

LENIN AND STALIN

ON

OPPORTUNISM

By

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and of the revisionist governments in Eastern Europe demonstrated the devastating damage that opportunism can cause to the communist movement. This operation began 37 years ago, when Khrushchev, at the 20th Congress, denounced Stalin and adopted an opportunist programme for the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. The rulers of Eastern Europe all adopted Khrushchev's revisionism and as soon as they established a strong class base for themselves they proceeded to hand over their countries to the Western imperialists. In so doing they did not use their state apparatus, their constitution or laws, nor their armies or weapons to defend or protect communism or indeed their own revisionist governments, but handed over these states without a fight to the enemies of communism, thus fully revealing their true nature.

Their opportunist comrades elsewhere in the world are now in panic. Some of them, like Castro, go on attacking Stalin and defending Gorbachev (read Castro's statement which is given in the appendix), though neither the Cuban people nor his own party asked him to do so. Others are running for cover. After 37 years they are about to review their position on the 20th Congress, as if that were going to shake the world, only in an effort to protect their positions by deceiving their own members once again and in order to cover up the fact that they supported even Gorbachev for three years.

These events make it necessary to carry out a detailed study of opportunism, to expose its true nature.

THE CLASS NATURE OF OPPORTUNISM

According to dialectical materialism everything and every phenomenon is dependent on everything else and the subjective and objective conditions of things determine their being and their behaviour. Accordingly opportunism is also the result of the material conditions in which it develops. To be precise opportunism is a natural outcome of the class society and is the philosophy of the petty-bourgeois class. Stalin says: "The proletariat is not an isolated class. It is constantly replenished by the influx of peasants, petty bourgeois and intellectuals who have become proletarianised by the development of capitalism. At the same time the upper stratum of the proletariat, principally trade union leaders and members of parliament, who are fed by the bourgeoisie out of the super-profits extracted from the colonies, is undergoing a process of

decay." (Stalin: The Party: Leninism page 82)

Lenin says: "This stratum of bourgeoisified workers of the 'labour aristocracy', who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their outlook, serves as the principal prop of the Second International and, in our days, the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. They are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real channels of reformism and chauvinism." (Lenin: Selected Works: Vol.5 page 10)

As a class the petty bourgeoisie is influenced by the working class and by the bourgeoisie. Dialectics teach us that a person's views and tendencies are reflections of the material conditions in which he lives. Thus the material conditions of the petty-bourgeois define his personality and his behaviour. For instance, when he suffers a set-back in his contradiction with the big bourgeoisie, he is forced to move towards the working class. But in the tough struggle with the workers against the bourgeoisie, his personal interests are threatened. For instance he may lose his job or his commission etc. and thus be forced to compromise with the bourgeoisie and pander to them in order to protect whatever private interests he has. In this manner an attitude of wavering develops in him. He succumbs to using duplicity, favouritism, corruption and so on in order to protect his class privileges.

In his daily contact with the workers the petty bourgeois discovers he is better off than the workers and thus develops feelings of superiority towards them and tends to make use of the workers for his own personal advantage. As soon as he joins the working class party he therefore tends to manipulate it so that it serves his own aims and ambitions. Thus he detests democratic centralism, unless he is at the centre himself, insisting that he should be a leader. Otherwise he accuses comrades of dictatorship. However once he is in a leading position he insists that he should remain there, accusing others of insubordination. He thus begins to dominate every aspect of party activity.

In his profession or trade the petty bourgeois is influenced by the advertising habits of the big bourgeoisie such as blowing one's own trumpet. Thus he imitates the big bourgeois even when he is inside the working class movement, tending towards self aggrandisement, insisting to give an example on speaking publicly, always and in every instance with little regard for content, providing he is the centre of attention. He will refuse to accept party discipline since that may prevent him from embellishing his own reputation. Thus his profession or trade forces him to work individually and he elevates individualism into a sacred principle.

There is among the peasantry an opposite tendency to that of the professional. In feudal society the peasant, who is also a petty bourgeois, has suffered for generations from the oppression of the feudalist. Thus the peasant develops the characteristic of subservience; he becomes docile and timid and accepts orders no matter how unjust.

Such attributes remain with the peasant even when he runs away from the feudalist to become a worker in the city. When he joins the working class party he is thus liable to accept orders from his petty bourgeois, professional leaders without question. The petty bourgeois of the city on the other hand exploits the peasant's simplicity and corrupts him for example into giving up the idea of armed revolution and to vote for him instead in a local or general election. The country may be in crisis with peasants being killed daily like flies, yet the petty bourgeois instead of raising the flag of revolution invites the peasant to come and vote him into power at the next election.

The traitors Khrushchev and Brezhnev used this type of servility to succeed in their bullying of the communist parties of the world, when they used every despicable means at their disposal to dragoon them into toeing the Soviet line against the parties of China and Albania during the polemics of the early 1960's.

Such briefly are some of the class characteristics of the petty bourgeois which produces opportunism inside the working class party.

What is the political philosophy of the opportunists? We have pointed out that it is the class nature of the petty bourgeoisie that gives rise to opportunism. Thus from the moment the first working class party was established there was opportunism and until the classless society has developed there will always be opportunism within the communist parties.

Let us put the question: are opportunists left-wing or right-wing? Stalin answers as follows: "It should not be forgotten that Rights and 'Ultra-lefts' are actually twins, that consequently both take an opportunist stand, the difference between them being that whereas the Rights do not always conceal their opportunism, the Lefts invariably camouflage their opportunism with 'revolutionary' phrases." (Stalin: Works: Vol. 4 page 9)

Stalin further points out that apart from the so-called 'left' and 'right' opportunists, there are also the compromisers, conciliators and concession makers, what he defines as "an intermediate diplomatic group". He exposes Ruth Fischer after the failure of the revolution in Germany, when an "Ultra-left" tendency developed in 1926 and stood against the Party. In their defence Ruth Fischer claimed that if they were opposed there would arise the danger of a "Right" tendency. Stalin replied: "Only a betwixt-and-between diplomatic group like the Ruth Fischer-Maslow group could land itself in such a ludicrous position in its effort to weaken the Party's struggle against the "Ultra lefts" and thus save the Scholem group, withdrawing it from the blow. For that is the whole purpose of Ruth Fischer's proposal. I think that there must be a similar intermediate diplomatic group in France, one that is trying with honeyed speeches to shield the Right elements in the French Communist Party. It is therefore an immediate task of the day to fight the intermediate diplomatic groups both in the German and in the French Parties." (ibid.: pages 9,10)

Nowadays too intermediate diplomatic groups have emerged making honeyed speeches to defend the opportunist ex-rulers of the East European governments, asking us to have mercy on these poor creatures, innocent victims of Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev. Often in so doing such intermediaries are really defending their own past history of compromise, since they themselves supported Khrushchev or Brezhnev or Gorbachev or all three of these traitors. One thing is clear, however, they did so of their own free will and were under no compulsion to do so.

SOME OPPORTUNIST TRENDS

a) Social Democracy

This is one of the most dangerous trends because it works within the working class movement and preaches the establishment of socialism via parliamentary elections under capitalism. It advertises the legality of these elections and advocates that once a working class party obtains the support of the majority of the people then it can be elected to power and establish socialism.

This opportunist idea has already proved its total bankruptcy in many countries. In Czechoslovakia the Communist Party came to power via an election in 1948, but because under pressure from the Soviet revisionists it abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat, it finally collapsed. In Chile Allende was elected by the people in an overwhelming vote and his government came to power, but Allende himself was later killed by the stooges of American imperialism in a bloody coup d'état.

In 1959 the vast majority of the Iraqi people demanded that the Communist Party should take power. In Baghdad alone on May 1st one million people (out of a total population of some 7 million) marched through the streets raising the slogan: "Communist Party take power now! This is the demand of the people!" The social democratic leadership however, which had already embraced the revisionist policies of the Khrushchev clique, rejected the people's demand, while the government on the other hand didn't carry out an election nor even legalise the communist party. Instead the communists were massacred in 1963 in a C.I.A. coup led by Saddam's Baath Party.

In the elections in France in 1955/1956 the Communist Party obtained 156 seats, making it the largest party in the parliament. The capitalist state then cancelled the prevailing electoral system changing it to a two-stage system, thereby reducing the communist seats in the French parliament to 10.

In India the various revisionist communist parties rule in West Bengal and other large states, presiding over pogrom and massacre, insisting

the while that the solution for all problems is yet another bourgeois election. Lenin says: "With reformists, Mensheviks, in our ranks, it is impossible to achieve victory in the proletarian revolution, it is impossible to retain it. That is obvious in principle and it has been strikingly confirmed both in Russia and Hungary." (Lenin: Selected Works: Vol.10, pages 256-257)

Attacking the parties of the Second International Stalin wrote: "the parties of the Second International are unfit for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, they are not militant parties of the proletariat leading the workers to power, but election machines adapted for parliamentary elections and parliamentary struggle." (Stalin: Leninism, page 72) Having described the basic meaning of the proletarian revolution Stalin asks: "Can such a radical transformation of the old bourgeois order be achieved without a violent revolution, without the dictatorship of the proletariat?" He answers: "Obviously not. To think that such a revolution can be carried out peacefully, within the framework of bourgeois democracy, which is adapted to the rule of the bourgeoisie, means that one has either gone out of one's mind and lost normal human understanding or has grossly and openly repudiated the proletarian revolution." (Stalin: Works: Vol.8, p.25)

Exposing the treachery of the social democrats, Lenin first presented their point of view which is: "First let the majority of the population, while private property still exists, i.e. while the rule and the yoke of capital still exists, express themselves in favour of the party of the proletariat, and only then can and should the Party take power. So say the petty bourgeois democrats who call themselves "Socialists" but who are in reality the servitors of the bourgeoisie." "We say: Let the revolutionary proletariat first overthrow the bourgeoisie, break the yoke of capital and smash the bourgeois state apparatus, then the victorious proletariat will be able rapidly to gain the sympathy and support of the majority of the toiling non-proletarian masses by satisfying their needs at the expense of the exploiters." (Lenin: Vol:14, page 647) He also said: "The proletariat must in the first place overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize state power, secondly it must introduce Soviet power and smash the old state apparatus to bits, whereby it immediately undermines the rule, prestige and influence of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois compromisers over the non-proletarian masses. Thirdly it must entirely destroy the influence of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois compromisers over the majority of the non-proletarian masses....." (ibid, p. 641)

Neither Lenin nor Stalin made Britain or the U.S.A. exceptions to the rule that armed revolution and not parliamentary elections must be carried out in both these countries. Marx had some reservations about the need of the armed revolution in Britain and America when they had not yet developed militarism. Later however both capitalist states in these countries became the major military powers in the world. For this reason Lenin wrote, "Today in Britain and in America too the preliminary

condition for every real people's revolution is the smashing, the destruction of the ready-made state machinery' (perfected in those countries between 1914 and 1917 up to the 'European' general imperialist standard)" Stalin adds: "Hence a forcible revolution of the proletariat, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is an inevitable and indispensable condition for the advance towards socialism in all imperialist countries without exception." (Stalin: Works. Vol.8, page 32)

The Social-democrats exposed their true colours at the start of the First World War when they encouraged the workers in each capitalist country to enter the war and carry capitalist arms to kill their fellow workers in other countries. This was at a time when Lenin and Stalin on the other hand were rallying the workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia to overthrow not only the Tsar but the Social-Democratic state of Kerensky.

Stalin was extremely concerned about Social-democracy in the capitalist countries. This is how he shows his concern: "A victory of the Right deviation in the communist parties of the capitalist countries would mean the ideological rout of the communist parties and an enormous strengthening of Social-Democratism. And what does an enormous strengthening of Social-Democratism mean? It means the strengthening and consolidation of capitalism, for Social-Democracy is the main support of capitalism in the working class." "Consequently a victory of the Right deviation in the communist parties of the capitalist countries would lead to a development of the conditions necessary for the preservation of capitalism." (Stalin Vol.11, p.234) He then says: "And since our proletariat does not live in a vacuum but in the midst of the most actual and real life with all its variety of forms, the bourgeois elements arising on the basis of small production 'encircle the proletariat on every side with petty bourgeois elemental forces by means of which they permeate and corrupt the proletariat and continually cause relapses among the proletariat into petty bourgeois spinelessness, disunity, individualism and alternate moods of exaltation and dejection.' (Lenin, Vol.25, page 189), thereby introducing into the ranks of the proletariat and its party a certain amount of wavering.", "There you have the roots and the basis of all sorts of vacillations and deviation from the Leninist line in the ranks of our Party." (ibid. p.239,240)

Stalin was correct. Social-Democracy raised its head again when Khrushchev adopted it as the official policy of his party, when he abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat and revolution in favour of a peaceful transition to socialism by parliamentary elections under capitalism, on the pretext that a revolution will provoke the imperialists, who will then use their nuclear weapons and cause a world war. Khrushchev, preaching peaceful co-existence and the peaceful transition to socialism in his 20th Congress speech and Brezhnev and his gang of opportunists succeeded in splitting the international communist movement. In this country the N.C.P. leadership takes the line even today that the split was not caused by Khrushchev and

Brezhnev, but by a "left deviation in the Chinese Communist Party", although they now brazenly support a traitor like Deng Xiaoping who has moved into the imperialist camp. They continue to defend these traitors, while saying a few words every now and then in favour of Stalin in order to improve their image and to forestall rank and file unrest at their year-long support for the Soviet revisionist leaders. Marxist-Leninists however will continue the on-going struggle against opportunism.

b) Economism

An early right-wing trend within the working class movement was and still is Economism. The adherents of this opportunist doctrine maintain that the struggle against the ruling class is a matter for all classes. They further maintain that the chief interest of the workers lies in the economic struggle against the employers for higher wages, better working conditions, security of employment etc. The primary aim of the workers should therefore not be the political struggle against the State, but the organisation of the "economic struggle against the employers and the government", a struggle for better factory legislation, shorter working hours, better trade union laws. The "Economists" claim that in this way it will be possible "to lend the economic struggle itself a political character". They further deny that a working class party should be the guiding force of the movement, nor should it intervene in the spontaneous movement of the working class, let alone direct it. At most they would support the workers from the rear once they make their demands, perhaps joining in demonstrations and waving a banner or two, later writing it all up in their party paper in order to boost sales. "As regards Lenin's plan for the organisation of the party," Stalin writes, "the Economists regarded it almost as an act of violence against the spontaneous movement". (Stalin, Works, Vol. 18, page 35)

In his work "What is to be done?" Lenin launched a vehement attack against this opportunist philosophy. Stalin summarises this as follows:

" 1) - Lenin showed that to divert the working class from the general political struggle....was to condemn the workers to eternal slavery. The economic struggle.... was a trade union struggle for better terms in the sale of their labour power to the capitalists. The workers, however, wanted to fight not only for better terms in the sale of their labour power to the capitalists, but also for the abolition of the capitalist system itself which condemned them to sell their labour power to the capitalists and to suffer exploitation."

" 2) - Lenin showed that to extol the spontaneous process... to deny that the party had a leading role to play (following in the tail), to preach the conversion of the party into a tailpiece of the spontaneous process, into a passive force.... capable only of contemplating the spontaneous process and allowing events to take their own course." This practice was

followed by the revisionist leadership of Eastern Europe for example during the events of 1989-1990 - "To advocate this meant working for the destruction of the party, that is, leaving the working class without a party - that is, leaving the working class unarmed. But to leave the working class unarmed when it is faced by such enemies meant to betray the working class"...

" 3) - Lenin showed that to bow in worship of the spontaneous working class movement and to belittle the importance of consciousness, of Socialist consciousness and Socialist theory, meant, in the first place, to insult the workers, in the second place, to lower the value of theory in the eyes of the party...and, in the third place, it meant to sink completely and irrevocably into the bog of opportunism."...

" 4) - Lenin showed that the "Economists" were deceiving the working class when they asserted that a Socialist ideology could arise from the spontaneous movement...for in reality the Socialist ideology arises not from the spontaneous movement, but from science..."

" 5) - Summing up all these mistakes of the "Economists" Lenin came to the conclusion that they did not want a party of social revolution for the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, but a party of "social reform"... and that consequently the "Economists" were reformists who were betraying the fundamental interests of the proletariat."

" 6) - Lastly Lenin showed that... the "Economists" were an instrument of bourgeois influence upon the working class, that they had allies in the West-European Social-Democratic parties in the person of the revisionists, the followers of the opportunist Bernstein."

(Stalin, Works, Vol. 18, p36,37)

c) The Conciliators

Side by side with the Economists and the Social-Democrats there are always those opportunists who volunteer to "make peace" between the true communists and the opportunists. In Russia Plekhanov belonged to this type. Stalin writes: "At the second Congress Plekhanov sided with Lenin. But after the second Congress he allowed the Mensheviks to intimidate him with threats of a split. He decided to "make peace" with the Mensheviks at all costs. It was the deadweight of his earlier opportunist mistakes that dragged Plekhanov down to the Mensheviks. From an advocate of reconciliation with the opportunist Mensheviks he soon became a Menshevik himself. Plekhanov demanded that all the former Menshevik editors of the Iskra who had been rejected by the Congress be included in the editorial board." (Stalin Vol. 18, page 45). This is strikingly similar to the demand of the reconciliators of today who are making a desperate effort to forgive and forget and allow the allies of Brezhnev and Gorbachev, such as Castro or the leadership of the N.C.P. or of the C.P.I.(M) to be accepted among the ranks of true

communists. Stalin replies: "Whoever insists on a conciliatory attitude towards opportunists is bound to sink to opportunism himself." (ibid. page 45) Discussing the differences in the Comintern Stalin said: "The third question is the question of the conciliationist tendency in the sections of the Comintern. Bukharin's theses spoke of the necessity of fighting the Right deviation, but not a word was said about fighting the tendency of conciliation WITH the Right deviation. That of course was a great defect. The point is that when war is declared on the Right deviation, the Right deviationists usually disguise themselves as conciliators and place the party in an awkward position. In order to forestall this manoeuvre of the Right deviationists we must INSIST on a determined fight against the conciliationist tendency." (Stalin, Leninism, Page 248).

In Volume 10, pages 337,358 Stalin recalls the conciliation experiment that Kamenev undertook in 1910 with the Mensheviks and with Trotsky in particular. The Bolsheviks decided, in spite of Lenin, in the plenum of the central committee, in favour of conciliation and Kamenev undertook to cooperate with Trotsky with Lenin's knowledge and consent, because Lenin wanted to prove how harmful this was going to be. In 1911, in his preface to a pamphlet on the "Two Parties", Kamenev reported: "In 1910 the majority of our group made an attempt at conciliation and agreement with comrade Trotsky. Vladimir Ilyich was strongly opposed to this attempt andinsisted that I should be ... on the editorial board of Trotsky's newspaper. By the autumn of 1910 ...I was convinced that Vladimir Ilyich was right in his opposition to my 'conciliatory' line.... The experiment in joint work with Trotsky, which I performed with sincerity, showed that conciliation irresistibly slips into defence of Liquidation and definitely takes the side of the latter. There we have the advice and a clear warning from one conciliationist to all others. Stalin comments: "I have no doubt that this pamphlet of Kamenev was very useful to all those comrades who still harboured illusions about cooperation with Trotsky."

d) TROTSKYISM

In a previous talk Bill Bland has given us detailed quotations from Lenin about Trotsky's opportunism before and after the 1917 October revolution. Stalin has written hundreds of pages on Trotskyism in Volumes 8,9,10 etc of his work. On pages 347 to 356 of Volume 10 Stalin summarised the essence of Trotskyism. These are:-

- 1) Denial of the possibility of building Socialism in one country. Trotsky insisted on this view for ten years after the October revolution, while he was a member of the Party.
- 2) Insistence that the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country is none other than the dictatorship of capitalism. Trotsky therefore

produced his thesis on Clemenceau, in which he claimed that since socialism cannot be built in one country, it is necessary to destroy the Soviet system. He dedicated the rest of his life to this.

- 3) Hostility to the formation of a block between the working class and the peasantry, especially after the distribution of land to the peasants.
- 4) Refusal to support revolutionary national liberation wars waged by the colonial countries against imperialism, thus rejecting the formation of a block between the socialist movement of the proletariat in the capitalist countries and the national liberation movements. Because of this the Trotskyists opposed the Chinese revolution.
- 5) Insistence on the "purity" of the proletarian class and thus the rejection of united front tactics in order to win over the masses to communism.

A summary like this is not sufficient to cover Trotskyism and the details as presented by Stalin are essential reading.

FIGHT THE OPPORTUNISTS

The methods used by the conciliators to cover up for the opportunists or make peace with them have been thoroughly discussed by Lenin and Stalin and totally rejected by both. Instead Lenin and Stalin both insist that all aspects of opportunism must be exposed and opportunists, including the conciliators must be expelled from the ranks of communists.

Reference was made above to the compromising and concession making attitude of the Ruth Fischer "intermediate diplomatic group" in Germany in 1926. Stalin gives the correct analysis about them: "The Ruth-Fischer group is not siding with the Scholem group openly, but it is doing everything in its power to weaken the force of the party's blow against the Scholem group. The Ruth-Fischer-Maslow group is thus hampering the efforts of the central committee of the German Communist Party to overcome and eliminate the 'ultra-left' prejudices of the German Communist Party. The German Communist Party must therefore wage a determined fight against this group Either the Ruth-Fischer-Maslow group is smashed, and then the Party will be in a position to overcome the present crisis in the fight against the Scholem group, or the German Communist Party is taken in by the diplomatic wiles of the Ruth Fischer-Maslow group, and then the fight will be lost, to the benefit of Scholem. (Stalin Vol.8, page 5) He then states: "It seems to me that in the matter of the inner-party ideological struggle, Hansen is preaching a sort of parson's morality, one entirely unbecoming a Communist Party. Apparently he is not opposed to an ideological struggle. But he would like to conduct it in such a way as not to discredit any of the opposition leaders. I must say that no such struggle ever happens. I must say that one who is prepared to tolerate a struggle only

provided that none of the leaders is in any way compromised, virtually denies the possibility of waging any kind of ideological struggle within the party. Ought we to disclose mistakes committed by party leaders? Ought we to bring those mistakes to light, so as to educate the party masses on the basis of the mistakes of the leaders? I think that we ought to do so. I think that there is no other way of correcting mistakes.. I think that the method of slurring over mistakes is not our method. But it follows from this that there can be no inner-party struggle and correction of mistakes without some leader or other being in some way compromised. That may be sad, but nothing can be done about it, because we are powerless against the inevitable." (ibid page 6)

Dealing with the right opportunism within the French Communist Party Stalin says: "Since the Rights have grown insolent when they ... published a declaration which was a slap in the face to the party, would it not be possible to consider exposing some of the Rights politically, if not expelling them from the party altogether? Then he says: "You cannot defeat the right - because the Rights are multiplying, and they apparently have certain roots in the French working class - you cannot, I say defeat the Right unless you unite all the revolutionary communists within the leading group which is prepared to fight the Rights to the finish." (Stalin Vol.8,page 109,110)

At the 15th Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B) talking about the expulsion of the Trotsky gang, Stalin said: "Why did the party expel Trotsky and Zinoviev? Because they are the organisers of the entire work of the anti-party opposition, because they set out to break the laws of the party, because they thought that nobody would dare to touch them, because they wanted to create for themselves the position of a nobility in the Party." (Stalin,Vol 10, page 360) Later he says: "Is it not a fact that all of us, including Kamenev, expelled Myasnikov and the Myasnikovites from the Party? Because their Menshevik views were incompatible with the Party's view."..... "Why were Ossovsky and Dashkovsky expelled from the Party? Why were Maslow, Ruth Fischer, Katz and others expelled from the Comintern? Because their views were incompatible with the ideology of the Comintern, with the ideology of the C.P.S.U.(B) " "Our party would not be a Leninist Party if it permitted the existence of anti-Leninist elements within our organisations." etc. (ibid.page 369) Further: "The Party has called upon the opposition completely to disarm, both ideologically and organisationally." "What is the Party's object in doing so? Its object is to finish with the opposition and to pass on to positive work. Its object is to liquidate the opposition at last and obtain the opportunity to get right down to our great work of construction." (ibid page 378) Stalin quotes Lenin as follows: "We do not want an opposition now We must now put an end to the opposition, finish with it, we have had enough of opposition now!" (Lenin Works Vol 32, page 177) (Stalin Vol.10,page 378) Further: "Our party is a living organism. Like every organism it undergoes a process of metabolism: the old and obsolete passes away, the new and growing

lives and develops. Some go away, both at the top and at the bottom. New ones grow, both at the top and at the bottom, and lead the cause forward. That is how our Party grew. That is how it will continue to grow."(ibid p.381)

Under the heading of "The party is strengthened by purging itself of opportunist elements" Stalin wrote: "In one way or another, all these petty-bourgeois groups penetrate into the party and introduce the spirit of hesitancy and opportunism, the spirit of demoralisation and uncertainty. It is they, principally, that constitute the source of factionalism and disintegration, the source of disorganisation and disruption of the party from within. To fight imperialism with such 'allies' in one's rear means to expose oneself to the danger of being caught between two fires, from the front and from the rear. Therefore, ruthless struggle against such elements, their expulsion from the party, is a prerequisite for the successful struggle against imperialism."

"The theory of 'overcoming' opportunist elements by ideological struggle within the Party, the theory of 'outliving' these elements within the confines of a single party, is a rotten and dangerous theory, which threatens to condemn the party to paralysis and chronic infirmity, threatens to make the party a prey to opportunism, threatens to leave the proletariat without a revolutionary party, threatens to deprive the proletariat of its main weapon against imperialism." (Stalin,The Party,Leninism,page 83)

CONCLUSIONS

It is abundantly clear that opportunism will appear in the communist movement so long as society is divided into classes. The source of opportunism is always the petty bourgeoisie, which is assisted by the capitalists. Opportunism may be 'Right' or 'Left' but the Left, in spite of camouflaging itself by the use of revolutionary phraseology sooner or later reveals its social-democratic colours. In the fight against opportunism there will always appear a group of conciliators, who call for peace and use diplomacy to protect the opportunists. Such conciliating, compromising, peace-making, diplomatic go-betweens invariably end up as opportunists in their own right.

There is only one way to deal with opportunists and that is to expose them, combat their ideology among the communists and having rendered them bankrupt, expel them from the movement. In his life-time Stalin fought against them fiercely and expelled many of them, but after his death, opportunism, in the form of modern revisionism, completely took over the Soviet party and the international communist parties. Over a period of some thirty years Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev, aided and abetted by the revisionist leaders of the East European countries, succeeded in destroying Socialism both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Incredible as it may seem, there are

opportunists all over the world today who go on defending them and who practise the same, stale, old social-democratic policies, by refusing the demand of the peoples to raise the banner of revolution. Members of such revisionist parties should struggle to expose their leaders and expel them from their ranks, along with their revisionist practices

The modern revisionists supported Khrushchev and Brezhnev for 36 years. They rejected Stalin and Beria. They misled and misdirected a whole generation of recruits to communism. Comrades must therefore be fully conscious of the mortal dangers to the communist movement, if the discredited leaders of the revisionist parties, decked out in their brand-new 'Stalinist' finery, should regroup and re-impose themselves.

Comrades must learn from Lenin, learn from Stalin. The fight against opportunism and revisionism is an ongoing one. It must continue and it must be intensified, otherwise the defeats of recent years cannot be reversed.

Appendix

Tomás Borge first met Castro in 1978 when Borge was a Sandinista guerrilla leader. Fourteen years later, 11 of them spent as Nicaragua's interior minister, Borge returned to Havana to interview his old friend. Castro spent 12 hours over three days talking with Borge on subjects as diverse as Stalin, homosexuality, his reading and his thoughts on retirement

single principle to buy time, nor for any kind of practical advantage.

He signed the famous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. I think, too, that the non-aggression pact, far from giving him time, reduced the time, because it definitively unleashed the war.

And there, in my opinion, was another big error: just as Poland was being attacked, he sent troops to occupy that territory that had been in dispute because its population was Russian or Ukrainian, I don't know.

I think the little war against Finland was another monumental blunder, both from the point of view of principles and from the point of view of international law.

He was making successive mistakes which built up antipathy towards the Soviet Union among large sectors of world public opinion, which throughout the world put communists, who were good friends of the Soviet Union, in extremely difficult positions as they had to defend each of those episodes.

Lastly, Stalin's character, his terrible mistrust of everything, led him to commit other serious errors: one of them was to fall into the trap of the Germans'

RECENTLY you said, referring to the Soviet Union in particular, that it had been stabbed in the back. Would you say that Gorbachev was part of the dagger-wielding conspiracy that killed it? No, I couldn't describe Gorbachev in that way. What took place in the Soviet Union was an incredible act of self-destruction. It is undeniable that the responsibility for that self-destruction lies with the leaders of that country. Now, some destroyed it consciously and some unconsciously. I can't say that Gorbachev played a conscious part in the destruction of the Soviet Union because I have no doubt that Gorbachev's aim was to struggle to perfect socialism. Imperialism would never have been able to break up the Soviet Union, if the Soviets themselves hadn't self-destructed. That is to say that socialism didn't die of natural causes: it was suicide, it was a murder of socialism. That's what I meant.

For most of Latin America's revolutionary leaders, the current crisis of socialism has an intellectual author: Josef Stalin . . .

intrigues and carry out a terrible, bloody purge of the armed forces and practically decapitate the Soviet army on the eve of the war.

And what in your opinion were Stalin's merits?

There is the merit of having established the unity of the Soviet Union, consolidating what Lenin had initiated, the unity of the party. He gave a boost to the international revolutionary movement. The industrialisation of the Soviet Union was one of Stalin's big successes.

A great merit of Stalin's — or of the collective that was with Stalin — was the programme of transferring the strategic industries to Siberia and the depths of the Soviet Union.

I think that once the war started he led the Soviet Union well. That is recognised by everybody.

One also hears a lot, including in leftwing circles, about democracy. What is democracy for you?

Look, Tomás, in very few words, democracy, as Lincoln defined it, is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. For me democracy

I believe that Stalin committed very big errors, but also had very big successes.

It seems to me that it is historically simplistic to lay the blame on Stalin for the phenomena that have taken place in the Soviet Union, because no man could, by himself, create such conditions.

I've been critical of Stalin over many things. I believe that Stalin committed enormous abuses of power. It seems to me that the attempt to socialise the land in a very brief historical period and through violence was very costly, in economic and human terms.

It's absolutely undeniable that the Western powers encouraged Hitler until Hitler became a monster, a real threat. Nor can one deny the extraordinary weakness of the Western powers towards Hitler. That stimulated Hitler's expansionism and Stalin's fear, which led to something which I have criticised all my life, because I think that it was really a flagrant violation of principles: to seek peace with Hitler at all costs to buy time.

We, in our long revolutionary life, in the already relatively long history of the Cuban revolution, have never negotiated a

implies the defence of all the rights of the citizens, among them the right to independence, the right to freedom, the right to national dignity, the right to honour; for me democracy means fraternity between men.

And I say that bourgeois capitalist democracy does not entail any of these elements, because I wonder how one can speak of democracy in a country where there is a minority with huge fortunes and others who have nothing; what sort of equality or fraternity can exist between a beggar and a millionaire.

I think that our system is incomparably more democratic than any other, incomparably more democratic than that in the United States.

I'd like to talk now about the essential battle for survival of the Cuban revolution which is taking place in the economic field. What is the immediate aim and what is the strategic aim?

In 1989, on the anniversary of July 26 [storming of the Moncada barracks, a revolutionary holiday], in Camaguey, I stated things which to many ears seemed strange, speaking of our readiness to fight.

My exact words then were:

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