setting up satellite buffer states to protect Russia.

China is very similar to Russia except that it has not had time to degenerate so far. But already the Chinese have managed to sell out the Indonesian people, in 1966, by ordering the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to support Sukarno, in

an attempt to make deals with bourgeois politicians friendly to China.

Class Collaboration

Maoism represents a serious threat to the revolutionary movement in America, because Maoism put into practice becomes class collaborationism, Third Worldism, nationalism, and reformism.

Class collaborationism is based on the myth that the imperialists can be defeated by a "popular front" of anti-imperialist classes laying aside the class struggle to defeat a common enemy. For Stalin, this meant alliance with FDR against Hitler. For Mao, this meant alliance with Chiang against the Japanese. For the American CP, this means to support Humphrey rather than Nixon. For the Panthers, it means to ally with the CP and other liberals against the fascist groups and the pigs. Anyway you look at it, this means a sell out of the rank and file, a pragmatic ditching of all your principles. The working class has found out the hard way that it cannot, must not, ally with any elements of the bourgeoisie, our class enemy, except only with individuals who are won over from the bourgeoisie to the proletarian struggle. A look at the history of "revolutions" based on class collaboration--Algeria is the classic example--will show that the petty bourgeois or military clique which leads these "revolutions" either become imperialist puppets, or are forced into the orbit of Russia or China (and this is what happened in Cuba). Either way, the workers are not in power.

Third Worldism is Lin Piao's revisionist doctrine, which Mao supports, that the Third World countries will surround the imperialist bastions and inflict defeat upon them. The RU modifies this to mean that anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World will weaken the U.S. so that the native working class, presumably led by the Black Panthers, can successfully carry out its revolution. While it is undeniable that the struggles of the NLF and the Black Liberation movement have weakened American monopoly capital and have raised the consciousness of millions of Americans--nevertheless, it is also clear that imperialism is able to peacefully co-exist with revisionism; and in fact, all revolutions in underdeveloped na-

tions that do not actually result in imperialist puppet states, will in fact result in revisionist nations for as long as the revolution here is delayed.

Stalinism is inextricably tied in with nationalism, Stalinism representing the forces of counter-revolution. The reason the Stalinists (including Mao) sell out revolutions is because they are obsessed with the idea of national security--so that they will make any deals with the imperialists, as at Yalta in 1945 or Geneva in 1954, to maintain this security. In fact, you have the disgraceful spectacle of China and the Soviet Union clashing in acrimonious debate and even fighting over a strip of land, because of their petty national chauvinism.

In practice, this nationalism would mean support of black nationalism in this country; and indeed, the RU supports the old CP theory that Negroes are a colony in the U.S. so that objectively you are saying they are more than an exploited caste, they are an actual nation, and if they are deluded by the Ford Foundation into wanting black capitalism, you are forced by your own logic to support this demand. Of course, we know there never will be black capitalism, but in the meantime thousands of Blacks are being diverted from the class struggle. I am not saying, as PL does, that black nationalism equals white racism; rather it is a matter of strategy, can you afford to have your more militant elements fighting for a myth when there is real work to be done?

Now the last practical consequence of Maoism is a difficult thing to attack, but it must be attacked nevertheless. This is the concept of the "mass line". In essence, what this means is doing the work of the Red Cross or running around performing good deeds, like Ralph Nader. Calling upon revolutionaries to "serve the people" is a moral exhortation for them to go out among the masses as missionaries and healers, organizing the masses around reforms, such as the free breakfast, which is financed by Safeway food stores for the Panthers. Now I don't want to sound callous, but a revolutionary party simply does not have time to agitate for reforms. I'm not saying that it's counter-revolutionary, because ultimately, if it genuinely serves the people, it's not counter-revolutionary.

But when you have limited time and resources, it is more profitable to organize people around revolutionary struggles than around reforms. As for the contention that serving the people wins them over to your line: I think they will be won over faster if you prove to them that you are a serious revolutionary.

Trotskyism

Now the RU has a lot to say about the "Trotskyites" so I want to offer some defense. First of all, Trotskyism is more relevant to the American condition than is Maoism. Trotskyism calls for a working class revolution in the advanced capitalist nations, where the working class is strong, educated, and able to establish true proletarian democracy, unfettered by an elitist clique of bureaucrats. Trotskyism calls for a contagious revolution that spreads like wildfire from the most advanced to the most backward countries, a revolution led by the working class and by no other class! In Russia, China, and the other "socialist" countries, the working class will kick out the bureaucrats and begin to run things themselves, in a democratic way. The world is a closed system, and only on an international scale can communism be achieved.

Trotskyism does not constitute the opportunism of the SWP-YSA gang. Opportunism has infected almost every party in any time when the situation seems hopeless for revolution. In conclusion, I hope you don't let the Avakian gang blind you to the true nature of Stalinism.

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