

**THE TRUTH ABOUT
STALIN**

A talk given to the Secular Society in Leicester

by
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**THE STALIN SOCIETY
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**THE TRUTH ABOUT STALIN - A TALK TO THE
SECULAR SOCIETY REFUTING SOME OF THE
PREVAILING LIES AND BOURGEOIS
PROPAGANDA AGAINST STALIN AND THE
ACHIEVEMENTS IN SOCIALIST
CONSTRUCTION UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP**

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to put right the historical record on a number of questions relating to Stalin. My talk is entitled "The truth about Stalin". This is indeed a very awesome title, but none-the-less necessary given the prevailing lies which pass as objective historical judgement. Lies which have their sources in the anti-communist think-tank of America's Harvard University and Nazi propaganda. Sources which work on the basis of throw enough mud alledging mass murder and some of it will stick. However, an historical assessment of Stalin cannot be done in isolation from the Russian revolution and the tasks of Soviet power in establishing and building the first socialist state. I am not going to defend Stalin's contribution only by appealing to the fair-mindedness of those who seek truth from facts, although the facts which I will be dealing with stand on their own as testimony to Stalin's achievements, but as a communist using the Marxist-Leninist world outlook to describe and explain the role of the individual in great historical movements and events.

Marxism teaches us that since the break-down of primitive communist forms of society and the emergence of classes - slave-owner and slave, feudal lord and serf or peasant, capitalist and worker, the history of human endeavour and progress has been a history of class struggle. Man's social conditions determine consciousness and all ideas are stamped with the interests of a particular class. The ideas of the ruling class are the prevailing ideas. The ruling class of any era seeks to mould the world in support of its interests and world outlook. We live in the era of imperialism and social-revolution. But social revolution has not yet succeeded in sweeping away the power of the bourgeoisie residing chiefly in Europe, America, Japan and now restored in Russia. It is, therefore, not surprising that the prevailing view of Stalin and indeed that of Lenin also, now that the Soviet Union has collapsed, is the bitter hatred of the imperialist bourgeoisie and their well taught well promoted army of scribblers.

These introductory comments are essential to making a meaningful assessment of Stalin.

EARLY YEARS

Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, known in history as Iosif Stalin, was born on December 21st, 1879, in the ancient Georgian town of Gori. His family were of peasant stock although his father was a cobbler. His parents were uneducated and his mother Ekaterina, against his father's wishes, skimped and saved to have him educated in a seminary and make a living as a priest. But this was not to be. The revolutionary ferment of the time affected Stalin deeply. After a period of being a model student he was expelled for propagating Marxism on May 27th, 1899. From then on he threw himself into his activities as a dedicated professional revolutionary calling himself Koba, meaning "The Implacable."

He joined the RSDLP and first became acquainted with Lenin by correspondence in 1903 whilst in exile. He recognized in Lenin a man of unusual calibre and readily supported the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks. Stalin, as he later became known, suffered a number of periods of imprisonment and exile in Siberia where he came to be known as not very sociable towards the other exiles. He preferred to go fishing and mix with villagers. Biographers tend to speculate that this was because most of the other political exiles were intellectuals and they either shunned Stalin, or he was uncomfortable or mistrustful of their company. Stalin was a very blunt and down to earth person who undoubtedly preferred the company of the workers and peasants. In 1912, Stalin was elected to the Central Committee but following an intensification of police activity to round up the leadership of the Bolsheviks, Stalin was arrested in February 1913 and after spending a period in prison in St. Petersburg was exiled to Monastyrskoe deep into Siberia and within the Arctic circle. Escape was impossible and Stalin was compelled to concentrate on the struggle for survival.

Following the February revolution an amnesty was declared for all political prisoners and Stalin made his way back to Petrograd, where he immediately threw himself into the revolutionary events of the time. Although relatively unknown he shouldered increasing responsibility in the work of achieving and consolidating Soviet power, not least in his command of units of the emerging Red Army in the civil war of 1918-20. This talk is not particularly about the events leading to and during the Bolshevik revolution. It is enough for today's purposes to say that the Russian October revolution is perhaps the single most significant event of the twentieth century to date, the event which ushered in a new era of social revolution and emancipation.

The October revolution from its outset was a beacon of hope and liberation to the workers and oppressed peoples of the world. For the first time in recorded history the masses had seized the reins of their own state power and through Soviet Power become masters of their destiny. Lenin was the architect of the Party which was able to achieve leading the masses to this great victory and it was Lenin who led the Party and Soviet State in its birth when it was fighting for its very existence. But Lenin who in 1918 was severely weakened by an attempted assassination, suffered a series of severe strokes from which he finally succumbed in 1924. It was to become Stalin's responsibility to lead the Communist Party of the Soviet Union through the extremely difficult years of building socialism, smashing the might of Nazi Germany and transforming one sixth of the world's land surface into a world superpower capable of challenging U.S. imperialism.

For approximately 30 years Stalin was the acknowledged leader of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Through the Comintern he like Lenin assisted in the formation and development of communist parties all over the world. He would receive and give advice to communist party leaders, whilst insisting on the responsibility of communists to use their brains and solve the problems of leading the workers' struggle principally through their own efforts. The labour movement in Europe and America became immeasurably more powerful with the increasing prestige of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. The formation of communist parties in the oppressed nations of the far and middle east, Africa and South America made the struggle for national independence from imperialist domination more powerful and able to win victory. Concessions made by the capitalist class to the working class (Free health care, social insurance, factory legislation) were of course sold as benefits of capitalism. But in reality they resulted from the workers' powerful international struggle and the strength of what became the socialist camp after the defeat of Nazi Germany, the formation of peoples' democracies in Eastern Europe and liberation of China in 1949. Stalin's contribution is indelibly written into this period of the history of the struggle of workers' and oppressed peoples. That is why he is made the target of so much venom by the reactionary classes.

The history of the Soviet Union itself involves the study of a great deal of detail in order to do it thoroughly. Today's talk, in the hour that I have available to me can only skim the surface. But there are a number of stages which most of us would recognize as important, if only because they spark off the most controversy. What are they?

- 1) Collectivization - the elimination of the kulaks as a class.
- 2) The opposition become tools in the hands of reaction, imperialism and fascism.
- 3) Stalin and the war against capitalist encirclement and fascist aggression.

COLLECTIVIZATION

Collectivization was central to the first five year plan launched in 1929. It was central to the Soviet Union's industrialization program and without it there could have been no assault on the backwardness of the economy. By the year 1928 the number of collective farms had risen from 14,830 to 33,258 involving a rise in membership from 194,200 to 416,700 peasant households. But this rate of growth was unacceptable. As the winter of 1928/9 approached, the threat of famine became serious. The

resistance of the Kulaks (rich peasants) constituted a serious threat to the five year plan and indeed socialist construction itself. On December 27th 1929, Stalin proclaimed that *"we have passed from a policy of confining the exploiting tendencies of the Kulaks to a policy of liquidation of the kulaks as a class"*. The Kulaks were destroying grain and cattle rather than come under the authority of the collective farms. Undoubtedly harsh measures were taken involving confiscation of property and deportation to Siberia and the Arctic regions. It was a period of intense class struggle which, once decided upon, needed to be completed in the shortest time possible in order to restore and expand production in the countryside. There was no escaping the resistance of the Kulaks and the campaign to complete the collectivization of all grain producing by autumn 1932 reached a climax of fury. In October 1929, 4.1 per cent of peasant households had been collectivized; by March 1930, the figure was more than 50 per cent and by July 1934 it was 71.4 per cent of the farm lands and of the peasant households. Stalin called a halt to the pace of collectivization in March 1930, when he published in Pravda his famous article *"Dizziness from Success"* in which he criticized the excessive zeal of party officials and called a halt to the forcible herding of peasants and livestock into the collective farms. He criticized distortions of the party line and called for greater care in handling the peasants and declared that in particular the treatment of thousands of poor and middle peasants as kulaks must stop. This resulted in a fall-back in the number of collectives but the campaign continued so that by mid-1931, 52.7 per cent of peasant households had been collectivized. Some 4 years later the figure had risen to 90.5 per cent.

Collectivization was a cornerstone of the first five year plan and socialist construction itself. But the savage resistance of the kulaks created huge problems. In the first months of 1930 alone, 14 million head of cattle were killed and of the 34 million horses in Soviet Russia in 1929, 18 million were killed. Such sabotage itself made the industrialization of agriculture a desperate necessity to prevent famine. But this could not be altogether prevented, and indeed was looming prior to the collectivization campaign. The winter of 1932-33 was a period of terrible famine but it was followed by a record harvest in 1933 which continued to improve in the years following.

Collectivization was essential to the Soviet Union's socialist industrialization. But it was also essential to freeing the mentality of the peasantry from the backwardness of the existing rural economy. The formation of the collectives, whilst still having a market relationship with the state brought the peasants into combinations and undermined the individual isolation of the peasants creating opportunities for developing social consciousness. This is precisely the effect it had and once the collectives were seen to improve the conditions of life of the peasants, the peasants defended them as their own. Cultural life in the countryside expanded with the formation of cinemas and halls for collective activity.

It was Lenin who raised the slogan that socialism was electrification plus soviet power. Electrification like industry generally was in an extremely backward state in Tsarist Russia. Large scale industry is unthinkable without the power to serve it. What was called the Goelro Plan to build 30 new power stations with a total capacity of 1.5 million kilowatts was launched by Lenin to be completed in ten years. In a series of 5 year plans initiated by Stalin, these proposals were greatly expanded. By 1937, the U.S.S.R. was already the world's third largest producer of electric power.

Industry developed at a phenomenal pace. Machine tractor stations were at the centre of the collectivization campaign. Already by 1927 production levels had reached pre-war levels. By the end of the last year of the first five year plan, large scale industry showed a remarkable increase of 113 percent. One of the features of this development which was to prove crucial in the war to resist Nazi Germany was the development of new industry to ensure a more even allocation of industry throughout the country. It was recognized that the concentration of industry in European Russia made it vulnerable to attack from the West. Ian Grey in his biography *"Stalin - Man of History"* wrote:-

"The redistribution of industry led to the development of a second coal and steel industry in the Ural-Kuznetsk combine. Magnitogorsk, the center of a new industrial region of the Urals began in 1931 as a collection of huts, housing the workers who were building the

furnaces and rolling mills; eight years later it was a city of 146,000 inhabitants. Kuznetsk in Siberia, known in 1932 as Stalinsk, and Karaganda in Kazakhstan, grew into great industrial cities in the same brief period." (page 253)

Collectivization, electrification and industrialization all developed at a rapid pace. By 1937, the Soviet machine building industry ranked first in Europe and second in world production. In ferrous metallurgy the U.S.S.R. held second place in Europe and third place in the world. The Soviet chemical industry occupied first place in Europe and second place in the world. A lot is said today that the Soviet Union had no regard for the environment. This was not the case in Stalin's time. Heat generated in the production of power was utilized to heat the homes of workers in the new towns that sprang up alongside the new industrial complexes. Water and wind power were utilized.

Alongside this intensive industrial production was the need to totally eradicate illiteracy and build an educated and technically competent working class. In 1929 there were still approximately 51% illiterate between the ages of 8 and 50 years. By 1939 this had been reduced to 18.8 per cent. In March 1931, about 5000 foreign specialists were employed in Soviet industry. Hundreds of Soviet engineers and students were trained abroad particularly in the United States. This wasn't satisfactory. By 1933 some 200,000 students were studying in higher technical colleges and some 900,000 students were attending secondary technical schools. Factory schools and specialist courses were training a million workers a year.

The urgency and pace of construction undoubtedly required a tremendous amount of sacrifice and exertion. But in 1933 Hitler became Chancellor and the Nazi party began its war drive and there was no mistaking the threat the young Soviet socialist state faced after barely more than a decade of peaceful construction. The tremendous sacrifices of the first five year plan, including the suffering were bearing fruit and conditions of life were improving while the depression gripped the west.

At this critical time for the Soviet Union, the opposition who had staked everything on Stalin and the Party failing to collectivise agriculture stepped up their diversionary activities. At every stage they had been proven wrong and they had very little support among the masses. To achieve their aims they now resorted to murder.

THE MURDER OF SERGEI KIROV

On December 1st 1934 Sergei Kirov, whilst working at the Smolny Institute, was assassinated by Leonid Nikolaev a Party member who had once been an official of the Kommissariat of Inspection in Leningrad but had been demoted on its abolition. His protests caused him to be expelled from the Party. He was also incompetent and the accounts he kept irregular. But he was re-admitted two months later after agreeing to submit to Party discipline. He clearly had not reconciled himself and resorted to terrorism to gain revenge. He was a discontented element who readily agreed to work for the opposition.

Kirov was the head of the Leningrad Soviet. In Party seniority terms he was regarded as the probable successor to Stalin. His assassination, therefore, could not be seen as a single act of revenge. It was a major act of political terror. The attempt on Lenin's life in 1918 had been carried out by a Socialist Revolutionary and not by a Party member. Kirov had been assassinated by a Party member. Stalin took this extremely seriously and took charge of the investigation into links with the opposition himself. Zinoviev was charged with being directly involved in the plot against Kirov. But at this time it could not be proved. The opposition whilst engaged in recruiting saboteurs and planning assassinations vigorously denied involvement on the grounds that individual terrorism is incompatible with Marxism. Zinoviev however agreed that his activities had contributed to inciting acts of terrorism. He was sentenced to 10 years.

At this point, I would like to make some points regarding historical lessons that Marxist-Leninists are making regarding the continuation of class struggle in the era of socialism. Socialism is not the final goal of Marxism-Leninism. Marx in the Communist Manifesto speaks of socialism being the period

of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat when the working class as the ruling class seeks to remould the world to its own proletarian outlook. To do this the proletariat needs its own state - a state which must ultimately wither away since the proletariat has no need of an oppressive force against itself. However, the Soviet state itself was very powerful and given the Soviet Union's capitalist encirclement, this could not be otherwise. But also the continuation of the class struggle takes place within that proletarian state and most of all within the ruling Party which is the advanced guard of its class - the proletariat. This being the case, whilst there will always be a need for struggle and controversy within a working class Party, it must be recognized that this controversy will also reflect class struggle in society and that the dispossessed and new bourgeois elements will seek to gain power for its interests in that Party. When the opposition resorted to sabotage and terror, having failed to gain support within the Party they had become tools, perhaps unwittingly some of them, in the hands of those seeking to overthrow Soviet Power.

The murder of Kirov marked the beginning of a qualitative change in the method of struggle of the oppositionists within the Party. The opposition of the Trotsky/Zinoviev bloc having failed to win support within the Party were counting on the failure of the first 5 year plan in order to overthrow Stalin. When this failed they had nothing left but to resort to terrorism. The trial of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre held in Moscow August 19-24 1936 established this. Bourgeois historians may sneer at these trials and dismiss them as show trials, but journalists and commentators of the time were impressed that the admissions of the accused were genuine. They reflected a reality that in socialist society the Party in order to stay at one with the masses must purge itself of rotten, demoralized and bourgeois elements. Following Kirov's assassination such purges were carried out and it is also a reflection of continuing class struggle that good communists should be wrongly accused and dismissed from the Party. But the Stalin Society upholds the necessity of such purges throughout the era of socialism in order to prevent capitalist restoration and degeneration of the leadership of the working class.

Perhaps the most sinister individual who held the powerful position of Vice-Chairman of the security police OGPU was Henry G. Yagoda. He systematically protected members of the opposition from investigation and was renowned for his preference for the use of poisoning and doctor's "treatments" in order to remove loyal and trusted members of the Soviet Government. He was responsible for murdering the chairman of OGPU Vyacheslav R. Menzhinsky by using his power to intimidate a Dr. Leo Levin into drawing into the conspiracy Menzhinsky's trusted physician, Dr. Kazakov. Menzhinsky suffered from angina and asthma and by administering his treatments incorrectly his heart was weakened and his death hastened. He died in May 1934, 6 months before Kirov's assassination and after Yagoda had assumed his post.

In fact Kirov's assassin, Leonid Nikolayev, had been picked up by OGPU agents only a few weeks before Kirov's assassination. On him he had a gun and a chart showing the route Kirov travelled daily. Yagoda ordered his release.

Yagoda was responsible for the murder of Maxim Gorky and his son. Maxim Gorky was loyal to Stalin and the Party and his writings are held in high regard internationally. It was this fact that made him a target for the opposition who feared exposure by Gorky in his writings. The motives of the opposition were venal and base. They were in direct and indirect alliance with the enemies of working class power in the Soviet Union and abroad. Yagoda declared at his trial that his actions were in order to help bring the opposition to power and not for self aggrandizement. Yet he confided to his secretary and henchman Pavel Bulanov, that he found Mein Kampf "a worthwhile book" and was impressed that Hitler had risen to the top from being a "top sergeant". Yagoda had started his career as a top sergeant in the Russian army.

The purge of such elements who had wormed their way into the Party and state was not only a necessity. It was a priority in conditions of the storm clouds that were gathering and the international threat from Nazi Germany and the Axis powers that the Soviet Union now faced. Trotsky had a fully developed position that terrorism alone would not bring down the Soviet Government. Terrorism, diversionary activity and sabotage needed to be combined with those prepared to go to war against the Soviet Union. That meant co-ordination with the military might of the Axis powers - particularly Germany and Japan. This was considered a matter of historical necessity in order to

bring down Stalin and put the opposition into power. Secret talks regarding the spoils to be granted German and Japanese imperialism took place.

Adolf Hitler, addressing thousands of troops at the Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress on September, 12th 1936, publicly proclaimed his intention of invading the Soviet Union. On November 25th, 1936, Germany and Japan's foreign ministers signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. But already, in the spring and Summer of 1936, the Soviet authorities in a series of raids throughout the country had swooped down on Nazi spies, saboteurs and terrorists. Bit by bit Trotsky's anti-soviet fifth column was uncovered and destroyed in the months to follow. Trotsky had predicted a war against Soviet Russia in 1937. As the extent of the conspiracy was uncovered for the world to see at the trials of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre, and subsequent trials, Trotsky could only cry himself hoarse against Stalin and the Soviet Union. Committees to defend Trotsky sprang up whose propaganda platform was to depict Trotsky as a martyr wrongly accused. But these committees soon revealed themselves as being composed of anti-Soviet and fascist elements co-ordinating propaganda to divert attention away from the war-threats against the Soviet Union.

In 1941, following the Nazi invasion of the USSR., Joseph E. Davies, former American Ambassador to the Soviet Union wrote:-

"All of these trials, purges and liquidations, which seemed so violent at the time and shocked the world, are now quite clearly a part of a vigorous and determined effort of the Stalin government to protect itself....There were no Fifth columnists in Russia in 1941. " (The Great Conspiracy page 326)

THE OPPOSITION BECAME TOOLS IN THE HANDS OF REACTION, IMPERIALISM AND FASCISM!

Trotsky and Trotskyism's virulent hatred of Stalin was never based on a principled platform. Trotsky was arrogant, and overweening. Trotsky regarded himself as Lenin's equal and later his successor. He joined the Bolsheviks only after failing to cobble together his own centre to lead the revolution and in opposition to Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He displayed nothing but contempt and class prejudice towards Stalin whom he regarded as an uncultured Georgian. As for Trotsky being Lenin's successor, this was not accepted by the Bolshevik party comrades who were only too aware of the fundamental divergences between Lenin and Trotsky on matters of principle. He joined the Bolsheviks in August of 1917 only two months before the Bolshevik October revolution.

After 14 years of opposing Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Trotsky still regarded himself as Lenin's natural successor. At Brest-Litovsk Trotsky had been sent by Lenin as Commissar for Foreign Affairs with categorical instructions to make a separate peace with Germany. But Trotsky refused to sign declaring neither peace nor war. He told the Germans that the Russian army could fight no more, would continue to demobilize but would not make peace. Following the Bolshevik revolution the British sent an agent to establish relations with Soviet officials without giving any recognition. This special agent of the British War Cabinet was R.H. Bruce Lockhart who wrote in his memoirs "British Agent" that the British Foreign Office was very interested in these "dissensions between Lenin and Trotsky - dissensions from which our Government hoped much". Lockhart established personal contact with Trotsky as soon as he returned from Brest Litovsk. Trotsky granted him a two hour interview in his private office at Smolny. According to Lockhart's memoirs, that same night he recorded in his diary his personal impressions of Trotsky:

"He strikes me as a man who would willingly die fighting for Russia provided there was a big enough audience to see him do it" (quoted in The Great Conspiracy pg31)

At the time following the October revolution when the people were yearning for peace and the revolution needed a respite in order to organize a Red Army, Trotsky played leftist games with the German imperialists, threatening war and revolution rather than sign a separate peace with Germany

who were making territorial demands on Russia. The result was that an even harsher peace was signed at Brest-Litovsk involving even greater territorial sacrifices to Germany. The fact was that the revolution in Germany had not matured and playing with "left" phrases to frighten the German imperialists who knew only too well the weak state the young Soviet power was in, very nearly brought about the complete failure of the revolution.

Nor can Trotsky's hatred of Stalin said to be based on his democratic as opposed to Stalin's centralist allegedly dictatorial methods of leadership. Trotsky was a fanatical exponent of the policy of war communism. Ian Grey in his book "*Stalin - Man of History*", writes about Trotsky:-

"He insisted that labour must be subject to the same strict discipline as the Red Army. Wholly authoritarian in outlook and without the least understanding of or feeling for human needs and emotions, he set about imposing this discipline. The immediate result was an angry storm of protest and rebellion.

"Trotsky came into direct conflict with the trade unions.he had mobilized the railwaymen under army discipline. Then, again in the face of union opposition, he had set up his own transport authority, the Central Transport Committee, known as Tsektran. His highhanded treatment of this union and his threats that he would deal likewise with other unions infuriated unionist members of the Party.

"Lenin, supported by ten members of the nineteen Central Committee members, including Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, proposed some moderating of party rule. Immediate abolition of Trotsky's hated Tsektran was to be the first step. Trotsky violently opposed such "liberal" policies. He was supported by Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, and the three members then in charge of the party Secretariat." (page 144)

The picture that the bourgeois official historians like to present, of Trotsky the dedicated revolutionary, man of principle hunted and persecuted by Stalin belongs to the realm of fairy stories. Trotsky was ruthless. What strengths he may have had and the contribution he made in the weeks of October become insignificant as he increasingly came into contradiction with Soviet power and of course, the leadership of Stalin. The revolutionary wave had subsided and Soviet power was faced with the immense problems of laying the foundations of and building socialism for the first time in history, or capitulating to imperialism and white Russian reaction. Trotsky had lost power within the Party. It was his life and he desperately sought to get it back. He was prepared to use ruthless measures and demand them of others just as he had been prepared to use the same methods as the Tsarist officers to maintain discipline in the Civil war - shooting 1 in 10 of the troops to enforce discipline.

Trotsky continued his opposition to Lenin and the Bolsheviks after joining the Party in August. He brought with him many opposition elements. However, during the October revolution it was important to unite as many as possible and it was perceived that Trotsky had agitational skills. His entry into the Party was done with the grandeur that suited his personality. Lenin observed sardonically that it was like coming to terms with a great power. After his failure at Brest-Litovsk he was removed as commissar for foreign affairs to the post of War Commissar. He was extremely high handed in his handling of Bolshevik commanders and the Central Committee was forced to intervene on occasion to prevent him shooting those he regarded as breaking military discipline.

War Commissar Trotsky is often praised for being a great leader in the Civil War. However, in the summer of 1919 Trotsky, stating that Kolchak was no longer a menace in the east proposed shifting the

forces of the Red Army into the campaign against Denikin in the South. This Stalin pointed out would have given Kolchak a much needed breathing spell and the opportunity to reorganize and re-equip for a fresh offensive. The Central Committee rejected Trotsky's plan and he took no further part in the campaign in the east which led to Kolchak's defeat. Similarly with his plan for a campaign against Denikin through the Don steppes, an almost roadless region filled with bands of counter-revolutionary Cossaks. Stalin rejected Trotsky's plan and proposed advancing across the Donetz Basin with its dense railway network, good supplies of coal and sympathetic working-class population. Stalin's plan was accepted by the Central Committee, Trotsky was removed from the Southern Front and told not to interfere with operations which led to the defeat of Denikin.

In 1921, at the 10th Congress, the Central Committee, headed by Lenin outlawed all factions within the Party as endangering revolutionary leadership. All Party members were expected to uphold majority decisions on penalty of expulsion. Trotsky, whose factional activities involved open opposition to decisions, was specifically warned. Power was slipping from Trotsky's hands. The opposition had always been engaged in open and secret activities against Soviet Power. But in 1921/22 a leading Trotskyite, Nicolai Krestinsky, who was Soviet Ambassador to Germany was approached by General Hans von Seeckt who offered funds for Trotsky's under-ground network. This offer was relayed to Trotsky who agreed. Krestinsky asked for 250,000 gold marks from Seeckt who agreed in return for important military secrets and visas for German spies operating inside the Soviet Union. The coincidence of interests between the Opposition and German imperialism in their hatred of bolshevism and Soviet power was a reality. No doubt there are those who would seek to justify such collaboration as no worse than Lenin obtaining a sealed car in order to return to revolutionary Russia in 1917. What Lenin did secured the victory of the Bolshevik revolution. What Trotsky did was directed against it. Any simple Soviet worker or peasant was capable of making the distinction.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky made a bid for power at the Party Congress in 1924. He demanded that he and not Stalin be Lenin's successor and he forced it to a vote. Stalin was voted unanimously by 748 bolshevik delegates to continue as General Secretary. Even Bukharin, Zinoviev and Kamenev felt obliged to vote with the majority. The opposition fell out but re-united as the New Opposition a few months later and went on to mobilize a rag-bag of oppositionists, careerists and white-guardists in secret cells which also began storing arms.

Despite the ban on factions and factionalism, the opposition found a great deal of opportunity to carry on their campaign against the leadership. In *My Life* Trotsky writes that "During 1926 the Party struggle developed with increased intensity. In the autumn the Opposition even made an open sortie at the meetings of the Party locals". This, however, only aroused the hostility of the workers forcing the Opposition to quieten down. In 1927 when Soviet Russia faced new war threats from the west, Trotsky publicly declared in Moscow:- *"We must restore the tactics of Clemenceau, who, as is well known, rose against the French Government at a time when the Germans were 80 kilometers from Paris."* Stalin denounced Trotsky's statements as treasonable and declared that "Something like a united front from Chamberlain to Trotsky is being formed".

A referendum of all Bolshevik Party members repudiated the opposition by a vote of 740,000 to 4,000. In fact at no time did the opposition receive any support from the mass of Party membership or the working class. This is indeed not surprising. The Opposition opposed all efforts to build socialism declaring it to be impossible in "backward Russia". They demanded that the Russian revolution be converted into a reservoir of the world revolution to promote revolutions in other countries. Stripped of its "leftist" rhetoric the opposition stood for a wild struggle for power and inside Russia military dictatorship under War Commissar Trotsky.

On Nov 7th, 1927, the tenth anniversary of the bolshevik revolution, during the annual mass parade in Red Square, a political demonstration against the Soviet Government was organized by Trotsky's Opposition. It was to signal a nation wide insurrection. But this was in Trotsky's fevered imagination only. The authorities acted quickly and the workers turned on the demonstrators as leaflets declaring the assumption of power of the new leadership showered the square. Arrests and raids followed. One of Trotsky's followers, the diplomat Joffe who had been ambassador to Japan, committed suicide. In some places, Trotskyites were arrested in the company of former white officers, social revolutionary terrorists, and foreign agents. Trotsky was expelled from the Bolshevik Party

and sent into exile at Alma Ata, Siberia. He was subsequently deported to Turkey in 1929, finishing up in Mexico where he was assassinated by one of his own supporters who grew to hate his extreme egoism and vanity.

STALIN AND THE WAR AGAINST CAPITALIST ENCIRCLEMENT AND FASCIST AGGRESSION.

Before the success of the Bolsheviks, Marxists had always believed that the socialist revolution would take place first in the industrially developed nations of Europe and America and that it would quickly spread transforming the world and bringing progress to the backward nations. But the outbreak of the first world war revealed that the socialist parties of Europe had given up the struggle to overthrow capitalism and international working class solidarity. The 2nd Socialist International collapsed as its parties supported the victory of their "own" ruling class in the war. Only Lenin and the Bolsheviks denounced the war as an imperialist war and called on the workers to turn their guns on the bourgeoisie. The focus of revolutionary opportunity shifted to Russia. The Bolsheviks were able to seize power and the belligerent imperialist powers locked in war could do nothing to intervene. After the armistice a 14 power interventionist army was assembled to support the White guardist armies in a civil war to overthrow the Bolsheviks. They failed because of the support among the Soviet people for their new government, international support and sympathy for Soviet Power and because of contradictions among the interventionist imperialist armies and the white counter-revolutionaries. Utilizing these contradictions to weaken the Soviet Union's enemies would always, therefore, figure highly in the Soviet Union's foreign policy considerations. It could not be any other way.

The Trotskyite opposition of the time were locked into a conspiracy to take power behind the aggression and tanks of the axis powers. Trotsky predicted war against the Soviet Union in 1937. They desired an early war against Soviet Russia because they believed it would lead to Stalin and the Bolsheviks inevitable defeat. They might have been right. Freeing Germany from the restrictions of the Versailles treaty in 1935 allowing Hitler to build up Germany's war machine was a clear signal to Stalin that Britain, France and America were encouraging the Nazis to attack Soviet Russia. War between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany may have been inevitable given the amount of sympathy and support for the Nazis in the West but an early war was not inevitable. Stalin's guiding foreign policy was to form treaties of collective security against German expansionism and if this fails, as it did, to exploit contradictions between the imperialist powers. There is no disputing the extent of the threat that the Soviet Union faced and if Stalin had faced war in 1937, probably with the Oppositionist fifth column still in tact, the Soviet Union would have suffered even greater losses and the war would have taken an entirely different course. This might have suited Trotsky's plans for Soviet Russia. But Stalin, understandably, was taking no advice from Trotsky on what was best for the Soviet Union. Nor should we take any advice from the modern followers of Trotsky who think it is enough to scream about the German/Soviet pact without any reference to the situation Stalin and the Soviet Union faced.

Stalin was always extremely concerned that there would be an alliance between Germany and the west directed against the Soviet Union. In the '20s good relations were established with Germany. The Weimar republic sought good relations with the east and west. By 1932 Russia was taking 30.5% of German machinery exports. Hundreds of German technicians and engineers were working and instructing in Russia and German officers were training Russian troops. In 1932, Germany supplied 46.5% of Russia's total imports. By 1935, the figure dropped to 9% while exports from Britain to the Soviet Union increased. America also increased its trade with the Soviet Union, particularly after Roosevelt came to power. The depression forced western capitalism to increase its trade with the Soviet Union. Even Nazi Germany sought to maximise trade with Soviet Russia and succeeded in increasing its market share to 22.8% in 1936. However, it soon fell back with the formation of the anti-Comintern pacts between Germany and Japan and Berlin and Rome, and the intervention of Germany on Franco's side in the Spanish civil war.

Clashes with Japanese troops on the Manchurian frontier compelled Stalin to be extremely cautious in

rebutting Japanese aggression and avoiding provocation on his western frontiers.

In March 1938 Hitler seized Austria and a crisis over the Sudetan Germans in Czechoslovakia followed. Stalin responded by proposing that Britain, France and the Soviet Union present a united front to defend Czechoslovakia. But Britain and France were following a policy of appeasement seeking to encourage Germany eastwards and hoping that they would be able to reap the benefits of the Soviet Union and Germany exhausting themselves in a war. They would have nothing of Stalin's proposal. They ignored Stalin's proposal and at the notorious Munich conference, surrendered Czechoslovakia to Germany. France had even failed to honour its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia and this horrified Stalin. When Germany marched into Czechoslovakia, the world was outraged. Chamberlain's lukewarm condemnation created an uproar in Parliament. Visibly shocked by the hostility, he went on to demand that the Soviet Union and Britain jointly give guarantees to Poland and Romania. Guarantees which offered no security to the Soviet Union.

Further Soviet proposals for a British-French-Soviet pact of mutual assistance which would guarantee the independence of all states along the Soviet frontier from the Baltic to the Black Sea were rejected by Chamberlain on the grounds that it would offend Poland and Germany. The issue was clear, Britain and France wanted an early attack by Nazi Germany against Soviet Russia to bring down socialism. Litvinov was dismissed as Kommissar for Foreign Affairs and Molotov appointed on May 3rd, 1939. In this situation Stalin was compelled to consider making peace with the devil rather than face a war alone, on two fronts, in 1939. Hitler was anxious to seize Poland and with this object in mind, Ribbentrop was sent to Moscow to negotiate a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. On August 23rd, 1939, Stalin received Ribbentrop and agreed the text of the agreement in a cold not in the least amicable meeting. The British and French Governments were stunned and the western propaganda machine was wound up to a frenzy of abuse and vitriol against the Soviet Union. On September 1st, Hitler invaded Poland, forcing Chamberlain to declare war on Germany in honour of the treaty obligations to Poland.

Stalin certainly hoped that the Soviet Union could avoid being drawn into the conflict and that the capitalist countries would exhaust themselves in war giving rise to uprisings and revolutions throughout Europe. But the ease with which the German armies swept through Europe, especially the collapse of the French armies and the evacuation of the British at Dunkirk left Stalin in no doubt that war with Germany was inevitable. However, he desperately sought to prevent any provocation that would precipitate an early conflict which Stalin strived to prevent at least until spring 1942. It, was therefore, a major blow to the Soviet Union's preparedness when Hitler attacked on June 22nd, 1941. The aggressors supreme advantage was that of surprise attack. But the non-aggression treaty had given Stalin and the Soviet Union valuable time to secure its borders. The war with Finland, when this pro-Nazi state refused to allow Soviet access to the Baltic in return for a greater area of Soviet territory, proved to be a harder struggle than expected requiring large numbers of Soviet troops. However, defeated armies learn through bitter experience the reasons for their failure, and this was no less the case for the Red Army. Stalin was clear that the Red Army needed officers who understood modern warfare and immediately went to work ensuring that the Red Army was organized and staffed to meet the threat the Soviet Union faced.

Shortly before the German onslaught, Molotov met Hitler in an icy meeting. After refusing to be drawn into talk about sharing the British empire on England's defeat, the Soviet Kommissar for foreign affairs raised the question of Finland's hostility to the Soviet Union. Hitler was enraged by Molotov's bluntness. The count down to the Nazi's invasion started in earnest.

Three million German troops with thousands of tanks supported by the most up-to-date weapons attacked along a huge frontier. The largest land battle in history. Within weeks the Germans had pushed into Soviet territory and were heading towards Moscow. The Red Army fought heroically suffering huge losses. On July 3rd in a Radio address to the Soviet People, Stalin gave a brief analysis of the reasons for the Nazi's initial success, but he left the people in no doubt that the Germans *would* be defeated by the Soviet Red Army and he gave specific guidance to the people on measures to be taken to create a peoples war on all fronts against the invaders:-

" The collective farms must drive off all their cattle,

and turn over their grain to the safe-keeping of state authorities for transportation to the rear. All valuable property, including non-ferrous metals, grain and fuel which cannot be withdrawn must be destroyed without fail.

In areas occupied by the enemy, guerrilla units, mounted and on foot, must be formed, diversionist groups must be organized to combat the enemy troops, to foment guerrilla warfare everywhere, to blow up bridges and roads, damage telephone and telegraph lines, set fire to forests, stores, transports. In the occupied regions conditions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step, and all their measure frustrated.

This war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war. It is not only a war between two armies, it is also a great war of the entire Soviet people against the German fascist forces.

The aim of this national war in defense of our country against the fascist oppressors is not only elimination of the danger hanging over our country, but also aid to all European peoples groaning under the yoke of German fascism."

The Germans came within 15km of Moscow before the tide was turned and the Nazi armies were smashed at such momentous battles as Stalingrad and Kursk. Throughout, Stalin was in full control taking regular reports from officers of the Red Army. Like all successful supreme commanders he listened to all their reports and placed his utmost trust in their loyalty and determination to defeat the enemy. He would not regard failure lightly and promptly removed or demoted officers who failed to fulfil their responsibilities or give satisfactory explanation for failure. Stalin's leadership was the dynamo which ensured that the Red Army seized every opportunity to take the offensive against Germany and which inspired the Army and people to endure such great sacrifice to save the Soviet Union from the fascist jackboot. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev, whose contribution in the anti-fascist war was not outstanding, tried to deny Stalin's role as supreme commander. However, Zhukov who led the battles which pushed the Nazi's back from Moscow and who before this led the forces in defence of Leningrad, had no doubt that Stalin's steel like determination inspired the whole army and people to victory.

Stalin welcomed wholeheartedly every step by Britain and America to commit more of their forces in the war against Hitler Germany. Replying to the Moscow correspondent of Associated press Henry C. Cassidy on November 13th, 1942, Stalin said of the Allied Africa campaign that it "*....represents an outstanding fact of major importance demonstrating the growing might of the armed forces of the Allies and opening the prospect of the disintegration of the Italo-German coalition in the very near future.*" Stalin went on to say that it was too early to judge how effective this campaign was in relieving pressure on the Soviet Union. However in answer to the rather odd question in the circumstances - "What possibility is there of Soviet offensive power in the east joining the Allies in the west to hasten the final victory?" - Stalin answered rather curtly, "*There need be no doubt that the Red Army will fulfil its task with honour as it has been fulfilling it throughout the war.*" This was in November 1942 when the Soviet Union was still deeply immersed in a life or death struggle to free its own territory from the Nazi invaders and after a period when western correspondents were confidently predicting German victory and the collapse of the Red Army.

The worlds' people celebrated every Soviet victory as their own. But the rulers of Britain and America forced into an alliance with the Soviet Union were alarmed by the Soviet Union's military success. Stalin repeatedly called for the opening of the second front in Europe. But the west proved

to be not too keen to draw German troops from the eastern front early. Already, the western leaders were undoubtedly pre-occupied with the problem of dealing with a Soviet Union whose prestige had been immeasurably increased in the world and whose military capability was almost single-handedly routing the Germans. The Second Front did eventually commence with the "D"-Day landings. America, however, was giving considerable attention to making sure that its power and not Soviet power was seen to be supreme in the world after the war. Terrified that the Soviet Union would succeed in extending its influence in the Far East as well as Europe, America brought about the speedy capitulation of Japan by dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Stalin sought to continue friendly relations with the Allies on the basis of mutual respect, but the threat the dropping of the atomic bomb was to the Soviet Union was clear to Stalin and progressive opinion throughout the world.

The Soviet Union lost 20 million of its best fighters in the war against Nazi Germany. As in all wars this number came mainly from Soviet youth, the future of any society. Such was the contribution of the Soviet people in stopping the most brutal and barbarous of imperialist powers. Such was the contribution of the Soviet people in ensuring the extension of the camp of socialism and making it possible for the peoples enslaved in the colonial empires of Britain, France and America to struggle for and gain their national independence. And this was achieved under Stalin's unchallenged leadership of the international communist movement. Despite the devastation of the Nazi invasion, the Soviet Union went on to rebuild its economy and catch up with America in the development of rocketry and science. No economy least of all a socialist economy should be faced with the threat that now confronted Stalin and the socialist camp. The threat of nuclear weapons raining down on Soviet cities built with the sweat of the working class. America's nuclear monopoly had to be broken and it was broken.

Stalin and the Soviet Union were feared by the imperialist powers because they signified that socialism was rising and imperialism dying. The post war period was a time of great hope and striving that even the imperialists had to take account of by granting concessions to the working people. But anti-communist rhetoric and propaganda in the west became more vicious and all pervasive. While Stalin was alive, however, the West's propaganda could not defeat the love and sympathy that existed all over the world for Stalin and the Soviet Union. When Stalin died in 1953, communist, progressive and socialist periodicals and newspapers carried complete editions mourning Stalin's death and celebrating his life. It was, therefore, with great jubilation that the imperialists greeted Khrushchev's secret speech attacking Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Khrushchev, who was a clown on the world stage and who brought socialism and the Soviet Union into dis-repute, crawled out of the woodwork to do what the imperialists themselves could never achieve. By attacking Stalin, Khrushchev was not just removing the so-called personality cult. He was attacking the ideological foundations of the Soviet Union in Marxism-Leninism. He was signalling to the world the beginning of capitalist restoration. Khrushchev fell in 1963 but the revisionist rule that he represented remained in power. Socialism was converted into state capitalism and the organs of Soviet power slowly corrupted and undermined. It is a testimony to the power and resilience of socialism built up by Lenin and Stalin that it took nearly four decades after Stalin's death for the revisionist rulers of Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachov to dismantle and finally bring about the collapse of the Soviet state and so bring back the unbridled power of the bourgeoisie. We can see once again what bourgeois rule means; poverty, starvation, gangsterism and dependence.

But the sight of bourgeois degeneracy in the place of socialism and working class power over its own destiny is not lost on the world's people. Stalin's name and prestige is being restored to its proper place in the history of the struggle of workers and oppressed peoples for socialism and human emancipation.

STALIN SOCIETY 16th October, 1994.