

The lessons of Stalinism

Introduction

Stalinism dominated and shaped the would-be left for two thirds of the 20th century. Its consequences still warp and shape much of the would-be left, including organisations that are ostensibly anti-Stalinist. To a surprising extent, the left has still not properly come to terms with the lessons of Stalinism.

The 1953 article by Hal Draper printed here was an attempt to summarise concisely the conclusions which the Independent Socialist League (formerly the Workers' Party: the "Shachtmanites", the heterodox Trotskyists) was drawing from the experience of Stalinism.

When Draper wrote, Stalinism was still expanding. It would continue to expand for the next 25 or so years, before the sudden collapse of the USSR and its East European satellites in 1989-91.

Stalinist "socialism" was the "actually existing" alternative to capitalism for a whole era. It occupied one third of the globe.

It seemed as if it might engulf the rest of it. That view of things was mistaken, as we can now see, and so was the view that capitalism was in its death-throes, a view which the heterodox shared with the "orthodox" Trotskyists, James P Cannon, Ernest Mandel, Michel Pablo, and so on, who saw the expansion of Stalinism as a deformed working-class world revolution.

Draper's view was rooted in a picture of Stalinism as a viable historical alternative to capitalism on a world scale — though until the mid 1940s the WP/ISL majority had seen Stalinism as a short-term, freakish socio-economic formation special to the USSR — and in a culpably wrong assessment of the state of capitalism. Capitalism continued to dominate the economically and socially advanced countries, and by 1953 it was expanding and becoming prosperous.

Notable in Draper's article is the idea that democracy in the Stalinist states would in fact be the socialist transformation there, and the implicit rejection of the idea that there could ever be a victory for capitalism in those countries. Draper and his comrades shared this idea with the "orthodox" Trotskyists, whose nonsense that the Stalinist formations were "degenerated and deformed workers' states" the ISL rejected.

That too was, I think, rooted in the idea that the Stalinist system was a viable alternative to a dying capitalism.

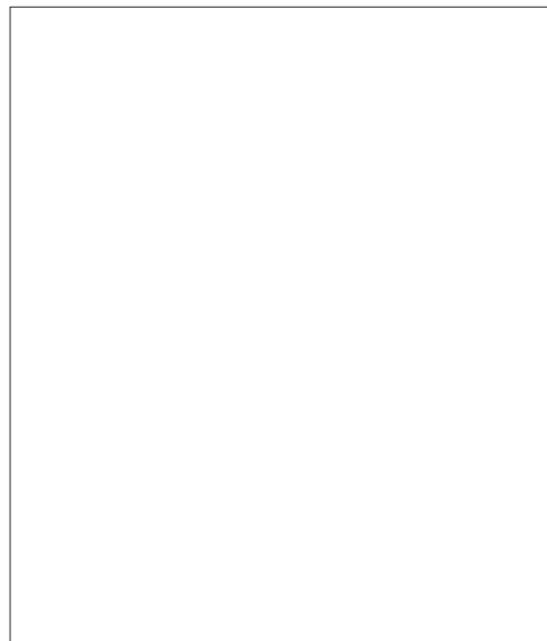
The way in which the clearest-minded of the Trotskyist currents after Trotsky, the Shachtman tendency, saw the evolution of the world then is of great interest to socialists today.

Draper presents a picture of a left disoriented by the failure to understand that it was no longer valid to approach anti-capitalist, or seemingly anti-capitalist, revolts and movements as necessarily serving the development of a socialist alternative to capitalism. That still tells us something of fundamental importance to the would-be left.

The left is still dominated by variants of the notion that any "anti-imperialist" movement ultimately serves the socialist outcome which we fight for.

No it did not, when Stalinism confronted advanced capitalism. No it doesn't now, with reactionary "anti-imperialist" movements like clerical-fascist political Islam.

Sean Matgamna



What to Learn From Stalinism

BY HAL DRAPER

Whoever cannot learn from history is doomed to repeat it. We Independent Socialists of today have only two advantages over the great socialist leaders and thinkers of the past: we stand on their shoulders, and we have lived longer. In our generation the colossal event which has tested all socialists' ideas — shattering some and affecting all — has been the rise of a completely new social phenomenon, Stalinism.

Whoever has not been able to learn lessons of the greatest importance from this, whatever movement has not been able to assimilate and readapt its conceptions to this, is doomed to impotence and worse — but to impotence only at the very best.

What our independent Socialist movement has learned from the rise of Stalinism would take much more than this page to present. We select only five of the most important lessons here. They are basic to "our kind of socialism", that is, to a genuinely socialist re-adaptation of Marxist policy for our era — not a mere "reaffirmation", not a parroting of biblical formulas, but a re-adaptation such as Marxism itself demands if its spirit is to be observed.

THREE-CORNERED WORLD

Most of the real lessons to be learned naturally cluster around the question of socialism and democracy. But the first is prior to it.

(1) There is a *reactionary* social alternative to the system of capitalism in the world today.

To the socialist generations before us, anti-capitalism and the fight for socialism meant the same thing, or at least were part of the same process. Anything which struck a blow against capitalism was a blow for socialism, in its consequences. For socialism was the next social system scheduled by history, and, whatever pulled the capitalist order down, socialism would

replace it because there was nothing else.

This is not true in the modern world. There never was, indeed, any principle of Marxism which predestined that decrepit social orders could be succeeded only by progressive heirs. There were only pseudo-Marxist formulas which made a principle of history out of the pattern of capitalism's own development from its feudal predecessor. The world has known societies which crumbled into retrogressive throw-backs of civilisation itself. Which is the pattern that is "scheduled" by history will be decided not by moods of either despair or blind faith in some mechanical schema, but it will be decided only by the struggle in society itself.

This struggle for the world is not the duel described in the Communist Manifesto a century ago — bourgeoisie versus proletariat. It is a three-cornered battle for power, in which both basic classes of the capitalist system faces a new contender, the ruling class of the new type of exploiting system which we prefer to call "bureaucratic collectivism" but which is better known as simply Stalinism.

This triangle of forces is not a mere freak of history. It is the outcome of two facts: the old system of world capitalism is indeed crumbling and disintegrating, as was foretold, but the only class which can bring a new world of progress and plenty to birth, the working class which incubated under capitalism, has not yet reached out for its birthright. But the forces which inexorably pull the old system apart cannot wait for the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the socialist proletariat hangs back, while the old social order dissolves here and there, weakens there and here, to that extent the new social force of Stalinist bureaucratic-statism steps in to take over. Out of the most reactionary elements of the decaying world, an even more hideous ersatz exploiter grows. Stalinism is the punishment visited upon the workers for as yet failing to overthrow capitalism themselves.

Stalinism steps in, not to hold capitalism together, for it grows where that can no longer be done, but to hold society together in the only way exploiters know how in a world that is falling apart at the seams — by brute force and tyranny.

It seeks power by appealing to the anti-capitalist aspirations and needs of the masses. It gains in power where the people know that they can no longer stand the old system of exploitation which they know on their own hacks and in their own bellies, and where they are not presented with a progressive alternative that challenges both the old and the new masters.

With regard to the fight for democracy, what is the importance of understanding that there is a reactionary alternative to capitalism in the modern world? What is the importance of understanding that anti-capitalism is not enough? If, to previous socialist generations, the socialism that was to replace capitalism would also naturally be democratic, to us the socialism that replaces the old system must be democratic — or it is not socialism, as we shall see in Lesson 2. If to them democracy was the expected and desired companion of socialism, to us it is a condition for socialism.

In no other era than this does the fight for democracy rise to such a pinnacle of importance for the forces of progress. No other movement in the history of the world is so driven to place the democratic goal so close to everything it strives for.

But also, more than it has ever been, this driving need for democracy is directed against both systems of

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domination, capitalist and Stalinist.

Today, in the capitalist-Stalinist struggle, not only the latter but also the capitalist powers turn increasingly toward bureaucratisation and militarisation to save themselves against the threatening rival. There is no other fight, except the fight for socialist democracy, which so unifies the struggle against both systems, which so sums up the tasks of progress.

STATIFICATION AND SOCIALISM

(2) Nationalisation of industry is not equivalent to socialism.

Stalinism presents us with a society in which all the means of production and distribution are "nationalised", or better, "statified", and which is yet the antithesis of socialism. This is the aspect of Stalinism which has been the source of its ability to spread confusion, bewilderment and disorientation in the ranks of the socialists themselves.

But this Stalinist-nationalised economy is not a *socialised* economy, it is not the property of the people. The question we have learned to ask is simply this: Yes, the state owns everything, *but who "owns" the state?*

It is a question which only has to be asked to cut through to the heart of the nature of Stalinism. The working class is not by its nature, and never can be, an owning class like previous ruling classes. It can "take over" the economy only in one way: collectively, through its own institutions. It can exercise economic power only through its political power. The expression of this proletarian political power can be given in two words: workers' democracy.

Stalinism has fused the economic and political power by the very fact that the political organ, the state, is also the economic owner. It has fused this power in the hands of those who hold this power, those who exercise the totalitarian control over this state: the new ruling bureaucracy, which becomes the new ruling class.

The victorious working class also will fuse the economic and political power in its own hands, by exercising its own control over its own state. But the working people, as the great majority at the population, can control its state only in one way — through its democratic institutions.

Nationalisation of the economy under a state which is the "property" of a new minority class of overlords is Stalinism. Socialisation of the economy under a state which is the democratic expression of the majority of the people is socialism.

The socialist revolution in Russia was made by overthrowing the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist counter-revolution had to be made by destroying the workers' democracy.

Stalinism itself cannot be understood without understanding the new lessons of the relation between socialism and democracy.

ECONOMICS OF DEMOCRACY

(3) Democracy is an economic essential for socialism, not merely a desirable "moral value".

Let us make plain immediately that we agree entirely with the view that democracy is to be desired and defended because it is a vital moral value for humanity. But if that were its claim for the allegiance of the people, the case for it would go hard. People who are hungry, people who are ill-housed and ill-clothed, are difficult to interest in moral values, much as this fact disgusts professors of ethics, especially after a good meal, with the "stupidity" of the human race.

The socialist striving for democracy has a more solid base than that. It is Stalinism more than anything else that has made that clear to us.

For the Stalinist economy's mortal contradiction is not the same as that of capitalism. It is a different system. It is immune to the specific capitalist form of crisis, as were the pre-capitalist systems. A crisis associated with "overproduction", a crisis of glut in the midst of poverty and want, unemployment because of an over-abundance of goods, such as the US saw in the '30s, is unthinkable for it. In replacing capitalism, it has truly abolished the capitalist source of crisis and the capitalist type of crisis, as the Stalinists boast. But like every exploiting society it does so only in order to develop its own specific forms of crisis.

The crisis of the Stalinist economy is chronic. In eliminating capitalism it has also eliminated that which regulates and orders the capitalist system: the market and its laws. In the unplanned and economically anarchic system of capitalism, it is this "blind" behind-the-scenes regulator of the economy which keeps it working, which acts as its impersonal "planner". There is only one thing which can replace the operation of the market in a system of state-owned economy: conscious planning. Without a system of planning which can keep together the jigsaw-puzzle of the modern tremendously complex society, there can be only chaos.

The Stalinist state has an economic plan. Like everything else in this totalitarian structure, it is a plan devised, imposed and enforced from above, bureaucratically. But

no bureaucratic commission can itself plan such a labyrinth of social processes. Such a plan must be constantly checked from below, corrected from below; it must depend on initiative and responsibility below; it must be self-correcting through the give-and-take of democratic planning between the lower and upper echelons on every level.

This is what is impossible under Stalinism. This is the basic reason for the fantastic botches, snarls, snags, wastes, and snafus which are angrily denounced in every issue of the Stalinist press. Under the system of totalitarian terror, no factory manager can afford to take responsibility for decisions, when mistakes are evidences of "sabotage". No continuity can exist when personnel vanish and appear regularly in accordance with the chronic purge which is the very mode of life of Stalinism.

The fatal contradiction of Stalinist economy is the basic contradiction between planning and totalitarianism. It must plan and it cannot plan. Like the contradictions of capitalism, this galloping disease which eats away at its vitals is not guaranteed to be fatal in any given number of years. The regime continually tightens against the disease of bureaucratism — by more bureaucratic controls. It still keeps up vast production by fantastic expenditures of human labour power, enslaved or virtually enslaved. It loots and robs its dependent satellites more brutally than most capitalisms, as far as it can.

For a planned economy, democracy is an economic necessity. That means democracy is not merely a political good but an economic necessity for socialism.

We have only one doubt about those ideologists who tout the virtues of democracy on moral grounds. We have seen too many men who, sincerely convinced as they may be about their moral ideals, are willing to cast them aside when faced with an inextricable dilemma. When mere "moral ideals" clash, or seem to clash, with economic and social reality, it is not usually the reality which comes off second best. For us socialists, democracy is not a valuable adjunct to, or dressing on, the society for which we fight: it is an integral element of its economic system, as profit-making and cut-throat rivalry is an integral element of capitalism.

STRUGGLE AGAINST STALINISM

(4) Under Stalinism; the fight for democracy is the fight for socialism.

The victory of Stalinism over a people does not mean the end of the socialist struggle. It means only its re-appearance in a new form.

Every evidence shows that in the Stalinist states, the mass of working people do not yearn to return to the old system of capitalism, much as they hate their new bureaucratic exploiters. Rather, the very demagoguery of the Stalinists, which speaks of the plants and factories as "the property of the people", leads them to demand that this demagoguery be made reality.

What the masses of the peoples of the USSR aspire to is the democratisation of the regime, their democratic control over the state-which-owns-everything. And in such a state, this aspiration to democratic control of the economy is — exactly equals — is identical with — the aspiration for socialism.

The fight for socialism cannot be downed, by Stalinism or any other reaction. It can be abolished only by the blowing-up of civilisation. The nature of Stalinism is such that for the first time in the history of the world, the fight for democracy is not merely "bound up with" or "a part of" the fight for socialism; the fight for democracy is the fight for socialism, wherever Stalinism holds sway.

THE SOCIAL CONTENT

(5) Democracy means a social program or it means nothing.

The advances made by Stalinism in the modern world should be a staggering portent for those philosophers who think that ideals have a power of their own, just as virtue is its own reward. Here we see the most dynamically appealing movement in the world which is also the most totalitarian and tyrannous force in the world. Yet masses flock to its banners!

"Cannot the American democratic ideal be made just as dynamic, just as appealing?" anxiously ask the most sincere ideologists of capitalism, including its liberals. "How can this murderous system be so attractive?" They make myths about its propaganda machine, its "brain-washing techniques".

The truth is that Stalinism's appeal is that of a social program — anti-capitalism — while American capitalism flutters the rags of its democracy in vain because it can give it no meaningful social content. The fight for democracy is a power, but only if it englobes a social goal.

For us socialists the fight for democracy is no abstraction divorced from the real struggle of classes and interests. The concrete fight for democracy today is a fight for a new social order, it is a fight against both capitalism and Stalinism, it is a banner on which is written: "The socialist alternative to capitalism, the democratic alternative to

How the 1940s "orthodox" saw Stalinism

Reading the press of the "orthodox" Trotskyist movement from the 1940s inescapably suggests a question: didn't they have access to the serious bourgeois press?

They did, of course. Yet their picture of the world and what was happening in it was gappy, patchy, selective, and vastly distorted by the narrow-focus ideological spectacles they had strapped on themselves.

Where others — including socialists like the Workers' Party of the USA — saw the enormous expansion of a Russian empire in eastern and central Europe, the "orthodox" Trotskyists saw the spreading of a distorted working-class and anti-capitalist revolutionary movement.

Where others viewed nation-occupying Russian imperialism and liberty-destroying Russian totalitarianism with dismay and horror, they saw the vitality of the 1917 Revolution under the encrustations of Stalinism.

Where others saw Stalinist totalitarianism as reactionary even as compared to the bourgeois democratic system, they saw it as progressive, and the bourgeois-democratic world in which labour movements existed or were reviving after 1945 as reactionary by comparison.

The "orthodox" Trotskyists went through a number of phases in the second half of the 1940s before finally settling into defining the states in Russia's east and central European empire as "deformed workers' states". Consistent through all the phases was the suppression in their press of comprehensive reporting of affairs in the Stalinist world. What did not fit their theorising was largely ignored.

Anyone relying solely on "orthodox" Trotskyist publications such as the US *Militant* simply would not have known what was going on in the world.

Before the war Trotsky had commented that the papers of the two great imperialist blocs, the fascist and the bourgeois-democratic, were truthful about the opponent bloc and invariably liars about their own.

Drawing inexorably by the logic of their commitment to "defend the USSR" — notionally against capitalist restoration — into supporting the expanding Russian Stalinist empire, the "orthodox" Trotskyist press came to ignore or suppress much of the truth about the bloc it supported.

The facts, the whole facts, told against their ideological view of Stalinism; so they ignored the facts. It was the opposite of a proper Marxist approach.

The following article illustrates what that meant for the US *Militant* over a single year at the end of the World War. It was published in the for-members-only "Internal Bulletin" of the SWP-USA, the group which published *The Militant*, by members of the minority in the SWP-USA led by Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow.

That it appeared where any slip or inaccuracy would have been pounced on by their opponents in the SWP-USA offers some assurance of its veracity.

It is a plea for honest revolutionary journalism. The relevance of that plea today will be plain to anyone who reads the "revolutionary" press of the SWP-UK and of the Socialist Party.

Sean Matgamma

BY EUGENE SHAYS AND DAN SHELTON

"It is indispensable to warn the masses tirelessly of the generally reactionary character of the Kremlin's policy, and of those dangers it bears for the occupied countries." (Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*)

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the complete deformation and distortion which the concept of the "Defence of the Soviet Union" has undergone at the hands of the present SWP leadership.

We have made a detailed and systematic study of *The Militant* from the end of the European war (May 1945) until the present moment (June 1916). By direct references to each article dealing in whatever form with the Kremlin's role and policies, we shall prove by *The Militant's* own record that:

1. Except in formal resolutions, the defence of the Soviet Union in the party press has turned into a capitulation to Stalinism.

2. *The Militant* has consistently and bureaucratically violated our 1944 convention resolution which relegates the defence of the SU into the background and pushes to the fore the defence of the European revolution against all its enemies including the Stalinists.

The method used to establish these two key criticisms will simply consist of (a) an enumeration of the main

crimes committed against the socialist revolution by Stalin in the course of the year since the end of the European war (as reported in the world press), and (b) the record of *The Militant* on each of these crimes.

1. The USSR and the dismantling of factories

A large part of the industries in countries occupied by the USSR have been stripped, dismantled and shipped to Russia. In Czechoslovakia, the official figure is over 20% of all industry; in Poland, over 30%. These are "allied" countries. In Austria and German (now Polish) Silesia, the figures are correspondingly higher. In Manchuria (containing 70% of China's heavy industries), heavy industry in the Mukden area is almost 100% stripped; the Fushun mining area is stripped of all its electrical and modern mining equipment. In Germany more than 50% of all productive capacity in the USSR zone has been removed. The same policy was followed in Romania, Hungary and Korea.

The objective resultant has been the de-proletarianisation of large parts of the working class, the lowering of the standard of living of the masses, the condemnation of the country to social and political stagnation and, thus, the creation of grave obstacles in the path of the coming socialist revolution.

The bourgeois press, for its own reasons, has carried literally thousands of documented items of reporting on this question. What has *The Militant* carried?

With the exception of three articles by the SWP minority (one by Goldman, two by Morrow) in 50 issues of *The Militant*, there appeared only the following:

July 14 1946: Allied Looting of Germany (unsigned) deals with both US and USSR; very brief, factual only, a rewrite job from bourgeois newspapers, no interpretation.

Aug. 25, 1945: NC Statement on "USSR in China" has not a single reference to the USSR's looting of China and Manchuria!

Aug. 18, 1945: International News; Austrian factories looted by USSR; brief, factual only, no interpretation.

Dec. 8, 1945: Austrian Election (unsigned) correctly relates losses of CP at polls to Stalin's policy which includes looting of factories. Reference is thus nothing more than incidental to the main argument of the article on losses of CP at elections.

There is not a single reference to any looting of factories in the 1946 *Militant*; no reference in either 1945 or 1946 to looting of factories in Manchuria, Hungary, Romania, Korea, etc.

2. USSR and forced labour

Millions of physically fit men and women, war prisoners and nationals of "defeated enemy nations" have been deported to the USSR and put to forced labour in concentration camps. Among them are tens of thousands of political opponents of the Stalin regime.

Inside the USSR, whole peoples have been declared "collaborators" and shipped to Siberia (Tartars, Volga-Germans, etc.) Torture and malnutrition has resulted in the deaths of literally hundreds of thousands of these modern slaves.

In addition to impeding the revolutionary upsurge by removing, demoralising and killing off millions of workers and peasants, and alienating the rest of the working class, this Stalinist crime must be opposed by socialists as the most cruel and brutalised form of human slavery yet perfected. The enslavement of man, and socialism, the freeing of man, are mutually exclusive.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, except for two of the above mentioned articles by Goldman and Morrow, there is not a single reference to forced labour. There is no reference ever to forced labour of war prisoners and political opponents in all the countries occupied by the USSR.

3. USSR and the seizure of territory

The following countries were occupied and were incorporated into the USSR: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Moldavia, Carpatho-Ukraine, Eastern Prussia, Karelo-Finland, Petsamo, Tannu-Tuva, Southern Sakhalin, Kuerlies.

In addition, through occupation troops and police rule, the following areas have been occupied: Romania, Hungary, parts of Austria and Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland and half of Korea.

As Marxists, we must oppose this violation of the right of self-determination of the countries involved.

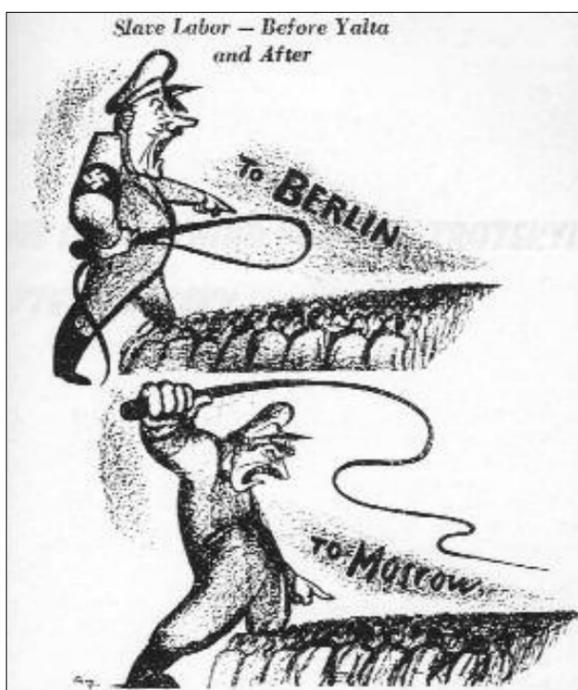
In 56 issues of *The Militant*, the following references appeared:

June 2, 1945: Relations between US and USSR (Li Fu-jen). In passing calls Stalin's aims "counter-revolutionary" but there is no condemnation whatsoever of Stalin's seizure of territories!

Aug. 25, 1945: NC Statement on USSR and China "explains" Stalin's "defensive expansionism" (!), opposes it only (!) because of - "bad results"!

Sept. 1, 1945: Editorial condemnation of Stalin's seizures in the Far East. But the "expansionism" is explained solely as a "defensive" one.

May 11, 1946: Carsten states that "the extension of USSR domination prevents the stabilisation of capitalist relations and powers". This unqualified statement leads the reader to think that these seizures are to be welcomed. Further,



An anti-Stalinist cartoon by Laura Gray printed in *Militant* in March 1945

Stalin wants spheres of influence only as a defensive measure, but (according to Carsten) no effective defence can thus be built. Presumably, this is Stalin's crime — a crime in military logistics!

May 18, 1946: "Korean Labor Pleads for Aid Against Brutal US rule" (unsigned) — but presumably not against brutal USSR rule, for the USSR is not even mentioned! Whoever relies exclusively on *The Militant* for his news does not even know up to the present moment that the USSR occupied half of Korea.

This is the entire record of *The Militant* on Stalin's seizures of territory.

4. USSR and reparations

The USSR has demanded and was granted by the Allied imperialists reparations from Germany in the form of machinery. Entire industries have been made inoperative by the loss. The Soviet Union has demanded \$100,000,000 in reparations from Italy and has just been granted payments out of current Italian production. Crushing reparations have been imposed on Romania, Hungary and Finland.

Marxists are opposed to the very concept of reparations, which holds the people of a country responsible for the crimes of the capitalist class. Reparations are a blow at internationalism. Our slogan must be the Bolshevik slogan of "No annexations, no reparations!"

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there has appeared nothing whatsoever on this question.

5. USSR and economic aggrandisement

In the spring of 1944, a secret treaty was concluded by the USSR with Churchill, assigning special spheres of influence in Southeastern Europe to Russia and to England.

Throughout the Nuremberg trials there has been constant references to secret economic treaties between the USSR and Hitler Germany, assigning spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, agreements concerning machinery to be delivered by the USSR and other help to be extended to Germany. These references have been diligently suppressed by the Russian prosecutor.

Joint stock companies have been and are being created in Manchuria, Romania, Austria, Hungary, etc. under the pressures of the USSR, giving the latter control over the wealth falling under these agreements.

Marxists are opposed to such imperialist acts as the establishment of spheres of influence, exploiting the peoples, deciding the fate of peoples without their consent. These are characteristic methods of the imperialist division of the world.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there appeared nothing on this topic.

6. The USSR's terror-rule in the occupied countries

The USSR enforces its rule everywhere through the agency of the NKVD; through fraudulent elections; by imposing CP-dominated governments upon people whose vote was overwhelmingly opposed to CP rule (Hungary, Romania, Germany); by the re-opening of concentration camps (Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen); by deportation and arrests; by suppressing and demoralising opponents; by postponing elections (Bulgaria, Romania); by lawless evictions; by torture, murder and the third-degree; by the ever-present threat of the "Red" Army; by the threat of loss of ration cards.

Such police dictatorships are but a reflection of the internal regime in the USSR and must be mercilessly exposed before the working class.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, except for the above men-

tioned article on Poland by Goldman, *The Militant* carried this single reference:

July 28, 1945: International News: Tito — a police dictatorship, no freedom.

There was nothing further in either 1945 or 1946.

7. USSR and forced migrations

The Kremlin has mercilessly carried through forced migrations in various European countries. These migrations have caused millions upon millions, mostly peasants and workers, unspeakable sufferings and degradations. Involved were and are: Germans who within 24 hours had to evacuate Poland; Poles who had to move into German territories, annexed to Poland; Sudeten Germans who had to leave Bohemia; Hungarians who had to leave Czechoslovakia and Transylvania; peoples within the USSR; and innumerable "minor" migrations, involving other nationalities, especially those of the Baltic states.

This brutal violation of the right of self-determination of these people must be opposed and denounced by the socialist movement.

In 56 issues of *The Militant* there appeared the following:

Oct. 6, 1945: 4 million Germans expelled from Eastern Germany by — (says *The Militant*) — Poles!!! (not by order of the Kremlin, by any chance!); even this is one paragraph only, buried in an article on a different topic, facts only, no comment or condemnation!

No other references, either in 1945 or 1946!

8. The USSR's role in preparing the next war

By its policy of armed aggression, intimidation and supporting the suppression of small nations; by its nationalist-chauvinistic terror-rule in occupied countries; by its police-state methods and dictatorial acts in its vassal states and the labour movement, the Kremlin, as much as the imperialists, is laying the foundations for the next world war.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, the following appeared:

June 2, 1945: Relations between the US and USSR (Li Fu-jen) denounces US at length; then makes passing references to Stalin's "counter-revolutionary" aims in Europe.

Dec. 15, 1945: Sen. Wheeler attacks the USSR (Hansen); a re-write job on Wheeler's speech, written to defend the USSR. — Not a single a reference or mention of any of Stalin's crimes.

March 9, 1946: Hansen explain that (a) Workers must oppose US imperialism. (b) Workers must oppose the Stalinists — "in the labour movement". (c) The workers must defend the USSR in case of war. A big sub-head reads: "Defend the USSR". Not a word of condemnation!

March 16, 1946: US prepares war (Hansen). Correctly opposes US. Then: "In the fact of this unbridled assault on the SU, the Kremlin is at an extreme disadvantage." Why? — because it always denied the danger of a third war, thereby disorienting the workers. Presumably Stalin's alarms have corrected this previous omission.

March 23, 1946: "Wall St. Hurls Reactionary Barrage at USSR" (Carsten). In a long and detailed article, there is a single paragraph on Stalin, buried in the text.

March 29, 1946: Preparations for anti-Soviet war (Carsten); 25 paragraphs directed against the US, one paragraph against Stalin's "brutal policy of aggression". Except for this generality, not a single detailed charge or condemnation is made.

April 6, 1946: Iran used to further war on USSR (Wright), first page, lead article. Exposes US. Stalin not mentioned, except for his "crime" — what crime? "Painting up the United Nations as peace instrument." Nothing further.

April 13, 1946: Long article on War danger; (unsigned); no reference to Stalin's role or crimes.

April 20, 1946: US prepares war (Carsten), not a single word on Stalin.

May 4, 1946: Carsten refers to US's building a ring of steel around the USSR. Exposes US. Not a single word against Stalin.

May 11, 1946: Paris Foreign Minister Conference (Carsten). Sub-head: "Imperialists Blame USSR". "Imperialists are attempting to lay the entire blame for deadlock on the USSR." No attempt made to show Kremlin shares the blame.

May 18, 1946: Carsten finds US "blaming" USSR for breakdown of peace negotiations. Except for one abstract statement — Stalin engaging in "power politics" — there is nothing else on Stalinist policy.

In none of the articles mentioned is there so much as a hint that Stalin may carry at least part of the responsibility of bring on the next war. On the contrary, the entire onus for World War III is placed on the imperialists. To clinch this charge, one need only mention Gray's cartoon (March 16, 1946) on "Preparing for World War III" showing Truman, Churchill and Bevin playing with the Atom Bomb. Stalin is absent. Apparently he is the innocent victim of that bomb.

9. USSR and Iran

The Big Three forced a treat on Iran in 1942 permitting their troops to be stationed there until six months after the end of the war. After this date, Russian troops remained giving a vague pretext ("elucidation of the situation").

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They also charged that Iran was threatening war on the USSR (!). Stalin manufactured a carefully planned “revolt” against the Tehran government, put pressure on it with the help of troop movements and reinforcements, and finally compelled it to grant important economic concessions, spheres of influence, monopoly of its northern oil resources.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there appeared the following:

March 23, 1946: Wall St. Hurls Reactionary Barrage at SU (Carsten). The entire article is devoted to Iran: headline suggests that whatever may be said against Stalin is reactionary poppycock. This impression is heightened by the absence of any reference to Stalin’s crimes in Iran except for a small paragraph, buried in the text.

March 30, 1946: Iran (Carsten) 25 paragraphs against US, one against Stalin.

April 6, 1946: Wright, on the first page, lead article — Iran used for war preparations against the USSR. Exposes US; refers ironically to the “pitiful plight of ‘Poor Little Iran’” (!) This reference to “Poor Little Iran” is in quotation marks in Wright’s text to show that he is making fun of the imagined complaints in Iran. What, then, is Stalin’s crime in this connection? “To paint up the UNO as a peace instrument.” (!!!) Not a single word more!

April 13, 1946: (unsigned) one line: “Stalin exerts pressure on Iranian government” in a long article. No condemnation. Nothing further.

May 4, 1946: (Carsten) once again refers to “Poor little Iran” (quotation marks his!) Not a single word against Stalin.

The above is the complete record *The Militant* on the Iranian issue.

10. The USSR’s rule in Germany

The USSR, as much as its imperialist accomplices, has brought misery and starvation to its zone in Germany. It has looted machinery, dismantled entire factories. It dragged off millions to slave labour. It kept the country at starvation levels and rules by brute dictatorial force. These undeniable crimes of the Kremlin must be exposed in our press.

In 56 issues of *The Militant* there appeared the following:

May 26, 1945: (Hansen) “Allies Impose Barbarous Rule on Germany” contains 1) one passing reference to Allies’ “Kremlin accomplices”, 2) all of long article devoted to denunciation of US and England. Not a single word more on Stalin!

July 7, 1945: CP opposes Soviets in Germany (Abbott), but not a single reference to Stalin’s policies in Germany.

Oct. 6, 1945: “Allied Rule in Germany” — generalities only.

Nov. 10, 1945: “Allied Rule in Germany” (Varlin) exposes US, not a single reference to the USSR!

April 6, 1946: Starvation in Germany (unsigned) eloquent about US and England, completely silent about USSR!

April 27, 1946: an especially odious example of an almost explicit capitulation to Stalinism: Two articles on the same page.

1) “Kremlin Policy in Germany” — under this comprehensive title, the “Kremlin’s policy” is outlined as: a) bringing Soviets (incidentally contradicting Abbott’s July 7th article: “CP opposes Soviets in Germany”!) b) creating factory democracy c) workers’ seizure of factories. Nothing further.

2) “US Imperialism Brings Starvation to Germany” (Varlin). The juxtaposition of such two articles on one page is tendentious in the extreme. Apparently one of the occupying powers brings factory democracy; while the other powers bring starvation!

This is the complete record of *The Militant* on this topic.

11. USSR and the merger of the German CP and SDP

As in Eastern Europe and Korea, so in its zone in Germany, the SU has compelled the merger of the Social-Democratic parties with the CP, resulting in the dominance of the CP. The merger in Germany was attended by an overwhelmingly vote of the SDP members against the merger (7:1) and by the last-minute prevention of the balloting in the Soviet sector of Berlin, in which half the SDP membership reside. It was further attended by the reactivation of the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen where actual and potential opponents of the merger were imprisoned, as well as by the terror of the NKVD and police.

Imposed by brute force, the merger strengthens the hands of the Stalinists, puts a party based on party based on totalitarian principles at the head of the masses, and thereby adds to the difficulties of the German workers in creating the preconditions for a struggle.

We must oppose such a merger.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there appeared nothing on this issue.

12. USSR and political asylum

The USSR has taken a definite stand against the granting of political asylum in the post-war period. In the UNO, the SU demanded that persons not wanting to return to their countries of origin should receive international assistance only with that country’s consent; that “no propaganda” be allowed against the idea of return home (a limitation of political freedom) and that no aid should be given to any

refugee hostile to any of the United Nations. The Soviet Union has advocated forced repatriation of its political opponents who come from Eastern Europe. (The Czech government was forced to return 50,000 refugees from the Carpatho-Ukraine.)

The Soviet Union’s shameful betrayal of this elementary human right of asylum — ever defended by Marxists — must be exposed in our press.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there was not a single reference to this problem.

13. The conduct of the Red Army

Twenty years of life under Stalinist barbarism have left their mark on the “Red” Army soldiers. Fed on the reactionary ideology of chauvinism and revenge, they entered into new territories as rapacious conquerors. Brutalities against the population, plunder, rape and widespread looting are on the order of the day. Living off the countryside like locusts, confiscating the peasant’s produce and land, and thereby further depleting already catastrophically low food supplies, the Soviet soldier incurs to an ever greater degree the wrath of the population. As a policing agent of the Stalinist bureaucracy — by crushing opposition, suppressing workers’ uprisings, etc. — the “Red” Army’s ideology is chauvinistic and reactionary; its tasks are counter-revolutionary and anti-internationalist.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there was not a single reference to this topic.

14. USSR and the food problem

With food being the first and last issue confronting the peoples of Europe and Asia, the SU has its occupation troops live off the land. The SU has offered no plan by which even a minimum ration of food can be guaranteed to these people. In Austria, the Kremlin exacted first a levy of 60,000 tons of wheat. It then confiscated vast areas of the richest agricultural section for the cultivation of the Army’s food supply. While the masses in the SU and in all Soviet-occupied countries starve, the SU shipped cereals to France amidst great publicity to strengthen its agents there. It bribes potential political adherents with food and allows extra rations to CP members. By dismantling industries vital to the production of agricultural machinery and machine parts, it forces the peasants of Eastern Europe into virtual idleness, further aggravating both present and future food shortages.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there is, except for one article by Morrow, not a single reference whatsoever to the problem.

15. USSR and Turkey

In an even more brazen and undisguised manner than in Iran, the USSR demanded from Turkey the cession of large parts of territory (Kars and Ardahan) and the establishment of spheres of influence in Northern Turkey. The pretext given was the preparation s by Turkey for an “anti-Soviet” war. As in Iran, such policies must be opposed.

In 56 issues of *The Militant*, there was not a single reference to this topic.

Conclusions

An objective perusal of the above record of *The Militant* from May 1945 to June 1946 constitutes the most damning indictment of our party policy at the present moment. The Kremlin has entered upon the European scene as a ruthless conqueror, a bloody oppressor, a grandiose looter and a robber par excellence.

It rules by terror and assassination. By its criminal policies, its rapacious conduct and its Genghis Khan-like demeanour, it has dealt and is dealing terrible blows to the European and, ultimately, the world revolution. It denied the right to self-determination to all its conquered peoples.

It demanded and extracted spheres of influences, “bilateral” trade agreements, raw material concessions in the best imperialist style.

It drowned the independent working-class movements in blood and “convinced” its political opponents by means of the NKVD and the hangman’s noose.

It added untold millions of war prisoners, workers and peasants, political opponents of all nationalities, to its vast reservoir of forced labour.

It looted the countryside, bringing starvation to the masses, as much as it looted the factories in the cities, undermining the economic foundations of the very class destined to lead mankind out of chaos — the proletariat.

It trampled democratic and political freedoms underfoot.

It denied the most fundamental rights to political refugees and demanded their forcible return to their home countries.

In short — it brought the reality of Soviet Russian life today to the masses of Europe and the Far East.

In the face of this almost unending list of crimes against the socialist revolution, the record of *The Militant* is both pitiful and criminal indeed. *The Militant* has failed in its revolutionary task to tell the truth.

The attacks on the Kremlin in whatever few manifestos or resolutions appeared in *The Militant* were purely perfunctory and hence, meaningless, since the line was not carried out in the party’s propaganda or press.

The objective resultant of the party press’s failure to in

any way adequately deal with the Kremlin’s crimes thus becomes, at least implicitly, or by omission, a capitulation to Stalinism on the part of the Trotskyist movement.

What remains is to uncover the roots of this terrible record of the party press. There is probably no comrade in the party, be they majorityite or minorityite, who is not aware of the fact that — without a resolution to signal a change of line — the majority leadership in its dealings with Stalinism is proceeding from the fundamental premise that an Anglo-American war against the USSR is imminent. Hence, the defence of the USSR is placed again in the foreground of our propaganda.

Further proof of this contention is to be found in the fact that *The Militant’s* record on the Soviet Union is slightly better for 1945, and gets progressively worse in 1946 when the SWP majority began to be convinced of the “imminence” of war. The Convention resolution on the Soviet Union (October 1944) — accepted only under the pressure of Comrade Natalia and the SWP minority and proclaiming the receding into the background of the slogan of defence of the Soviet Union — has now been buried quietly in the backyard. Bureaucratically, without consent or knowledge of the party, the line was changed.

Given the “imminence” of a new war, the slogan of defence of the Soviet Union is suddenly back in the foreground; the slogan of the defence of the European revolution against all its enemies has receded into the background.

Presumably, as far as the majorityites are concerned, the European revolution is off the agenda for the moment and is to be preceded by the war against the USSR. For if it was not, how could the “imminence” of a war against a trustworthy accomplice in putting down the revolution be otherwise explained?

We shall not enter here into a discussion of the SWP majority’s ludicrous position on the “imminence” of war, for such discussion is irrelevant to the subject. Regardless of the majority’s position on the present world situation, their concept of defence of the SU still has nothing in common with Trotsky’s concept of the defence of the SU. Let us recall certain key formulations of his interpretation of defence of the US and counterpose to them *The Militant’s* role during the past year.

1. However progressive, the statification of industry Soviet-occupied territory, “this does not alter the reactionary character of the Kremlin’s policy”, which it is “indispensable to tirelessly warn the masses against”. (*In Defence of Marxism*)

When has *The Militant* ever “tirelessly” pointed this out?

2. “The defence of the USSR coincides for us with the preparation of world revolution. Only those methods are permissible which do not conflict with the interests of the revolution. The defence of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter.” (*In Defence of Marxism*)

When did *The Militant* point out to the masses that the Kremlin’s occupation of Eastern Europe, Germany and the Far East is “in contradiction” to the strategic goal of world revolution?

3. “The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important those may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this done — and the only decisive standpoint — the policies of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retain their reactionary character and remain the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution.” (*In Defence of Marxism*)

When did *The Militant* point this out?

4. “The statification of the means of production is a progressive measure, but its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by ‘socialist’ measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic manoeuvres and so on. The evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms.” (*In Defence of Marxism*)

When did *The Militant* “first and foremost” point this out?

5. “We were and remain against the seizures of new territories by the Kremlin.” (*In Defence of Marxism*)

When did *The Militant* point this out?

For more than one entire year, the party press, under the compulsion of a completely distorted concept of the defence of the Soviet Union, has objectively, both by what it said and what it omitted, defended Russian foreign policy. It has done so, furthermore, in violation of the party’s own 1944 resolution on the Soviet Union. It is high time that the party press began to espouse a Trotskyist interpretation of the USSR’s role in Europe and the Far East instead of objectively capitulating to a Stalinist interpretation.

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