

Revolution

June 1981



"But we are out to rebuild the world. . . it is time to cast off the soiled shirt and to don clean linen."

V.I. Lenin
"The Tasks of the Proletariat in
Our Revolution"
April, 1917

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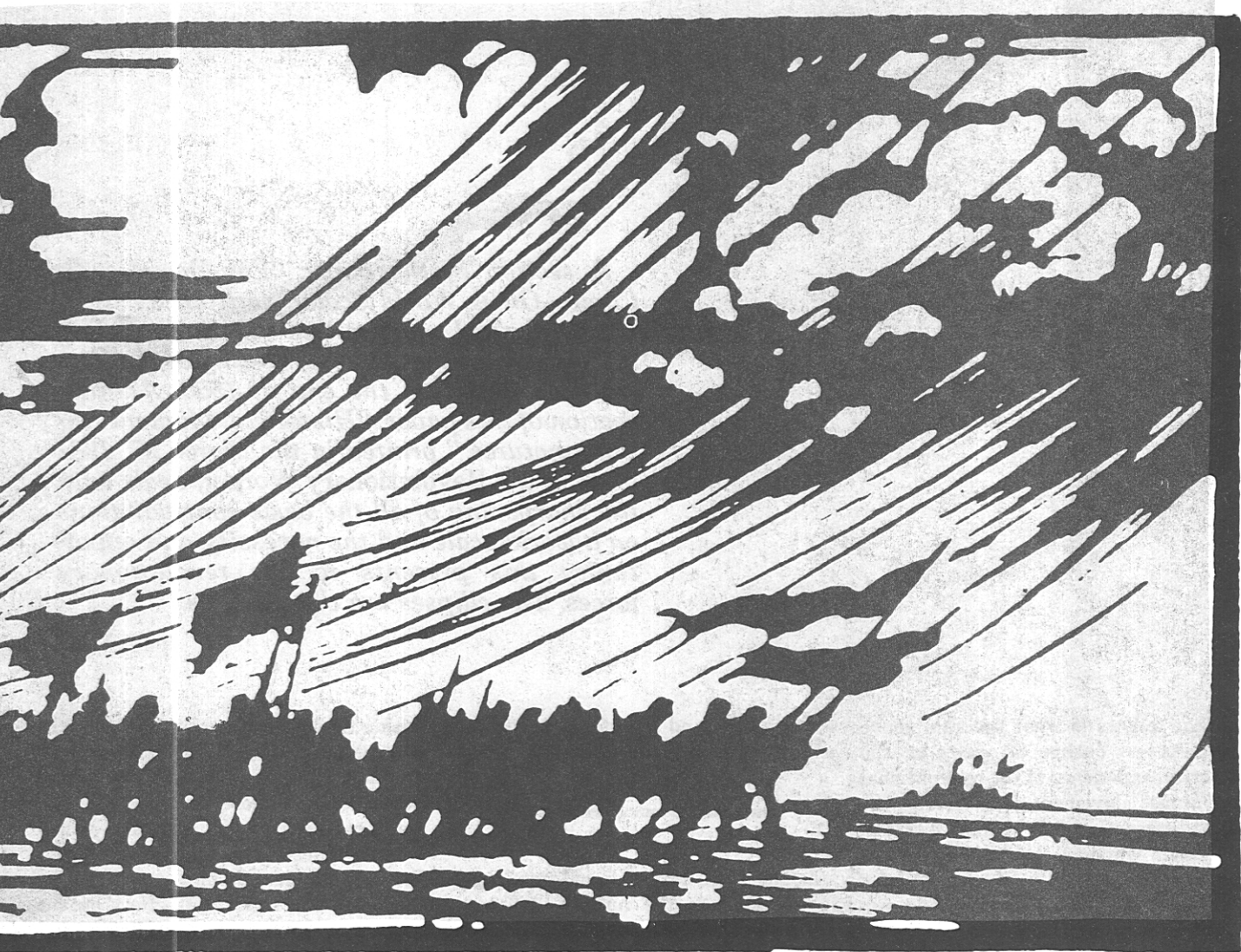
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Table of Contents

Outline of Views on the Historical Experience of the International Communist Movement and the Lessons for Today	4
Some Notes on the Military and Diplomatic History of WW2	11
On the Question of So-Called "National Nihilism": You Can't Beat the Enemy While Raising His Flag	20
"You Can't Beat the Enemy While Raising His Flag"– MLPUSA Tries It	28
The Line of the Comintern On The Civil War in Spain	32
<i>"In Spain, to be blunt, the possibilities for big revolutionary advances in that country and worldwide were sacrificed..."</i>	
Joint Communique of 13 Marxist-Leninist Parties & Organizations– "To the Marxist-Leninists, The Workers and the Oppressed of All Countries"	71





This issue of Revolution is dedicated to Chiang Ching and Chiang Chun-chiao

"If we continue, if we persist, if we take up exactly the call and the example that Comrade Chiang Ching and Comrade Chang Chun-chiao are making, not just to the people of China but to the proletariat and the revolutionaries of the world, by the kind of stand they are taking in that courtroom, then we are in quite a good position going into the kind of period of upsurge and revolutionary crisis and war that is going to be coming internationally."

-from a speech on behalf of the Central Committee of the RCP, USA
at a meeting in solidarity with Mao's imprisoned comrades.

A section of the paper "For Decades To Come—On A World Scale," written by RCP, USA Central Committee Chairman Bob Avakian and adopted by a meeting of the Central Committee at the end of 1980. Another section of this paper, "Historical 'Moments' or Conjunctures," printed in the March 27, 1981 issue of the Revolutionary Worker, deals with the sharpening of all the basic contradictions on a world scale and the necessity and opportunity this presents to the revolutionary forces. The ellipses are the author's.

What follows is what the title above suggests—an outline of views on the historical experience of the international communist movement, in particular the Third International. It should be stressed that, while a basic position is presented here, it is in the nature of a "working thesis," and the outline setting this forth is meant to serve as the framework for further investigation, study and summation, to which not only myself and not only our party but others as well must and will contribute. The basic overview can be expressed by using Stalin as the focus and referring to the statement by Mao (cited in the "Philosophy" chapter of *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*)—that in the 1920s "Stalin had nothing else to rely on except the masses, so he demanded all-out mobilization of the party and the masses. Afterward, when they had realized some gains this way, they became less reliant on the masses" (see p. 147)—and the related assessment made in that chapter that, especially after the 1920s, Stalin was "not as consistently or thoroughly dialectical in his approach to problems." (*Ibid.*) Of course, it is not a question of one leader alone; but this assessment of Stalin does, I think, apply more generally to the leaders of the Third International (after Lenin). What follows, in outline form, is

a beginning (and tentative) elaboration of this view.

I. The Third International was forged (established) in the furnace of intense struggle—against imperialism and opportunism—brought to the boiling point in World War 1. In particular, it was forged in the bitter fight against social-chauvinism. But a distinguishing feature of it from the beginning was that the organizational center of it was the Bolshevik Party—a party in power—in the only socialist state. This had its positive aspect, in that the line of Lenin, having become a material force in this way, was in turn transformed into a tremendous ideological force, influencing communists, and others, very broadly and powerfully. But, of course, this itself involved contradiction (there were a number of forces attracted by the success of the October Revolution who were not really thoroughly won over to Bolshevism ideologically but nevertheless joined the International, while on the other hand there were tendencies to mechanically copy the Bolshevik experience, as well as other deviations) and, over a period of time, especially with the growth of erroneous tendencies

within the Soviet Communist Party, the contradiction of having an International dominated by the one party that was in power became more acute. While this was not the essential question—which was the question of line, in the Soviet Party and the Comintern—it nevertheless had a significant effect on the question of how line was determined and carried out, on the international level and within the different countries (this will show up more prominently later) . . .

II. With the failure of revolutions to develop or their defeat in other countries—especially Germany—in the years right after the October Revolution (by 1923), the "first period" (as formulated by the Comintern) came to an end. It was then clear that the new Soviet Republic would be the only socialist state to emerge out of the historic conjuncture that shaped up around World War 1. This confronted the leaders of this new socialist state with heavy necessity, if the victory of the October Revolution was to be preserved and socialism actually built in that country.

In this, the "second period" (1923-28), Stalin's leadership, especially in the struggle against Trotsky, Bukharin and other opportunists, was in the main correct. Certainly the fight he led to uphold the possibility of and undertake the task

Outline of Views on the Historical Experience of the International Communist Movement and the Lessons for Today

of establishing socialism in one country was essentially correct. But, while at that time Stalin drew a distinction between the victory of socialism in one country and the *final victory* of socialism—which he said could not be accomplished in one country alone—already there were within his line at that time erroneous tendencies that would further develop in the future; and within the international communist movement (before as well as after Stalin's influence became dominant in the Comintern) there were already developing economist, reformist and bourgeois-democratic deviations, rationalized in particular on the basis that the movement was in general in a period of "the defensive"...

III. The line of the Comintern in relation to the "third period" (1928 and after) also divided rather sharply into two. On the one hand, there was the more or less correct prediction of the end of the temporary period of stabilization (and expansion) in the capitalist world (or most of it)—more or less correct because it did involve some mechanical materialist tendencies that marred this analysis and would be reflected more strongly later (both in the 1930s and after World War 2 as well, when they took the form of tendencies toward see-

ing an imminent major crisis of the capitalist world when none was then in the making). This is linked to errors in relation to the theory of the "general crisis" of imperialism, as opposed to the more dialectical view of the development of imperialism—yes, toward its ultimate end, but—through major war-to-war spirals.

The "third period" line was, in one sense, "left" not right—but "left" economist, again revealing mechanical materialist tendencies. This was connected with some significant departures from Leninism, especially from the Leninist emphasis on historic conjuncture and from the whole thrust embodied in *What Is To Be Done?* The campaigns for "Bolshevization" and for "mass parties" and an emphasis on "factory nuclei" must be seen in this light...

IV. Especially after the crushing defeat of the communists in Germany with the rise of the fascist form of bourgeois dictatorship (1933), heavy defensive and defeatist tendencies grew in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Together with the growing danger of world war, especially of attack on the Soviet Union, openly rightist deviations, of a fundamental nature, became predominant—the promotion of

nationalism, reformism and bourgeois democracy, the subordination of everything to the defense of the Soviet Union, etc., in a qualitatively greater way than before. While the line represented by the writings of Dutt during this general period were a part of this overall development, all this was concentrated in the Dimitroff Report to the 7th World Congress of the Comintern (1935) and the implementation and further development of this line—which, as we know, involved, among other things, as one of its key ingredients, the basic repudiation of the Leninist position on "defense of the fatherland." This whole line was in its essence erroneous...

V. The line(s) of the Soviet and Comintern leadership in relation to WW2 overall (that is, during the period leading up to the war, from the mid-1930s on, and during the different phases of the war itself) was *basically wrong*. The point is not that particular policies and tactical maneuvers of the Soviet Union, in dealing with different imperialists and making use of contradictions among them, were absolutely wrong in principle, taken by themselves; the point is that the overall line guiding this was incorrect. Even when, in the first phase of the war (before the Soviet Union was in-

vaded) the line was put out that this was again an inter-imperialist war—a line which in form seems correct—this was largely a case of taking, at that moment, the correct position for the wrong reasons... it was still mainly determined on the basis of subordinating the whole world struggle to—and essentially reducing it to—the defense of the Soviet Union.

More essentially, it must be summed up that the analysis which our Party has upheld, that with the invasion of the Soviet Union the nature (the principal aspect) of the war changed—from an inter-imperialist war to one whose main aspect was that between socialism and imperialism—is *not correct*. While certainly this aspect was a very significant one once the Soviet Union was forced into the war, and while in addition the aspect of national liberation struggle vs. imperialism (most of all in China) was also very significant during World War 2 (in contrast to the first world war, when Lenin correctly said that this national liberation aspect was practically insignificant), still an objective analysis of the overall character of the second world war—of its principal aspect, which determines its essence—reveals, I believe, that its nature remained *mainly* an inter-imperialist war.

In such circumstances (an inter-imperialist war in which a socialist state is forced to fight a—legitimate—war of defense) it is not necessarily wrong for the socialist state to make use of contradictions among the imperialists, even to have certain agreements with one bloc or the other (or both), etc.; *but* this must be based on a correct analysis of the overall character of the war, and the defense of the socialist country must be made subordinate to the advance of the international struggle overall, and not the other way around. However, even with regard to the other just and progressive (revolutionary) aspects of the war—in particular the war of liberation of China against Japanese imperialism—this, too, was approached by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Comintern in a way that would have sacrificed them for the sake of defending the Soviet Union (Wang Ming's *right* line, and the way the Soviet Union dealt with Chiang Kai-shek, among other things, were manifestations of this). And generally, in the contradiction between defending the Soviet Union on the one hand and supporting and advancing revolutionary struggle elsewhere and on

the international level as a whole on the other hand, not only was the first aspect (incorrectly) treated as the principal one but the other aspect (which should have been treated as principal) was liquidated insofar as it conflicted with the (narrowly, one-sidedly conceived) defense of the Soviet Union (the dissolution of the Comintern itself during the war, and especially the explanation given for this, is a sharp expression of this). The fundamental deviations during this war were concentrated in Stalin's speeches "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union," where the erroneous, anti-Leninist positions consistently put forward are so thoroughly (and extremely) incorrect that they cannot be explained merely by the necessity Stalin faced but must be taken as the expression of fundamental departures from Marxism-Leninism.

Of great importance in all this is the understanding that the line of the Soviet and Comintern leadership in relation to World War 2 represented carrying to an extreme—and turning into their opposite—certain analyses and lines that were in the main correct, and dictated by necessity, when it became clear (in the early 1920s) that it would be necessary to build socialism in one country. These earlier policies largely corresponded to the conditions that existed when the historic conjuncture represented by World War 1 (and its immediate aftermath) had passed, and when a new major spiral was only *beginning*. But the policies in relation to the second world war basically extended—again, to an extreme—this earlier orientation, *precisely when a new historic conjuncture was shaping up, when that major spiral was reaching its concentration point and resolution*—raising qualitatively greater possibilities for revolutionary advance on a world scale, which the Soviet and Comintern leadership's line largely worked against.

The essential point here can be seen, in a concentrated way, in the speech by Stalin to the 18th Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B) in 1939, where he not only puts forward the seriously erroneous view that antagonistic class contradictions have been eliminated in the Soviet Union (and the contradictions between workers, peasants and intellectuals are treated as if there is no possibility of serious conflict arising from them), but he goes on to say that the Soviet Union is "moving ahead, towards communism." From the correct in-

sistence on the possibility of establishing socialism in one country—and the fight to actually achieve this—things have turned into their opposite: into the completely erroneous notion of achieving *communism* in one country! It is basically inevitable that such a position would be accompanied by the tendency to sacrifice everything—in particular revolution in other countries—for the defense of the Soviet Union, and by an erroneous line overall for the international communist movement...

VI. The serious deviations from Marxism-Leninism that arose and found increasing expression from the mid-1930s through World War 2 were never really thoroughly criticized, nor certainly rooted out. After the war, even allowing for powerful necessity faced by the Soviet leadership, their policies (including those promoted by Stalin), with regard to the emerging socialist camp, and overall, continued to contain significant aspects of economism (including the "theory of productive forces"), bourgeois democracy and nationalism, especially Great-Russian chauvinism, and fundamentally a failure to rely on the masses and lead them in a revolutionary way. This is true despite some attempts by Stalin to combat some of the more flagrant revisionism among the Soviet leadership. (Stalin's "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR" must be assessed, more deeply, in this light.)

Overall, during the period from the end of the war to Stalin's death (1953) revisionism was further strengthened in the USSR itself. In Eastern Europe the policies and means for mobilizing the conscious initiative of the masses to carry out socialist transformation were not really and consistently developed and applied—significantly, Mao comments (in two separate places) in his *Critique of Soviet Economics* that, although the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe were established as the outcome of class struggle internationally (that is, World War 2), a good job was not done in leading class struggle there in the period after the war. Thus, no solid basis for socialism in those countries was ever laid, even though significant steps were taken in transforming the ownership system. As a result of all this, the socialist camp, even as it was reaching its "height" in the early and mid-50s was already disintegrating from

within. And in general the conditions were ripening for the triumph of revisionism in most of this camp and more broadly for the complete degeneration of the majority of the parties that had been part of the Third International . . .

VII. An overall summation of this whole period—from the triumph of the October Revolution and establishment of the world's first socialist state to the turning of this into its opposite, with the triumph of revisionism in the USSR and most of the countries of the socialist camp in the mid-1950s—must thoroughly and all-sidedly examine the dialectically related aspects of ideological and political line on the one hand and material basis on the other, not only in the Soviet Union itself but on a world scale. But, in brief, as I see it, it was indeed possible and necessary to build socialism in one country (the Soviet Union) after the failure or defeat of revolutions in other countries, and this was actually done and was only finally reversed with the rise to power of the new bourgeoisie led by Khrushchev—which did represent a qualitative change from one class rule and one system to another, despite the very serious errors that marred the line of the Soviet (and Comintern) leadership, especially from the mid-1930s on. *But*, on the other hand, once the line becomes consolidated that defending what has been gained in one country is the highest principle and that risking this, even for greater advances on a world scale, is something that is not dared, then, unless such a position is reversed, the loss of even what has been gained, as well as serious setbacks in the international struggle overall, is bound to occur sooner or later (and not that much later). Here is where I feel the principle of warfare, expressed in concentrated form by Mao—to preserve oneself and destroy the enemy, with the latter being principal—applies. And this links up especially with the importance of grasping and applying the Leninist line on historic conjunctures and the analysis of major war-to-war spirals. Only by firmly grasping and applying this, and much more penetratingly and thoroughly making a critical analysis of the experience of the international communist movement with this in view, can the serious errors of the past be avoided (and at least new and less serious ones committed) in carrying the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat forward toward

its final aim: world communism. . . .

VIII. The line and leadership of Mao Tsetung, especially in the fight against revisionism, represented a major leap in the international communist movement. In my opinion, however, it should be viewed as the *beginning* of the way forward out of the swamp into which in the main the international communist movement had been sunk. Mao refused to slide into that swamp and he pointed the direction, and led in taking crucial steps, on the opposite, the high road of proletarian revolution. It is indeed true that he led the international proletariat to unprecedented heights. But the point is exactly to forge further ahead up that tortuous ascent. The task is definitely not retreating to the path of Stalin, but neither is it simply *standing* with Mao; rather, it is to dig deeper into the past and to advance further, higher in the future.

It is objectively necessary to make a dialectical analysis of the role of Mao. This means, first of all, upholding and building on the overwhelmingly principal aspect—his truly immortal contributions, especially in the realm of philosophy, his development and enrichment of the dialectical-materialist basis of Marxism-Leninism, and most particularly in the line of *continuing* the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it also means critically summing up his errors, especially some tendencies toward seeing things too much from the point of view of nations and national struggle. More specifically, it must be said that, even in the struggle against revisionism, including in the polemics against the Soviet revisionists, there are aspects of promoting nationalism, and the line of “picking up the national flag” in the imperialist countries (other than the imperialist country or countries identified as the main enemy) is not broken with but put forward. This, I believe, is related to the erroneous tendency on Mao's part to extend the principle of “defeating our enemies one by one”—applied (overwhelmingly, at least) correctly during the course of the Chinese revolution, particularly in its first stage—onto the world scale in such a way as to deviate to a certain degree from the Leninist line on “defense of the fatherland.” Mao, as we know, was not of course the initiator—nor certainly the worst practitioner—of this error in the international communist movement, and in fact he did

not repeat the worst expressions that this took, on the part of Stalin and others. But the point is that neither did he break in any qualitative way with this error. (Perhaps some principles of military line also have some relevance here too: Mao had to wage a bitter struggle in the course of the Chinese revolution against the disastrous line of attacking the major strongholds of the enemy all at once, and he correctly posed in *opposition* to this the line of protracted people's war in China, encircling the cities from the countryside; and, even though he noted that in the imperialist countries the correct military line was centered around mass insurrections in the cities, perhaps the general-political implications of this for the world struggle were not grasped by Mao—that is, the possibility of attacking and seizing power from the reactionary ruling classes in a number of countries [in both imperialist blocs] during the same, relatively short, period, especially at a historic conjuncture, and particularly in the context of inter-imperialist war, rather than seeking an alignment of the people of the world, with a socialist country [or countries] at the center, to fight, in alliance with some imperialists, against one “main enemy” [one imperialist bloc]. How a socialist country can contribute to *this* possibility, and how its own defense fits into this perspective, even if it has to make use of *contradictions among the imperialists*, should, I believe, be the orientation of the international communist movement—including, even especially, when only one [or a few] socialist country[ies] exist, surrounded by imperialism still dominant in the world, and including, even in the context of world war, which represents the concentration point of the major spiral and presents greatly heightened revolutionary possibilities, taking the world as a whole.)

Mao's line on classes and class struggle under socialism, on the importance of the superstructure and on *continuing* the revolution under the proletarian dictatorship must also be evaluated in the light of what has been said above. While there is no question that these are indeed truly immortal contributions and led in the achievement of unprecedented advances, there was still some tendency to separate this too much from the whole international class struggle, to treat the class struggle within socialist China too much as a “thing in itself,” apart from the whole, world-wide struggle against

imperialism, reaction and all exploiting classes. And this I believe is true, even though Mao certainly never advocated "communism in one country," and in fact stressed that the final victory of communism could only be achieved on a world scale, as the outcome of the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed peoples and nations and fundamentally of the international proletariat, which, Mao insisted, a socialist country must support.

The essential point of what has been outlined above is that, especially ap-

proaching the historic conjuncture shaping up, with its tremendous challenges and opportunities for the international communist movement, a vigorous struggle must be carried out to forge further ahead on the revolutionary road indicated by Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, to strike more deeply at the roots of revisionism, to draw more fully the profound lessons from the errors as well as the great leaps forward in the past, and thereby to seize to the fullest the prospects ahead. As the draft document, "Basic Principles . . ." emphasizes:

"History advances not in a straight line but through twists and turns, it advances in a spiral—but it does advance. And this is most certainly true for the historic process of the world proletarian revolution and the replacement of the bourgeois epoch by the world-historic epoch of communism. Grasping and acting in accordance with this law in order to accelerate this advance is not merely a general and long-term requirement of proletarian revolutionaries but is of immediate, pressing importance in today's situation and with future developments in mind."

Addendum On The Character of WW2 . . . and why it did not change

First, in restudying the material we have produced relating to this general question (and specifically to the position that the character of the war did change with the invasion of the USSR and its entry into the war), I am struck by the superficiality of the arguments. To cite a flagrant example, in the original Party *Programme*, in the section "The Present Situation," it merely says that since the end of WWI the Soviet Union had been established as a socialist state and . . . "So, with the German invasion of the USSR in 1941, WWII changed . . . It became a battle for the defense of the future, as it was already being realized by the Soviet working people in building socialism." (p. 11, emphasis added) Similarly, in the article "On the Character of World War 2" (*The Communist*, V1, N1) at one point it is simply stated that "Everything described above changed with drastic swiftness on June 22, 1941. . . This changed the nature of the war and required a totally new orientation." (p. 90); and in the "Conclusion" of the article, this point is summed up as follows: "World War 2 changed in character *overnight* with the invasion of the Soviet Union which changed the objective situation, the necessity, and thus the opportunities for advancing the struggle of the working class." (p. 108, emphasis added)

Of course, arguments with more substance (than is found in the statements cited above) were made—and I will turn to these next—but I think that the rather obviously facile nature of these statements already provides at least a hint that our position (up to now),

that the character of the war did change, has represented in fact a rationalization for—and an attempt to give the best interpretation to—the overall erroneous line of the leadership of the USSR (and the Comintern . . . as long as it existed) on WW2. This was actually a line of *incorrectly* subordinating everything to the defense of the Soviet Union and *along with that* downplaying or even denying the need to advance revolutionary struggles elsewhere that conflicted with this narrowly (and overall erroneously) conceived defense of the USSR, and it seriously deviated from the correct, Leninist analysis of imperialism and imperialist war and from the Marxist-Leninist stand on the nature of the state (as opposed to bourgeois-democratic camouflage of this nature) and other cardinal questions. In short, while we have criticized a number of the particular deviations associated with this overall line, we have not (up until now) made a deep-going analysis of this—nor *fully* broken with the overall erroneous orientation of Stalin et al. on this question, which represents a concentration of much of what constitutes the roots of revisionism in the international communist movement. . . . But let's turn to the somewhat more substantive arguments we have made in support of the idea that the character of WW2 changed with the invasion of the USSR . . .

One of the main arguments is that once the Soviet Union was attacked (and entered the war) the decisive battlefield in WW2 became the Soviet front, that the Soviet forces took on—and defeated—the bulk (and "pride") of the

German army, that victory at Stalingrad was the decisive turning point in the whole war, etc. (See, for example, pp. 90-93 in *The Communist*, V1, N1; and pp. 62-65, V2, N2, "On the Outcome of World War 2 and the Prospects for Revolution in the West.")

There is, of course, a great deal of truth to all this (although it is the case that, as opposed to Europe for most of the war, the "Allied" imperialists, and in particular the U.S., did fight for real in the Pacific against Japan; this was largely a naval and air war and much of the ground fighting was over island outposts and not with the masses of troops that were involved in Europe). But, again, as an argument as to the character of the war, it is superficial and does not address, let alone answer, the decisive question: what *objective interests* were mainly in conflict during the war? Even though it is true that the Soviet armed forces and people were the main force that defeated Germany—and this was decisive in the defeat of the "Axis" imperialists overall—that does not change the fact that the main opposition being struggled out through the course of the entire war was that between the two groups of imperialists.

While the alignment of military forces, the actual configuration of the battles, etc. is of course important in determining the nature of a war, it is not the decisive, determining thing. It is precisely the case that a major way in which the U.S. and British in particular pursued their imperialist interests during the war was to maneuver to make the Soviets do the bulk of the fighting

against "the common enemy" (the "Axis" imperialists and Germany in particular) until such time as they could move in to clean up the spoils. But that does not mean they weren't fighting (nor certainly that they were not pursuing their imperialist interests by military means). Take the infamous statement by Truman, that the thing to do was to let the Germans and Soviets kill off the largest possible number of each other and then intervene on the losing side—if Germany had, as it expected, rolled over the Soviet Union and subdued it or conquered the strategic parts of it within a very short time, the U.S. and British imperialists would very probably have had no choice but to throw everything they had, right then, at their German rivals. While all this involves by definition a great deal of speculation, what is important to grasp is that the *military tactics* of the various forces in the war are not the determining thing—it is rather the objective interests being battled out, through whatever tactics and tactical shifts and maneuvers, that determine the character of the war and specifically determine that WW2 was from the beginning and remained throughout an inter-imperialist war in its principal aspect, its overall character. Of course if neither the British nor even the U.S. had been able to play any significant role militarily at any stage in the war (or after a certain point and for the rest of the war)—if, in short, they had been incapable of moving decisively when there was the necessity and the opportunity—then that would be a different matter. But that was hardly the case—especially with regard to the U.S.—and this brings us to a crucial point. Not only did WW2 arise out of inter-imperialist rivalry, but the *main aspect of the resolution* of the war was once again an *imperialist redivision* of the world, even though the progressive, revolutionary aspect—especially the defense of socialism and the revolutionary liberation struggle in the colonies, above all China—was a major factor (and much more of one than in WW1).

Thus, another argument made (including by ourselves) as to why the inter-imperialist aspect of the war was no longer principal after the Soviet Union was involved—namely, that the necessity for an alliance with the Soviet Union (and other progressive and revolutionary forces) put objective limitations on the "Allied" imperialists in pursuing

their imperialist interests and aims—can be seen not to be correct. It is true that there was such necessity and such limitation for these imperialists, but not to such an extent or in such a way that their pursuit of their imperialist interests—and the opposition between them and interests and aims of the rival imperialist group—was relegated to a secondary position in the war after the USSR entered it. This, again, is indicated in the (principal aspect of the) outcome of the war. (Of course, it could be argued that if the Communist Parties in a number of countries—Western Europe, to cite an important example—had carried out more revolutionary policies while making defense of the USSR paramount and treating the war vs. the "Axis" as just, then the outcome, and what happened in the more or less immediate aftermath, of the war might have been quite different, etc. . . . On the other hand, it could just as well—or more meaningfully—be raised: what if the Soviet Union and the international communist movement overall had carried out a correct, revolutionary line in relation to WW2, including in the period leading up to it as well as during the war itself, after as well as before the Soviet Union was invaded?! But in this type of questioning the aspect of speculation goes so far as really to divorce the subjective factor from objective reality and to get mired down in "what ifs" instead of scientifically analyzing the different class interests and forces in conflict and thereby determining the main aspect and overall character of WW2, before and after the Soviet Union became involved.)

It might possibly be argued: well, the principal contradiction (for a time) after WW2 was that between socialism and imperialism, so might that not indicate that the principal contradiction during the war, which gave rise to the situation after WW2, was between socialism and imperialism? As far as I know, no one has actually put forward this argument (at least not in this form)—and it is a bit of a "straw man," since it is obviously marred by a considerable amount of metaphysics—but it nevertheless seems worth addressing here briefly, partly to combat the metaphysics of this kind of argument and more specifically to make clearer why the war remained inter-imperialist and how its actual outcome indicates that. Essentially what is wrong with the above (theoretical) argument is that it ignores the particularity

of contradiction and the principle that qualitatively different contradictions are resolved by qualitatively different means. The contradiction "between socialism and imperialism" during and after the war was *not the same contradiction*. During the war the USSR, a socialist country, was aligned with certain imperialist states (the "Allied" imperialists) and at war with the opposing group of imperialist states; after the war the *socialist camp*, headed by the Soviet Union, came into open antagonism with the *imperialist camp as a whole* (including all the imperialist states) headed by the U.S. This difference was precisely because of the outcome (resolution) of the war—again, *principally* the resolution among the *imperialists themselves*, indicating that the main aspect and overall character of the war remained inter-imperialist. All this points us back to the conclusion that the analysis that the principal contradiction during the war—after the USSR entered it (in alliance with one group of imperialist states)—became that between socialism and imperialism, representing a basic change in the overall character of the war . . . such an analysis is incorrect.

In sum: the second world war, from beginning to end, was the second world *inter-imperialist* war—this was its principal aspect and overall character even after the Soviet Union was invaded and became involved in the war (and even though it did play the decisive role in defeating the "Axis" imperialists). The aspect of socialism vs. imperialism, and more generally of progressive struggle (warfare) against imperialism, was far greater in this second world war than in the first, but it was not the principal aspect and did not determine the character of the war as a whole (which remained inter-imperialist). Summing this up and analyzing the errors on this of the leaders of the USSR (and the Comintern)—much more deeply—is crucial in order to strike more penetratingly and powerfully at the roots of revisionism in the international communist movement. (Here it should be re-emphasized that these views, as well as the ideas presented in "Outline of Views . . ." in general—are, as stated there, in the nature of a "working thesis" and "meant to serve as as framework for further investigation, study and summation, to which not only myself and not only our party but others as well must and will contribute.")



RCP

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Some Notes on the Military and Diplomatic History of WW 2

The following article was written by a comrade after studying the preceding paper by Comrade Avakian. It is not an attempt to give a thorough account of World War 2, nor to go over once again all the ground previously covered in articles in our Party's press on this subject. Rather it is a fresh, if somewhat brief, look at the diplomatic and military history of the war that concentrates on refuting some of the main arguments that have been made about the character of the war in the past, including our own.

Even before the ink on the Treaty of Versailles which ended World War 1 was dry, Lenin wrote of "the next imperialist war, which the bourgeoisie are preparing, and which is growing out of capitalism before our very eyes."

Lenin had described the Treaty of Versailles as a "brutal and despicable" treaty "dictated by the 'democratic' republics of America and France and also by 'free' England." Meeting amidst the decadent splendor of the royal palace of the old French monarchy at Versailles, the victors divided the world between them, with Britain and France taking the lion's share. Germany was stripped of all its colonies and significant chunks of its territory and billed for huge sums of money in tribute ("reparations"). Britain grabbed up most of Germany's African colonies, splitting the Mideast possessions of the vanquished Ottoman Empire with France. The Austro-Hungarian empire was also cut up into a number of new countries, allotted to the hegemony of the victorious imperialists: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia to France, Hungary to Britain, etc. Representatives from the oppressed colonies of the world who came to Versailles thinking, or at least hoping that all the fine ideals of

"democracy" embodied in U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points meant the opportunity for the lessening of imperialist control of their lands were unceremoniously booted out the door as the noble statesmen demonstrated the first and only real principle of imperialist international law: might makes right. An imperialist war had ended with the imposition of imperialist peace.

But the relation of forces between the imperialist powers that existed at the end of the war began to change rapidly, due to the same uneven development of capitalism—exacerbated all the more by its development to the stage of monopoly capitalism—that had led to the forceable redivision of the world in the first place. In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin showed that, "In the division of this 'booty' [the plunder of the colonies], an exceptionally large part goes to countries which do not always stand at the top of the list as far as rapidity of development of productive forces is concerned." In the period between the two wars the United States, Germany and Japan all expanded their accumulation of capital at a much faster rate than Britain or France, which meant that their relative economic strength, which formed the underpin-

nings of their military power, grew increasingly out of proportion to the division of plunder that had been enforced by World War 1. And as Lenin had said of the pre-World War 1 situation: "The question is: what means other than war could there be *under capitalism* of removing the disparity between the development of productive forces and the accumulation of capital on the one side, and the division of colonies and 'spheres of influence' for finance capital on the other."

Britain had defeated its rivals in World War 1 at the expense of a great weakening of its position, turning for example, from a creditor of the U.S. to a debtor. Yet it controlled a vast empire that straddled the globe from Africa to the Indian sub-continent, from the Middle East to the Far East, from which it sucked huge revenues. The U.S. on the other hand, which had been able to sit out much of World War 1 while Germany and Britain fought for dominance, emerged greatly strengthened. Its main areas of colonial domination were in South America, where it clashed repeatedly with Britain in local proxy wars. It also had important colonies in the Pacific, including the Philippines. The U.S. imperialists definitely looked

to further expansion in the Far East, where Britain still remained the dominant imperialist power. It is not surprising that the U.S. and Britain considered themselves potential military adversaries, to such a degree that the U.S. actually drew up plans for an armed invasion of Canada in the 1920s as part of overall strategic planning for war with England.

The U.S. was not the only imperialist power with designs on Britain's Far East colonies and spheres of influence. Japan's determination to expand its empire and become, in the words of Japan's Prime Minister in 1914, one of the world's "governing nations" had been only partly satisfied as a result of the first inter-imperialist war. Seizing the opportunity this war presented, Japan entered the war on the side of the Allies and, as its contribution to the war, grabbed Germany's holdings in China on the strategic Shantung Peninsula as well as the Marshall, Mariana and Caroline Islands in the Pacific. The Japanese imperialists, however, had far larger ambitions than this. They desperately needed the oil, rubber and tin of the Dutch and British colonies in the region as well as the coal and other materials to be found in China. Without this Japan could not secure for itself the capital markets and monopoly supply of raw materials necessary to compete head-on with the Western imperialists. This put them on a direct political and military collision course with both the U.S. and Britain in the Far East and in the Pacific.

At the Washington Conference held in the winter of 1920-21, attended by nine imperialist powers, the U.S. and Britain tried to put the brakes on Japan's plans of expansion. The Naval Treaty signed by four of the imperialist powers came up with the famous 5:5:3 ratio for naval strength, which at one and the same time recognized the growth of U.S. power by granting it parity with Britain, which would no longer rule the waves by itself, and tried to impose restrictions on the size of the Japanese fleet. A nine-power pact also attempted to give the force of international agreement to the U.S.-coined "Open Door Policy" on China, whereby all the imperialist powers were to enjoy open feasting rights, without any one of them being able to slice off and claim large sections of Chinese territory for their exclusive dining pleasure. According to the treaty, Japan was to relinquish its unilateral control over Shantung and Manchuria

and withdraw from the Siberian port of Vladivostok. In addition, the U.S., Britain and Japan all agreed not to turn their Pacific colonies into military strongholds.

The fact that Britain and the U.S. were able to impose such "legal" restrictions on Japan reflected the commonality of their interests in stopping Japan, as well as the realities of the balance of power at the time. But during the next decade Japan worked persistently to redress that balance and exploit the conflicting interests between the U.S. and Britain in the area. Finally it moved decisively to break out of these restrictions altogether. In September of 1931, the Japanese Imperial Army marched on and seized the Manchurian capital of Mukden and by the spring of 1932 controlled all of this rich Chinese province. In 1934 they repudiated the Washington Conference agreements. By 1937 the Japanese had tightened their grip on all of northern China and had crossed the Yangtze in their move to subjugate the south. Both the U.S. and Britain served up ineffectual protests, but their own rivalry in the region, among other factors, prevented any effective military or political moves against Japan at the time.

Europe, too, saw the unfolding of a complex picture of all-sided jockeying among WWI's victors and vanquished alike. At Versailles sharp disputes had arisen between the French and British bourgeoisies over what measures to take against Germany. France wanted to dismember it and was determined to keep it from rising again as its rival for the domination of continental Europe. The British imperialists wanted a somewhat resurgent Germany, as a counterweight to French influence on the continent. The British-U.S. view prevailed and France got no German territory east of the Rhine. In 1923 France and Belgium occupied the industrial and coal mining region of the Ruhr Valley, but the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, called to guarantee the boundaries in Western Europe set up by Versailles, forced the return of the Ruhr to Germany and a plebescite for the return of the Saar region as well. Locarno also attempted to keep a check on potential German moves to the West by decreeing the demilitarization of the Rhineland.

One of the backdrops for the Locarno Treaty was the fact that Britain was attempting to consolidate Italy as its European junior partner in an alliance

that would give it leverage against both France and Germany. Hence, it was Britain and Italy that were to guarantee the boundaries set by the treaty. Similarly, when Italy occupied and then annexed Ethiopia in 1935, Britain, in effect, winked its imperialist eye.

By this time it was becoming crystal clear, however, that while France could not have its way in fattening itself on Germany, neither would or could German capital submit to Britain's plan of limited resurgence. Deprived by defeat in the first inter-imperialist war of all its colonies and desperate to secure sources of raw materials and markets, German imperialism in 1933 installed Hitler in power and began rapid remilitarization in defiance of the prohibitions of the Versailles Treaty.

The German bourgeoisie, however, could not expand and grab new colonies and spheres of influence without coming into direct confrontation with Britain and especially France. If Germany was going to succeed in breaking out of the strangling vise of defeat in the last war, Britain and France had to be knocked down. The first step was the annexation of Austria in 1938. When this met with little opposition from Britain or resistance from the Austrian bourgeoisie, Germany moved on Czechoslovakia, which since 1935 had had a mutual defense treaty with France and the Soviet Union. This move was intended as a blow against France and a direct counter to France's efforts to build a countervailing force against Germany in Eastern Europe. It also brought other appetizing rewards to the German imperialists, including three of Europe's most modern arms manufacturing operations, the giant Skoda Works among them. Since it was an area of French influence that was under attack, the British were not particularly upset or inclined to support French intervention to prevent the German thrust. And neither France nor Britain desired a Soviet move to the west, so the Czech government was instructed by both to reject the Soviet offer of help.

But there was more behind the British stand on Czechoslovakia than its rivalry with France, since it was apparent to the dominant section of the British ruling class that Germany posed a dangerous threat to its empire. The British strategy for dealing with Germany was put into effect at Munich in September 1938 in the form of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's "appeasement" policy.

The purpose of Chamberlain's agreement at Munich to give Czechoslovakia to Germany was, in fact, to push the Germans to the east and into confrontation with the Soviet Union. One reason for this, of course, was the British imperialists' fond dream of smashing the socialist Soviet Union which Britain (along with the U.S., France and other imperialists) had tried to do after WW 1. But Britain's principal goal was to prepare better military and political ground for its own direct confrontation with Germany by hopefully weakening it in a war with the Soviets. The U.S. imperialists went along with this. After all, hadn't the U.S. itself used a similar strategy in WW 1—waiting to enter the fray until both sides were nearly exhausted and then moving in to pick up the pieces? As Chairman Avakian pointed out in his paper, there was never any question, either on the part of Britain or the U.S., of letting the German imperialists swallow the Soviet Union—they hoped the Germans would choke on it.

There is also another factor that could have well entered into the Munich agreement, another inter-imperialist rivalry on the other side of the world. In 1937 a number of the imperialist states with interests in the Far East had met in Brussels in an attempt to find a way to stop Japanese expansion. The British were clearly worried, and if they had not been more concerned with developments in Europe they would have most likely reinforced their forces in Asia, despite likely U.S. opposition to a British build-up in a region they were staking out for themselves. The hopes of relieving some of the pressure from their European interests in order to deal with the Japanese threat to their empire could have been an important consideration.

Despite their efforts at Munich, the British imperialists knew that sooner or later they would have to take on Germany. At the same time they were supposedly "giving in to Hitler" at Munich, they were taking steps to strengthen France against a German advance to the west. (Perhaps it was being caught in this squeeze play between Germany and Britain that gave the French bourgeoisie so little enthusiasm for World War 2.) As the conflict heated up, Britain signed a defense pact with Poland in March of 1939 which would allow it to use Poland against Germany from the east if necessary. On the other hand, if Germany crossed Poland on its way to invade the Soviet Union, without moving to the

west first, that pact would no doubt have been overlooked with as much ease as the French-Czech pact had been.

The USSR, quite rightly, was determined not to be used as the rock against which the other imperialists hoped Germany would crash. In August 1939, the USSR and Germany signed a mutual non-aggression pact. In this context, when Germany invaded Poland in September, Britain chose to consider it a provocation. Germany acted equally aggrieved, claiming that it was the British who provoked them by trying to use Poland to encircle Germany. Either way, who fired the first shot is irrelevant. If one hadn't, the other would have.

The fact is that Germany and its allies were not the main instigators of the war in Europe or anywhere else—all the imperialists were instigating it. The fact that Britain already controlled a vast colonial empire and Germany had, at the moment, no colonies did not make the necessity for redivision of the world any less imperative for Britain than it did for Germany. Nor was the fact that the U.S. managed to stay out of the fighting for the next two years a sign of disinterest on the part of the U.S. imperialists, who considered themselves in a good position to profit by the weakening of their enemies and "allies" alike. The worldwide imperialist economic crisis that broke into the open in 1929 threw into stark relief the life and death necessity of *all* the imperialist powers to drive for a new redivision in order to expand their plunder, and wipe out competition and obstacles to their hegemony. Britain with its vast empire was no more immune to the economic crisis than was Germany, Japan or the U.S.

Before the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact," as the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty was known, the Soviet and Comintern leadership had portrayed Germany not as simply the main danger to the USSR (which it was) but as the main danger to "peace" and to the peoples of the world. The criticisms hurled by the Comintern at the maneuvers of the British/U.S. bloc which were concentrated at Munich were aimed not at exposing both blocs of imperialists for their political, diplomatic and military war preparations, but in essence at exposing the Allies for not being willing enough to go to war with Germany.

Now after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, when the war actually did break out, it was denounced by the Comintern

as an inter-imperialist war in which the workers of the world had no interest. Following this line, the CPs of Denmark and France denounced the resistance movement against German occupation of these countries in the name of "the struggle for peace." But clearly the nature of the inter-imperialist conflict was no different during this period between the German-Soviet pact and the German invasion of the USSR (that is, between 1939-1941) than before or after. This line was not adopted because it was based on a Leninist analysis of the conflict, but simply because it was, at the moment, in accord with the interests of the Soviet Union.

Germany's blitzkrieg invasion of Poland in the fall of 1939 was followed by six months of what became known as the *sitzkrieg*, with little military action in Europe. Then in April 1940 both Britain and Germany moved to consolidate positions in the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea, each reaching for positions to threaten the other. The Germans succeeded first, taking over Norway and Denmark. In June, Germany moved to knock out Belgium and France. German troops quickly breached French defenses and swept through the country all the way to the English Channel. The bulk of the British army escaped by boat from Dunkirk, leaving behind most of the soldiers of their French ally, who were stranded on the beach and taken prisoner by the Germans. As the French government collapsed, Britain demanded that France turn over its navy to Britain. The French bourgeoisie decided to keep their navy and surrender to Germany instead. By the end of July the first phase of the war in Europe was over.

The picture of the German army standing on the beaches of France and looking across the Channel to the shores of Great Britain reveals much about the real nature of this war. The fact is that the German imperialists never had any real plans for the military occupation of the British Isles. Some were worked up but never seriously pursued. The reason was not lack of foresight, but because the main purpose of the German advance through Europe and their subsequent effort to bring Britain to its knees through the air war over the Channel was precisely in order to subjugate British and French capital and gobble up their spheres of influence and colonies. Certainly, had Germany been

ultimately successful there would have been annexations of sections of the territory of the European countries, but this was not the main goal.

The course of the war in the next few months underscores this fact. After a three-month effort to win the Battle of Britain, as the war over the Channel was called, Germany turned to destroying British lines of communications to its colonies by closing the sea lanes in the Atlantic and to a direct assault on the British colonial empire in North Africa and the Middle East.

But Germany recognized that seizing the British colonial empire could not be accomplished without obtaining overwhelming political and military superiority over Britain, a feat that could be accomplished in more ways than the occupation of the British Isles. As far as the German imperialists were concerned, the key to forcing Britain to its knees was the defeat of the Soviet Union. As Hitler himself stated in July, 1940, "Russia is the factor by which England sets greatest store. If Russia is beaten, England's best hope is gone. Germany is master of Europe and the Balkans. . . . Decision: As a result of this argument, Russia must be dealt with, Spring 1941."⁶ Of course Germany was not just counting on defeating Britain psychologically. The plunder of the USSR's industry, agriculture and abundant mineral resources, such as its southern oil fields, was essential in order to prepare Germany for further battle.

In his essay *Socialism and War* written in 1915, Lenin quotes Clausewitz' famous aphorism that "'war is the continuation of politics by other' (i.e. violent) means.'" He says that "Marxists have always rightly regarded this thesis as the theoretical basis of views concerning the significance of every given war. It was precisely from this viewpoint that Marx and Engels always regarded different wars."⁷ Viewed from this perspective, there is no other way to see the beginnings of the Second World War than as a continuation of imperialist politics. The history of the period between the first two world wars is above all the history of preparation for war, of complex and increasingly desperate maneuvers through which the various imperialist powers strove to ensure that the war would be fought on the basis most favorable to them—and above all, objectively and increasingly consciously throughout the 1930s, to form the most powerful blocs with which to wage and

decide the next war.

The question is, shouldn't the whole war be viewed this way? How can it be claimed that the cause of this war—the conflict between two imperialist camps out to redivide the world—no longer determined the nature of this war after the invasion of the Soviet Union? How can it be claimed that this invasion, like some magic wand, so transformed the character of the war that it was now correct for the proletariat and the masses of people of Europe and the U.S. to unite with their own bourgeoisies, and for the oppressed peoples of the British and French and U.S. colonies to unite with their colonial slavemasters in order to fight a war against the aggression of the "Axis" powers? The fact is, as Comrade Avakian points out, the war remained in its main aspect inter-imperialist.

Here we should elaborate a bit on the point that the line openly put forward by Stalin and the Comintern after the invasion of the USSR was *not* that the principal aspect of the war was now the defense of the Soviet Union, although that has been the explanation put forward by ourselves and others trying to put the best face on it, as Comrade Avakian comments. Instead the Comintern's line was that it was a general anti-fascist war.

In a famous "Radio Address" of July 2, 1941, Stalin declared, "In this war of liberation we shall not be alone. In this great war we shall have true allies in the peoples of Europe and America, including the German people who are enslaved by the Hitlerite misrulers. Our war for the freedom of our Motherland will merge with the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independence, for democratic liberties. It will be a united front of the peoples who stand for freedom and against enslavement and threats of enslavement by Hitler's fascist armies."⁸ A few months later in a speech given on the 24th Anniversary of the October Revolution, he made it clear that he was not speaking simply of a united front of all those faced with the immediate task of fighting the German bourgeoisie, in Germany and the countries occupied by it, but rather making a clear (and utterly false) distinction between the two imperialist camps: "Actually, the Hitlerites are the sworn enemies of socialism, arrogant reactionaries and Black Hundreds, who have robbed the working class and the peoples of Europe of the most elementary democratic liberties. In order to

cover up their reactionary, Black-Hundred nature, the Hitlerites denounce the internal regime of Britain and America as a plutocratic regime [rule by the rich]. But in Britain and the United States there are elementary democratic liberties, there are trade unions of workers and other employees, there are workers' parties, there are parliaments; whereas in Germany, under the Hitler regime, all these institutions have been destroyed."⁹

Were there any fundamental differences between Roosevelt, Churchill and Hitler or the regimes they headed and the ruling class they represented? True, in the U.S. and Britain, the bourgeoisie was still able to disguise its rule with the facade of bourgeois democracy, while in Germany they had been forced to resort to open fascist terror. But all three represented the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the working class and the masses of people; only the form of this dictatorship was different. All three represented imperialist countries. Churchill, no less than Hitler, had been among the most vociferous "sworn enemies of socialism," having been the main promoter of the imperialist invasion of the USSR in 1919. Had he changed and become a friend of socialism? Had the British bourgeoisie, which under Chamberlain egged on Germany to attack the USSR, changed its nature under Churchill? Had the U.S., which also took part in the invasion of the USSR and the subsequent imperialist blockade and which lauded Britain's Munich policy?

Of course, these imperialists' objective role in relation to the USSR had changed. They were unable to directly attack it or work for its defeat by others. Now they even had a stake in the USSR's victory over Germany, in a very limited and temporary way. They had become allies. But their underlying imperialist nature and aims in this war and the nature of the main objective interests in conflict from one end of the globe to the other had not changed.

Stalin went so far as to imply that in the whole period before the outbreak of the war, the U.S.-British bloc of imperialists had been real peace lovers. "It is a fact that the aggressor nations in the present war had an *army of invasion* ready even before the war broke out, whereas the peaceful nations did not even have a fully satisfactory *covering army* for mobilization. Unpleasant facts such as the Pearl Harbor 'incident,' the

loss of the Philippines and other islands in the Pacific, the loss of Hong Kong and Singapore, when Japan, as an aggressor nation, proved to be better prepared for war than Great Britain and the United States who pursued a peace policy, cannot be regarded as accidents.”¹⁰ [Stalin's italics] What is really a fact here is that this is a fundamental departure from Marxism-Leninism on the nature of the state and imperialism and represents in fact the subordination of Marxism to nationalism in the form of the defense of the Soviet Union.

Eventually the Comintern itself was to be sacrificed at the altar of the Soviet/Anglo-American alliance. It was dissolved in the spring of 1943. In response to a question about this submitted by a Reuters' reporter, Stalin gave four reasons, among them the argument that “it facilitates the work of patriots of all countries for uniting all freedom-loving peoples into a single international camp for the fight against the menace of the world domination by Hitlerism, thus clearing the way to the future organization of a companionship of nations based upon their equality.”¹¹ It is hard to see how the oppressed, colonial and semi-colonial nations of the world, for example, could live in “companionship” with their colonial slave-masters—a companionship that the Comintern had been specifically aimed at doing away with through promoting international revolution. The Comintern resolution itself put more emphasis on the increasing “complications of (the communist movement's) problems in separate countries,” arguing that the Comintern had “even become a drag on the further strengthening of the national working-class parties.”¹²

None of this criticism of the positions of Stalin and the Comintern leaders denies the fact that the German imperialist invasion of the Soviet Union was an extremely important aspect of the Second World War. As we have said before, unlike WW 1, this time the workers of the world did have a country, the USSR, and the imperialists of the whole world were maneuvering to crush it. But as important as this aspect of the war was—and as crucial to the international proletariat—still the contradiction between German imperialism and the Soviet Union was a secondary contradiction so far as the overall nature of the war was concerned, in the sense that the inter-imperialist contradiction more

determined the course of the contradiction between German imperialism and the socialist USSR than the other way around, although these two aspects clearly influenced each other.

The same thing was true of the national liberation struggles in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which as Comrade Avakian pointed out in his article, played a significantly greater role and had much more importance in World War 2 than in World War 1, reflecting both imperialist expansion and the advances of the proletarian revolution.

To ignore the effects of the inter-imperialist war in China would have meant defeat for the revolution. For instance, Chiang Kai-shek's ties to U.S. imperialism became a favorable condition for the revolutionary forces, who could not fail to take advantage of it in the war against the main enemy, Japanese imperialism. But to subordinate China's revolutionary war to the cause of U.S./British alliance against Japan in the name of the allegedly progressive nature of the war as a whole would also have been disastrous. Yet this latter is the course that was recommended by the Comintern and its strongest voice within the CPC, Wang Ming. Wang and the Comintern argued that for the sake of strengthening the war against Japan, and by implication to prevent the possibility of a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party should subordinate itself to and put its military forces under the control of the reactionary Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek, who devoted most of his efforts to trying to crush the Communist Party and little to fighting the Japanese invasion. At the 1935 Comintern Seventh Congress (and within the CPC itself), Wang Ming put forward the slogan “for a government of national defense,” by which he meant dissolving the Communist Party's Red Army into the KMT Army and its political power in the liberated areas into the KMT government.

Summing up Wang Ming's rightist line (Wang Ming had also earlier been a champion of an equally incorrect ultra-“left” dogmatism), Mao later wrote,

“During the War of Resistance [against Japan], our Party combatted ideas similar to those of the capitulationists, that is, such ideas as making concessions to the Kuomintang's anti-popular policies, having more confidence in the Kuomintang than in the masses,

not daring to arouse and give full rein to mass struggles, not daring to expand the Liberated Areas and the people's armies in the Japanese-occupied areas, and handing over the leadership in the War of Resistance to the Kuomintang. Our Party waged a resolute struggle against such impotent and degenerate ideas, which run counter to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, resolutely carried out its political line of ‘developing the progressive forces, winning over the middle forces and isolating the die-hard forces’ and resolutely expanded the Liberated Areas and the People's Liberation Army. This ensured not only that our Party was able to defeat Japanese imperialism in the period of its aggression, but also that, in the period after the Japanese surrender when Chiang Kai-shek launched his counter-revolutionary war, our Party was able to switch smoothly and without loss to the course of opposing Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary war with a people's revolutionary war and to win great victories in a short time. All Party comrades must keep these lessons of history firmly in mind.”¹³

Mao doesn't say so, but it's clear that to a significant degree, at least, Wang Ming's line was also supported by Stalin.

One of the principal arguments made by ourselves and others as to why the character of the war changed after the invasion of the Soviet Union is that from that point on, the overwhelming bulk of the fighting against the German imperialist forces was done by the Soviet Union. This military history is a fact. In November of 1942, of Germany's 256 divisions, 179 were on the Russian front. The Red Army faced a combined German force of over 3 million men. Overall the Soviet Union suffered 20 million casualties in the war, including 8 million soldiers. The combined British, French and U.S. losses in the European and North African theatres were less than in the previous world war.¹⁴ The Soviet Union was responsible for the defeat of Germany. But again, as Comrade Avakian argues, this does not mean that the overriding interests being fought out in the war changed, since the way that the U.S. and British allies worked to defeat Germany was through the Red Army, to put it quite bluntly.

While they relied on the Soviet Union to defeat the German army on the Eastern front, the U.S. and British im-

perialists were very much active in the war, fighting principally to protect and expand their respective colonial and neo-colonial empires. In 1940 the British had struck out at the Italians and rolled back their initial successes in North Africa. But when the Germans entered the fighting in Africa, the British were pushed back again. In May of 1942 the German General Rommel launched a rapid tank assault across North Africa towards Egypt. He came within 60 miles of Alexandria, but was finally stopped by a British force at the first battle of El Alamein in June. By October the British were able to break out of El Alamein and launch a drive that forced the bulk of the remaining German and Italian forces in Africa to withdraw into Tunis, where they were later defeated and captured. In the meantime, U.S. forces landed in North Africa in November of 1942, where they did little until the joint U.S.-British invasion of Italy in July 1943—except clear French North Africa of the Vichy government and troops, only to turn around and appoint many of these “collaborationists” as the new colonial administration for the area.

But if the U.S. was not particularly active in North Africa, and constantly delayed plans for an invasion of Europe to open a “second front,” it was waging bitter warfare against Japan in the Pacific.

Although it was part of the so-called anti-Comintern pact with Germany and Italy signed in 1936, Japan was guided by its own imperialist interests, which directed it to the south and west and the rich prizes of the British, Dutch and U.S. colonies, not the Soviet Union. Early on Japan had made a few forays against the Soviet forces in Mongolia, where they were thrown back. Japan did not attack Russia and the Soviet-Japanese non-aggression pact was formally in place until the USSR declared war on Japan after the defeat of Germany.

Japan’s strategy was to knock out U.S. naval power and quickly consolidate an impregnable position in the Pacific. The massive destruction it wreaked on the U.S. fleet in the “surprise attack” on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 seemed like it might have accomplished this goal. Operating from six aircraft carriers, the Japanese sent in 360 aircraft. They lost only 29. They sank four U.S. battleships and left four more severely damaged. Ten other warships were destroyed; 349 U.S. planes were destroyed or damaged and 3,581 U.S.

military personnel were killed. The whole thing took only two hours.

But just who was surprised at Pearl Harbor is a more complicated matter. By “coincidence” the entire anchor of the U.S. fleet, its four aircraft carriers, just happened to be out of port at the time of the attack. The remaining ships were relatively obsolete and the men, of course, expendable. There is significant evidence that the U.S. imperialists not only knew in advance that the attack was coming, but welcomed it as a way to arouse a distinctly unwilling population in the U.S. into support of their imperialist war efforts.¹¹ To cite just a few examples, the Japanese codes had been broken well before Pearl Harbor, and their messages indicating the attack had been intercepted by U.S. personnel, who in turn relayed them to military brass, who just happened to be out, busy or overlooked them.

Roosevelt and Churchill (who was jubilant that the U.S. had finally entered the fighting) met right after Pearl Harbor and agreed that the defeat of Germany was their first aim. But the U.S. imperialists made no effort or plans to do this directly, and in reality made the defeat of their Japanese rivals (and gobbling up the British Far East and Pacific empire) their first priority. During the first half of 1942 twice as many supplies went to the Pacific as to the European theater. (Even the U.S. “lend-lease” aid to the USSR, which became a U.S. ally when Germany declared war on the U.S. after Pearl Harbor, amounted to only about 4% of total Soviet war materiel.) When Roosevelt met Churchill in New Foundland in late December, 1941, the U.S. refused to even discuss the Far East with him, and even went so far as to label the Middle East a “liability from which the British should withdraw.”¹² Although the British hadn’t been doing so badly there, the U.S. would be pleased as punch to step into the vacancy caused by a British withdrawal.

The imperialist war in the Pacific was a battle of navies and air forces, and not of massed troops as was the land war in Europe. While Japan had the vast bulk of its forces stationed in China, well poised to control the land mass of Asia, its naval fleet in the Pacific seemed at first to have overwhelming superiority at the beginning of 1942. By March they had seized both of the main Far East outposts of U.S. and British imperialism, the Philippines and Singapore. The

British also lost Hong Kong.

By the spring, however, the U.S. naval forces managed to deliver Japan its first setback, blocking its advance towards Australia at the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 8. The next Japanese defeat, this time a major one, came only a month later near the Midway Islands. Japan had marshalled a huge fleet to make a thrust and establish a position half way to Hawaii. But the U.S. was able to inflict massive destruction on the Japanese fleet. What began to tell was the tremendously superior productive capacity of the U.S. Its industry was able to crank out a stream of fighting ships, transports and aircraft at a rate that more than compensated for the initial losses, and at a much more rapid rate than Japan could. Still, it was a war, not a production match, and the next two years saw a series of bitter and bloody slugging matches over island after island in the Pacific, until the Japanese navy was virtually destroyed in 1944. By the beginning of 1945 Japan was defeated, for all intents and purposes. It had no fuel or food reserves left and the U.S. was bombing it almost at will. Despite the fact that the Japanese imperialists still had much of their army intact in China, having lost the sea and air war to the U.S. they could not hold out.

But the anti-Japanese war in China did play a significant role in the overall war by insuring that large numbers of Japanese troops could not be freed up to defend the Pacific islands against U.S. attack. The Kuomintang forces of Chiang Kai-shek received huge quantities of U.S. aid, but it was the Red Army that really waged the war against Japan, while Chiang’s forces did little but attack the Red Army, collaborate with the Japanese and generally sit on the sidelines and wait for the opportunity to smash the liberation forces. The KMT government had not even declared war on Japan until after Pearl Harbor, ten years after the Japanese invasion of China began in Manchuria. But although the U.S. employed a similar strategy in the land war in Asia as they did in Europe—that of relying on the communist forces to defeat their principal imperialist enemy in the region, hoping that in the process the Red Army would be fatally weakened and unable to withstand the KMT attack after the defeat of Japan—the U.S. imperialists also demonstrated that their principal concern was not the immediate defeat of

the communists, but the Japanese. They did support the united front forced on Chiang in 1936 and even put some real pressure on Chiang to fight the Japanese in 1944 when a Japanese offensive sweep to the south seemed a threat to U.S. airbases in South China from which bombing raids were launched against Japanese supply lines.

U.S. air and naval power was decisive for the defeat of Japan in the war for imperialist hegemony in the Far East and the Pacific. If Germany had not been defeated in Europe, perhaps the picture would have been quite different. But by 1943 the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk had marked the beginning of the end for the German imperialists. In July 1943 the Soviet army began a counter-offensive which moved forward for a year, until Berlin itself fell to the Red Army. It is in this final phase of the war that its overall imperialist nature stands out most clearly.

In June 1944, as the Soviet armies were rolling towards Berlin, and in fact exactly because they were rolling towards Berlin, the U.S. and Britain decided that the time had come to throw everything they could into the war against Germany. With the belated opening of the second front which the Soviet Union had been demanding for two years, the Allies sent their armies racing from the Normandy beachhead across France and into Germany. The U.S. and Britain did not play a decisive role in the defeat of Germany in Europe, but they were determined to have the decisive say in the final outcome of the war; the division of the spoils. For these imperialist allies it had never been a question of merely beating back Germany, Italy and Japan and restoring the status quo ante bellum. What they were out for was a new redivision of the world among imperialists and the subjugation of the losers to the victors.

This was the principal outcome of the war. The vanquished and other victor imperialists were subordinated to U.S. imperialism. The U.S. had fought Japan and Germany for, among other things, the British empire—and the U.S., whose contention with Britain had mainly been carried out in the form of allying with Britain, had won. In the Pacific and Far East, the defeat of Japan and the virtual disappearance of Britain from much of the area resulted in the U.S. claiming dominance there as well. Japan itself was brought under the influence of the

U.S. In Southeast Asia, the British seized the southern part of Indochina at the end of the war and held it until a reorganized France could send in its troops in an effort to re-establish its colonial rule, an ultimately unsuccessful attempt. Here too the U.S. eventually stepped in and took over from the former colonial masters. In the Middle East and Africa, the British and French were, at least for a time, able to restore their overlordship, but their influence in many of these countries too soon passed to the U.S. imperialists, although not without a series of sharp struggles, most notably the 1956 Suez crisis.

Germany, Italy and Japan had been unsuccessful in forcing a redivision of the world in their interests, but a redivision did take place that reflected the actual balance of forces in the imperialist world, in which the U.S. now predominated.

The imperialist victors were by no means completely successful in their ambitions, however. The defense of the Soviet Union and the newly established Peoples Democracies of Eastern Europe meant that they were deprived of a vast region of territory and population. In Asia there was the victory of the Communist-led liberation war against Japan and the success of the Chinese revolution in 1949 which ripped a quarter of humanity from the bloody claws of the imperialist powers, as well as the liberation of part of Korea. Thus there were important advances for the proletarian revolution through this conjuncture.

But couldn't there have been greater advances, both actual victories in this period and the basis for still further victories? Instead, as it turned out, the line carried out by the Comintern in this conjuncture constituted a part of the basis for the proletarian revolution's later defeats.

In an effort to defend the collaboration of the Communist Parties with their own bourgeoisies which was fostered by the incorrect line of the Comintern and Soviet leaders on the nature of the war, it has been argued that this was necessary to defend the Soviet Union and limit the ambitions of the U.S./British imperialists. But this directly contradicts the reality that it was in fact the Communists and the struggle of the masses in the Allied imperialist countries, that they supposedly led, which was the most limited by this line. This collaboration contributed little or nothing to the defense

of the USSR. In what way did the failure of the Communist Parties of Britain, France, and the U.S. (as well as, for instance, Italy) to struggle to carry out revolutionary work directed at making it possible to turn the inter-imperialist war into civil war aid the Soviet Union? Can someone seriously argue that the reason the U.S. and Britain made and kept their wartime alliance with the USSR was because of the patriotic activities of the CPs in those countries? Most importantly, the line that fostered this collaboration in the name of defending the USSR greatly limited the advances of the world-wide proletarian revolution. In the past, while not challenging the Comintern's line on the nature of the war, we argued that had the Communist Parties of France, Italy, Greece, etc. carried out more revolutionary policies, then the outcome of the war would have been different. But it is ridiculous to argue "what if they had done the right thing even though their line was wrong," and it is even more ridiculous not to see the link between the post-war capitulation of those parties and their wartime collaboration.

World War 2 was not the same as WW 1, in which the contradiction between socialism and imperialism played a far smaller role and the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations even less. Our argument is not that all world wars are the same, without regard to concrete conditions and development. It is certainly possible to conceive of world wars of a different character. For instance, if capitalism had not been restored in the USSR after Khrushchev's coup in 1956 and the socialist camp had instead continued to exist, it is possible that a world war would have broken out that would have been principally between the U.S. bloc and the socialist camp, with inter-imperialist contradictions playing an important but secondary role. The point is that the Comintern's wrong analysis of the particular character of WW 2 was the basis for its completely wrong analysis of the whole historic conjuncture taking place at the time. World war represents, as Comrade Avakian has written, "the extreme concentration of the contradiction of the imperialist system and the crisis that preceded it and led up to the war. Lenin was dealing precisely with a crisis occasioned by the first world war when he drew the general conclusion that 'it is the great significance of all crises that they make

manifest what has been hidden; they cast aside all that is relative, superficial, and trivial; they sweep away the political litter and reveal the real mainsprings of the *class struggle*.¹¹⁷

What is most tragic about the Second World War is that what was hidden remained hidden—at least to those who took the line it was a just war and not principally an inter-imperialist conflict—and the great crisis of the im-

perialist system that resulted in and was manifested by WW 2 was not taken by the Comintern as an opportunity for an assault on the imperialists and other reactionaries in every country possible, but only as a time to make an absolute of defending what had been won in the last historical conjuncture, a “tough time” through which to hurry as quickly as possible with the minimum of risk-taking. This line taken in the name of

the “defense of the USSR” surely had a lot to do with setting the stage for the subsequent triumph of the bourgeoisie within the Soviet Party, the loss of the Soviet Union to the proletariat, and the complete capitulation of the majority of the world’s Communist Parties. The legacy of that line is part of the litter to be swept away so that the next time the opportunity will not be wasted.

1. V.I. Lenin, “Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 55.
2. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
5. Taylor, A.J.P., *The Second World War*, Berkeley Windhouer, 1978, p. 29.
6. *Random House Pictorial History of WW 2*, by C.L. Sulzberger, distributed by Crown Publishers, Inc., p. 101.
7. V.I. Lenin, “Socialism and War,” *Lenin on War and Peace*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970, p. 11.
8. Joseph Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, New Book Centre, Calcutta, p. 13.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
12. “Resolution of the ECCI Presidium Recommending the Dissolution of the Communist International” in Jane Degras ed., *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, p. 477.

13. Mao Tsetung, “The Present Situation and Our Tasks,” *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, FLP, Peking 1967, p. 171.
14. The total military casualties for the three countries were as follows:

WWI	
U.S.	109,740
Britain	839,904
France	1,654,550

	2,704,194
WWII	
U.S.	292,131
Britain	244,723
France	210,671

	747,525

Source: *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 29, pp. 358-60 and p. 530.

15. *Revolutionary Worker*, No. 42 (Feb. 22, 1980), and Taylor, p. 121.
16. Taylor, p. 105.
17. Bob Avakian, “The Prospects for Revolution and the Urgent Tasks Ahead,” *Revolution*, Vol. 4, No. 10-11, p. 9.



Recent Publications By Bob Avakian

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Bob Avakian, in front of the Wall of the
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You Can't Beat While Raising

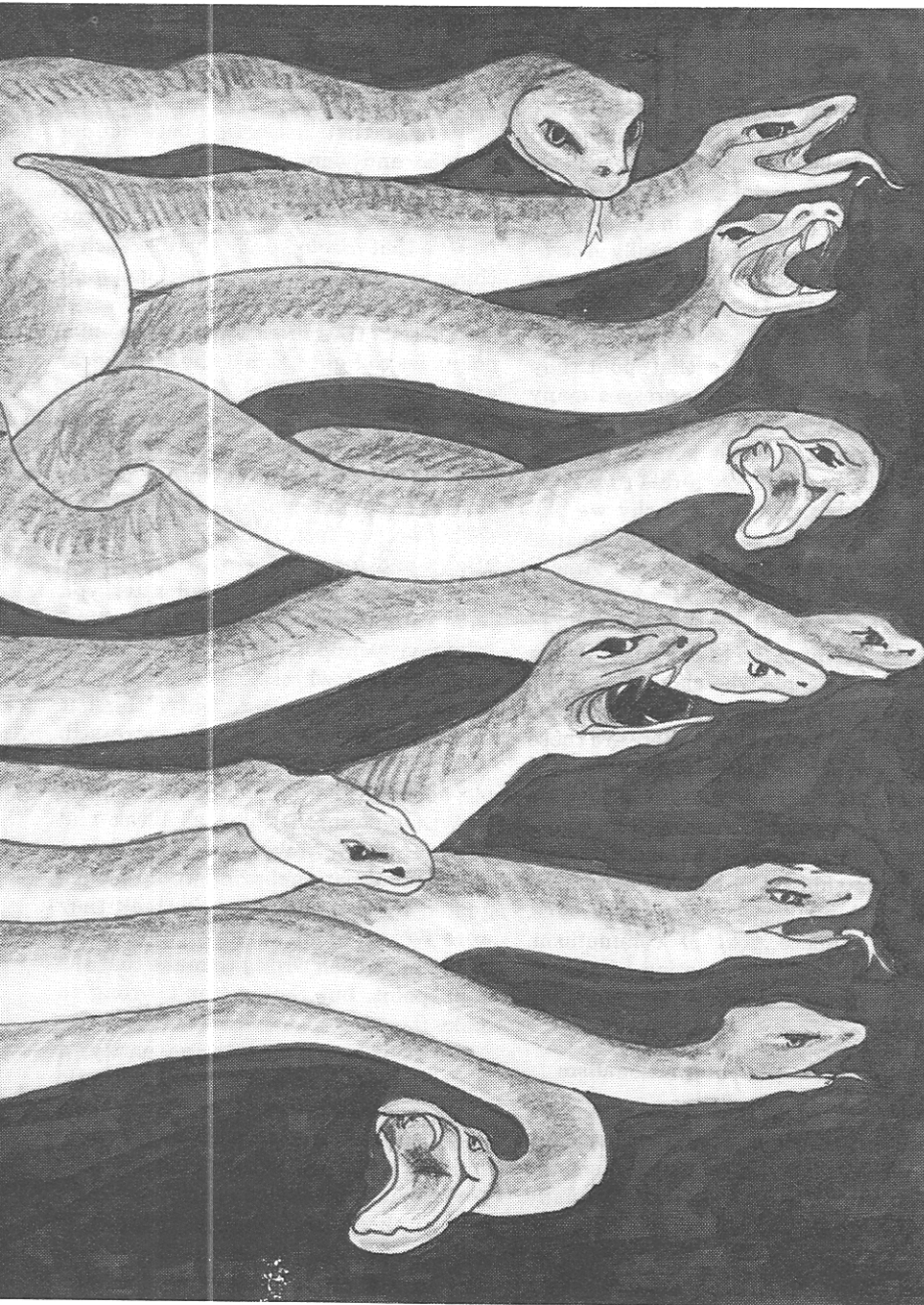
Can revolution in the U.S. today come wrapped in the American flag? Can we "claim it as our own"? Should a revolutionary party be motivated by a desire to "save America . . . from her rulers and for her people"? Can a class-conscious revolutionary in the U.S. "have pride in the true history of this country"? These are questions which have posed themselves again and again in the development of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. and are doing so today. In fact, similar questions of national pride and patriotism have historically been very important in the advances—and setbacks—of the international communist movement.

Earl Browder, the naked revisionist former leader of the Communist Party, USA gave his infamous answer to these questions in the mid-1930s when he coined the phrase "Communism is 20th Century Americanism" and said that the CPUSA was carrying on the revolutionary tradition of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and the like. Unfortunately, when all was said and done, Earl Browder was right about the CPUSA (though most certainly wrong about genuine communism) because the CP had completely taken up the program and outlook of bourgeois democracy. Such a stand may be American and definitely is bourgeois, but for a communist it is a thoroughly counter-revolutionary one, especially here in the imperialist USA in this, the era of *proletarian* revolution.

It would be nice to pretend that revisionism started and stopped with Earl Browder. But this "easy target" method of struggle leaves too much dirt in the old CP unwashed and, even more importantly, leaves untouched many of the roots of revisionism and decay that have damaged all and destroyed some of the international communist movement



The Enemy His Flag



over the past 50 years.

Today the call to revolutionaries in the imperialist countries to "pick up the national flag" is heard from such diverse and mutually cutthroat revisionist quarters as the Chinese revisionists who overthrew Mao's line and from Enver Hoxha of Albania who is trying to appear most "revolutionary" in contrast. Even the Soviet-style revisionist parties inside the Western bloc countries are loyal to this "true patriots" creed—some even going so far as to say that, if they were in power they would favor remaining in the Western war bloc NATO for the "defense of the country". In less crude forms, this nationalism has become accepted fare even in the proletarian revolutionary ranks. Spontaneously, too, this line comes up among progressive-minded people who are drawn to the view, for example, that opposing the draft should be advertised as the "real patriotism." Some so-called "communists" say the same thing, and this amounts to a set-up to rally around the real flag wavers—the imperialist ruling class. Over the last 50 years bourgeois democracy, patriotism and communism have become so intermingled and mixed into one hulk, that it is necessary to begin summing up something deeply—and to do so quickly—in the face of the looming pitfalls and revolutionary opportunities posed by deepening crisis and war moves.

Dimitroff

Specifically it is necessary to look at the line of the Comintern (Communist International) which was systematically laid out by its General Secretary Georgi Dimitroff in its 7th World Congress in 1935. In his major address laying out the strategy of "United Front Against Fascism," Dimitroff made the following

statement: "We Communists are the *irreconcilable opponents, on principle*, of bourgeois nationalism of every variety. But we are not supporters of national nihilism, and should never act as such. The task of educating the workers and all toilers in the spirit of proletarian internationalism is one of the fundamental tasks of every Communist Party. But whoever thinks that this permits him, or even compels him, to sneer at the national sentiments of the broad toiling masses is far from genuine Bolshevism, and has understood nothing of the teaching of Lenin and Stalin on the national question." (New Century Publications, 1945, p. 78)

By "national nihilism" Dimitroff meant to imply some sort of view based on the idea of wrecking, destroying or denying the whole history of development of the nation; of course, since this is a bit difficult, to say the least, for a basic materialist (such a history exists, no matter what you say), this straw man phrase "national nihilism" was meant to characterize and attack any view that did not base itself, ideologically and politically, on patriotic sentiments.

In a recent talk the Chairman of our Party's Central Committee, Bob Avakian, spoke directly against this view: "Basically my point is that there is no such thing as so-called 'national nihilism'; a communist does not talk about it. This concept was introduced in the most significant way during the whole Dimitroff United Front Against Fascism line; it's a fairly significant line in his report and basically it was a way of greasing the skids for the slide into 'defend the fatherland' during World War 2. . . . I don't believe that this 'national nihilism' was a deviation that had to be combatted in the sense that it was raised at that time and I think that something should be said about it because I think this is an important part of combatting national chauvinism. I think we have correctly used the words 'patriotism' and 'national chauvinism' interchangeably when talking about this country, and I think it's correct to continue to do that. This theory for combatting national nihilism to me is a theory for social chauvinism.

"This came up around the Vietnam war, the idea that the reason we want to put a stop to the U.S. around the world is because we are ashamed about what a handful of phony patriots are doing in our name, the way they are misusing the

American flag. No. They are *properly* using the American flag and they can have it. That is *not* why we oppose them being in Iran, for 'disgracing the American nation.'

"I think this is going to be an important question. We might be able to unite with people who have these sentiments—in fact we should try to do so. But we should never blur over the two different lines here. In other words if somebody wants to get up and say, 'Let's stand with the Iranian revolution,' and they denounce these handful of imperialists (or whatever they might call them) dragging the American nation in the mud. Okay. But a friendly warning: we're not going to unite with that ideologically and we are going to struggle broadly against that kind of line. That's not why we oppose what the U.S. imperialists are doing in Iran. Let's not let chauvinism in through the back door. The reason we oppose U.S. imperialism is not because it's 'our own' bourgeoisie, in the sense of there being something especially *American* about it—or us. The reason we especially oppose the U.S. bourgeoisie is because this is *where* we are and the U.S. bourgeoisie is the one that politically rules over us and that oppresses many other nations in the world and tries to get their working class here to identify with that, and we have a role to play in opposing that. And *that's* why we pay special attention to this, not because they are American and we are American."

But this same attitude of "unity and struggle" cannot be taken when it is a question of people who claim to be *communists* and who fight for this to be the leading line of revolution. Here are those who are supposed to be in the vanguard of the class struggle urging the workers to cast their eyes backward—to making a fetish out of what is ultimately a bourgeois thing, the nation, instead of pushing things forward, through stages, to the ultimate goal of communism, which means the elimination of classes on a world scale and the merging of all nations.

Nationalism and Internationalism

The results of communists burying their independent line and their ideology beneath the mantle of nationalism are disastrous. This stands out especially starkly in the imperialist countries. Even in the nations oppressed by imperialism where nationalism can play a

progressive role in the struggle, if it is adopted as the ideology of the party of the leading class, this, too, will mean that any advances in the struggle will be turned soon enough into their opposite.

Comrade Avakian also said, "I do not believe that in a fundamental sense there is for a communist such a thing as national pride. Mao Tsetung posed the question, 'Can a communist, who is an internationalist, at the same time be a patriot?' Mao correctly and explicitly said that in the *colonial* countries that 'he not only can be but must be.' I think that is a question of practical political stand. *That* is correct. For example if a person in Iran was not patriotic in the sense of stressing the unity of the Iranian nation against U.S. imperialism it would be an error—a left error. We here would certainly be making an error if we obliterated that distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations—imperialist countries and their victims. But on the other hand, for all that, I do not believe that *ideologically* there is such a thing as national pride nor national nihilism.

"There is the necessity in the colonial countries to fight against the ideological expressions of colonial domination; attitudes of inferiority can even take hold among the victims themselves. There is a sentiment within the colonized nations that they are not capable of standing on their own two feet, managing their own affairs and forging their own destinies. This is even necessary well after you have established socialism. It was certainly very important in China in the struggle over whether to capitulate to the imperialists or not, and I think it was quite correct for that to be stressed. When the revolutionaries said, for example, about the Antonioni film on China (a film that pictured China as bleak and backward) that 'any Chinese who has a modicum of national pride would be disgusted by this film' I don't think they were wrong to make that point. They would have been wrong to make that the *main* point, but they weren't wrong to make it.

"A socialist country is an entity, a state, and you can make use of patriotic sentiments of the middle classes as long as you don't make that the main thing and you don't make it the principle you are basing yourself on. Lenin wrote an article about this which I think is helpful. In Volume 28 in his article 'Report on the Attitude of the Pro-

letariat to Petty-Bourgeois Democrats,' he made the point that because of the Bolsheviks' stand of proletarian internationalism and opposing national defencism they lost large sections of the petty bourgeoisie during the period of building up to and during the October Revolution. But during the civil war that followed, when the enemy imperialists came in on the side of the reactionaries and in form a part of the struggle was that these imperialists were actually occupying part of Russia, some of the patriotic sentiments of the petty bourgeoisie swung over to the side of the Bolsheviks because they wanted these foreign imperialists out. And Lenin was very blunt and said that these people had never been socialists and never would be, so we have to figure out how to unite with them on the basis of where they are at without compromising our principles. I think that's correct, but that's not the same thing as 'opposing national nihilism.'

"In colonial countries it is correct for people to stress the struggle against the feelings of national inferiority and to build up a national pride of the people in the sense that they are not inferior as a nation. But that always has to be done—and here it gets to the basic point—not on the basis of nationalism but *internationalism*; not on the basis that the Chinese nation, or any nation, is *superior* to other nations, but that it is no less, not unequal, not inferior to them. So therefore what does national pride in a fundamental sense have to do with it? I don't believe it does. I think it's a question of internationalism and what concrete practical, political expression it takes under different conditions."

Class Betrayal Under a National Banner

But nationalism became the ideological line and political programme of the Communist International for the imperialist countries in the years before World War 2. Most of the parties took up this line with a revisionist, capitulationist gusto—and the results were disastrous. For example, the French party in the '30s proudly wore the mantle of nationalism with the slogan "Long live free, strong and happy France, faithful to its mission of progress, liberty and peace." Here is a so-called communist party sounding for all the world like Voltaire or Rousseau—ideologues of the French bourgeois revolution a century

and a half earlier. As Marx and Engels stated so clearly in the *Communist Manifesto*, Voltaire's ideal kingdom of liberty turned out to be the very real kingdom of the bourgeoisie on earth. And, to put the French CP in its proper—and historically backward—place as compared to the bourgeois Voltaire, French capitalism was no longer progressive, rising capitalism, as in Voltaire's time, but decadent imperialism—death-bound and seeking world domination, like all imperialism. This fact was not lost on France's overseas colonies. But under the guidance of this line, it was lost on the so-called communist upholders of "happy France": in his report to the 1939 Congress of the French CP, its leader mentioned French colonies only once—and then only to point out that their residents did not enjoy the rights of French citizens—as if that, not national liberation, was the goal of their struggle. In another example, in the pre-World War 2 Spanish Civil War—fought by the Spanish Republic (with the Communist Party) versus the fascist General Franco—Franco's army included many soldiers from the Spanish colony of Morocco. But the progressive forces never came out for the independence of Morocco or any other Spanish colony—an act which could have even played a significant role in disintegrating Franco's army and making victory over the fascists more possible.

These, together with Browder's statements about communism being Americanism, and his later dissolving of the Communist Party USA itself, were just some of the more blatant effects of substituting nationalism for internationalism as the basic outlook of the communist parties. The effects of this line ran far deeper than just these crass manifestations.

Communist Manifesto

The basic attitude of communists toward nationalism during the 1930s grossly departed from the stand spelled out long ago in the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels: "The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got." Clearly, if Dimitroff had been searching for the source of the so-called "error" of "national nihilism" he could have found it in

the *Manifesto*. Of course socialist countries, when established, must be defended and, beyond that, communists have recognized that national sentiments and patriotism play a progressive, even revolutionary role in the countries of the world oppressed by imperialism—where the stage of the struggle is national liberation, as one step toward the proletarian dictatorship. But even there, as the *Manifesto* also said, "In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries, they [the communists] point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independent of all nationality." It is the internationalist, not nationalist, outlook that must be brought to the fore, even when the stage of the struggle requires a program of national liberation.

Contrast the above statement from Marx and Engels with the following one from Dimitroff's report to the 7th Congress: "Proletarian internationalism not only does not contradict this struggle of the toilers of the individual countries for national, social and cultural freedom but, thanks to international proletarian solidarity and fighting unity, provides the *support* which is necessary for the victory in this struggle." (p. 81) This formulation reverses the correct—and Marxist—relation between national struggle and internationalism. Proletarian internationalism is reduced to *support* (Dimitroff's emphasis) for the national struggle (and remember Dimitroff was speaking of *all* countries here, including the imperialist ones). This reduces the proletariat to a supporter of the bourgeoisie.

Criticizing so-called "national nihilism" meant you had to criticize Marx, so the Comintern began to do so—behind only the tiniest of fig leaves. In a November 1938 article in *The Communist International*, for example, the following not-too-subtle attack on Marx appears: "For a long time the working class lived on the edge of the nation. It was more or less excluded from the national community of culture. In old German the word 'misery' was an expression for 'foreign'; and for the working class the fatherland was merely misery and foreignness. 'The proletariat has no country' was a profound and bitter conviction." (Note the *past tense* in the above paragraph, but lo!...)

"Through the class struggle the workers gradually won a place in the nation for themselves. By achieving demo-

cratic rights, by the shortening of working hours, by the right of combination and social legislation the beast of burden was transformed into a citizen. Through its parties, trade unions and other organizations the working class began to take an ever-increasing part in the life of the nation and the great national community of culture. . . . The working class began to revise its relationship with the nation." ("The Working Class and the Nation," reprinted in "Clarity," published by the N.Y. State Communist Party Education Department, No. 1, p. 9)

Here it was, the perfect marriage between nationalism and reformism—both gutting the revolutionary and internationalist heart out of Marxism. Reforms now meant that the workers had a fatherland. Marx, of course, had seen more than a few reform struggles in his day, but somehow this didn't change his opinion that the workers had no country.

More recently than Marx, and after many more of these miraculous reform struggles the Comintern article spoke of had taken place, Lenin, truly unimpressed with these "miracles," wrote the following:

"The national ideology created by that epoch [of struggles against feudalism to form nation-states] left a deep impression on the mass of the petty bourgeoisie and a section of the proletariat. This is now being utilized in a totally different and imperialist epoch by the sophists of the bourgeoisie, and by the traitors to socialism who are following in their wake, so as to split the workers, and divert them from their class aims and from the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

"The words in the *Communist Manifesto* that 'the workingmen have no country' are today truer than ever before. Only the proletariat's international struggle against the bourgeoisie can preserve what it has won, and open to the oppressed masses the road to a better future." (Lenin, "The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad," Vol. 21, p. 160)

Attacking Leninism

Leninism stands for fierce opposition to national chauvinism and, in particular, to any attempt to camouflage imperialist reaction with talk about "the nation" and "defending the fatherland" in the imperialist countries. So the Comintern, taking off from this line of opposing so-called national nihilism, took an

increasingly anti-Leninist position as well. For example, a different article in the same collection quoted above extends the Comintern's not-too-subtle polemics to oppose Leninism, too: "In connection with the first imperialist world war, masses of the workers came to abominate bourgeois nationalism and its despicable product, social patriotism. Many revolutionary workers identified the national idea with the reactionary chauvinism of the bourgeoisie, and to the social-patriotism of the Second International they opposed the complete negation of the nation. In this, however, they overlooked the fact that, although the nation is indeed ruled by the bourgeoisie, it is not identical with the bourgeoisie. The Communist International, in its manifesto on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the great socialist revolution, characterized the nation as follows:

"The nation is not the gang of fascists, reactionary financiers and industrial magnates who rob and betray the people. The nation is the many millions of workers, peasants and working people generally—the people that is devoted to its country, cherishes its liberty and defends its independence." (From "Changes in Bourgeois Nationalism," *The Communist International*, June 1939)

And their conclusion, of course, amounted to the same socialist masquerade for imperialist rule and domination that Lenin had bitterly polemicized against, "It has become the great task of the working class in *all* countries to save the nation." (From the first article, p. 9, emphasis added.) Lenin had already exposed this as the "socialist" cover for the imperialist debacle of sending worker to fight worker for "the nation." Here what is being said by the Comintern is not at all the Leninist position that it is the task of the working class in the colonized countries to lead the national liberation struggle against imperialism, while it is the task of the working class of the imperialist countries to support this struggle and generally oppose their own bourgeoisie and prepare to overthrow it guided by internationalism. Here, the communists of *all* countries were being led to become promoters and "saviors" of the nation, promoters of nationalism and thus, ultimately, tails on the bourgeois dog. In case anyone would think we are guilty here of exaggeration, then read the following passage, also from *The Communist International*

(again from "The Working Class and The Nation"), which takes Dimitroff's quote on "national nihilism" as its authority:

"In the struggle against fascist imperialism and its reactionary accomplices the working class and its Communist Party are the only consistent defenders of national independence. The modern nations were born in the process of the bourgeois revolution. The reactionary bourgeoisie is betraying the national interests together with the *whole* heritage of the bourgeois revolution. It is the working class and its Communist Party which take over the legacies of the bourgeois revolution, maintain them against the traitors and develop them to a richer, fuller life." (p. 3) So, Earl Browder was not alone, nor original in his thesis that "Communism is 20th Century Americanism," and communists are told not to be revolutionaries whose final goal is radically different from all previous revolutions—the abolition of all class distinctions worldwide. Instead they are called on to be the further "developers" of the bourgeois revolution.

National Chauvinism in World War 2

This analysis by the Comintern on nationalism went hand in hand with their analysis of the world situation and the tasks of the working class in the period leading up to World War 2. While the world had changed greatly since World War 1, including the fact that there was now a socialist state, the USSR, which was a product of and potential base area for the struggles of the international proletariat, still, the basic era of imperialism had not changed in these twenty years. But in the Comintern, including in Dimitroff's report, there were strong tendencies to depart from the basic Leninist analysis of this era and the tasks of the proletariat in it. One area this showed itself in was the Comintern's line on the nation. There was a strong tendency to believe that with the advent of fascism in several countries, the whole role of the nation, of nationalism, and of the bourgeoisie in relation to it had changed. For example, in July of 1939 the Comintern said straight out, "Today there are states . . . whose imperialism is not simply a continuation of 1914 . . ."

Dimitroff, too, in his report to the 7th Congress, put forward the slogan "fascism is war." Fascism is certainly not peace, but this was taken to mean something markedly different and more "up

to date" than Lenin's analysis that *imperialism—capitalism in its highest and final, moribund stage—meant war*. It meant that only *certain* imperialists—the fascists—were the source of war, not the imperialist system. Imperialist countries were classified into "aggressor" (i.e., fascist) and "non-aggressor" (bourgeois-democratic imperialist) states. In the first category, the fascist bourgeoisie was accused of being "destroyers of the nation" and upholders of "barbarism" (something different from capitalism). In the second "non-aggressor" camp, the bourgeoisie was (at least for a while in the 1930s) also accused of betraying the nation, but here the charge was that it was doing so by giving in, appeasing, surrendering to the fascist aggressors. In common between both these analyses was the idea that the proletariat should "oppose" the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries on the basis of being the "true defenders of the nation." Increasingly, and especially after the Soviet Union was attacked, the mask of "opposing" was thrown aside and the open line taken up of uniting with the bourgeoisie... increasingly under the bourgeois and chauvinist banner of defending the (imperialist) nation.

In Dimitroff's report, he lays the basis for this in concluding the section on national pride. He says that "opposing national nihilism," basing oneself on national sentiments, "... is unquestionably an essential preliminary condition for a successful struggle against chauvinism—this main instrument of ideological influence of the fascists upon the masses." (p. 82, Dimitroff's emphasis) In other words, the only basis to "oppose" chauvinism is with nationalism, not internationalism. Far from opposing chauvinism in the imperialist countries, this is a recipe, as Comrade Avakian has put it, for letting it in through the back door.

In a report to the 1978 Central Committee meeting of our Party, Bob Avakian hit just this sort of thinking: "The workers in this country can never make revolution by 'claiming the American flag as their own'—it is *not*—but only by learning to *hate* the American flag and all it stands for, and to take up the red flag... the proletariat cannot make its revolution as the leader of the 'nation' but against the actual leader of its nation—the bourgeoisie."

Twisted Logic

In the 1930s, reality was twisted wildly

in an attempt to squeeze it to fit this analysis. For example, in June 1939, an article in *The Communist International* said, "The bourgeoisie—once nationalist-revolutionary, then cosmopolitan, then reactionary and chauvinistic—has now become the destroyer of nations, just as capitalism has changed from a constructive to a destructive force. The bourgeoisie, which once entered upon its domination at the head of, and with the help of, the nation, now trembles lest it lose its domination through a great national movement." And then, extending this twisted logic to the level of the ludicrous, the article goes on: "It is not by chance that the German fascists are coming more and more to use such imperialist terms as 'Reich,' 'greater German Reich,' and so on, instead of the word 'nation.' ... It is the will of the fascist dictators that the Germans shall not feel themselves to be a nation but 'followers of the Fuhrer.' It is well known that the fascist bourgeoisie also fears that the tide of a genuinely national movement may sweep over it." ("Changes in Bourgeois Nationalism") Now they were out to "out-nationalist" the Nazis. They flopped.

They went totally bananas to "prove" their point: "The destruction of the community of culture extends even to the language; the barbarous, confused and savage gangster slang of the German fascist is becoming more and more incomprehensible to those who learned to speak the *German* of Luther, Lessing and Goethe. A young Austrian Socialist who was imprisoned in the custody of German fascist turnkeys wrote to a friend: 'The worst was that I could not understand a word they said. What these brutes spoke was certainly not German.'" Not content with taking up the banner of the bourgeoisie, this line recommends that communists sound like aristocratic defenders of "the King's English."

Lenin's Imperialism Rejected

In all this, there was a great departure from, one could even say burying of, Lenin's great work *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, a work that must be taken up again as a foundation for thoroughly routing the influences of nationalism that still linger in the communist movement of today. In *Imperialism* Lenin saw and analyzed all the essential decadent and reactionary tendencies of the imperialist countries, and showed why they were due to the features common to all capitalism in its highest stage—and to nothing else. He

analyzed why imperialism tends toward repression and violations of bourgeois democracy, and why it aggressively seeks world domination and redivision of the world through war. He even noted that, leading up to World War I, Germany was the openly lusty, up-and-coming imperialist which had been largely cut out from the imperialist feast, so it was the more openly aggressive. But all this didn't lead him to talk about "aggressor" and "non-aggressor" states or to take sides. Even then, England was far more "democratic" and Germany more militarist and repressive, but Lenin's position (quoting Kautsky from when he was a Marxist) was: "In a war between Germany and England the issue is not democracy, but world domination, i.e., exploitation of the world. That is not an issue on which Social-Democrats [communists] can side with the exploiters of their nation"! (Vol. 23, p. 35) As Lenin explained in the prefaces to *Imperialism*, this book proved through analysis of "the fundamental economic question" that "the war of 1914-18 was imperialist (that is, an annexationist, predatory, war of plunder) on the part of both sides..." (Vol. 22, pp. 188-89)

Lenin duly noted all the basic facts cited by the Comintern, but it didn't drive him over the edge into concocting special theories about communists continuing and developing the bourgeois-democratic revolution or being the true saviors of the capitalist nation. Lenin was clear, and it is necessary to be clear again today, that modern capitalist society is not a horror because it's something *other* than capitalism; America is not monstrous because it's practicing something other than "Americanism"; it's monstrous precisely because it *is* Americanism, it *is* imperialism. And this is capitalism in its highest stage, and, most importantly, capitalism in transition to something else. And that something else is neither barbarism, nor a new stage of bourgeois democracy, this time led by communists; it is socialism, proletarian revolution, itself a transition to communism.

Revolutionaries Should Look Forward

It is *not* the business of communists, nor anyone who wants liberation, to put their shoulder to the wheel of history and push backwards. This means that communists are internationalists, and not nationalists.

Even in the countries oppressed by

imperialism, where the stage of the struggle to be fought is national liberation, the goal of the struggle is not to try to repeat the process of the bourgeois-democratic revolution that went on in Europe, but to develop the struggle for national liberation as a step in the continuous process of a revolution whose goal is the proletarian dictatorship. In China, Mao stressed during the years of war for liberation that China's revolution was *new-democratic*, not bourgeois-democratic, that it could only be a transition to socialist revolution, and that the bourgeoisie could not lead any stage of this struggle. To accomplish this, and to develop the struggles in these countries as part of the world proletarian revolution, requires uniting with patriotic sentiments, to be sure, but most of all it requires that the ideology of the leading class be internationalism and not nationalism.

In the imperialist countries the effect of this nationalism stands out all the more sharply and immediately. Here, the bourgeoisie is not capitulationist as it often is in the oppressed nations, but has the banner of the nation firmly clutched in its hand. In these countries, the proletarian revolution will be against patriotism and for something far more lofty and earth-shaking—our part in the international revolution.

In analyzing imperialism, Lenin, too, made the sharp distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations: "What do we mean when we say that national states have become fetters, etc.? We have in mind the advanced capitalist countries, above all Germany, France, England, whose participation in the present war has been the chief factor in making it an imperialist war. In these countries, which hitherto have been in the van of mankind, particularly in 1789-1871, the process of forming national states has been consummated. In these countries the national movement is a thing of an irrevocable past, and it would be an absurd reactionary utopia to try to revive it." ("A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," Vol. 23, p. 38) And as Lenin also pointed out, the aim of socialism is not only to bring nations closer together, but to merge them.

In all countries, and especially the imperialist ones, this means, when looking at the past, stressing the radical differences between the bourgeois revolutions, such as the American revolution in 1776, and the coming proletarian

revolution. It means stressing that while such previous revolutions were necessary and progressive *at that time*, their time is past and now it is the turn of the proletariat. Washington, Jefferson and the rest cannot be spoken of as "our forefathers," for the child their revolution begat was capitalism (deformed at that time by slavery) and it could only grow and develop into the ugly monster of imperialism, which we must overthrow. This materialist view is different, indeed, from Dimitroff's call in the 7th Congress to "link up their [the working class's] present struggle with its revolutionary traditions and past." (p. 78)

National Pride or Internationalism

And what of other, related aspects of national pride, which Dimitroff raised in the 7th Congress as a necessary part of the outlook of communists. In the talk referred to above, Comrade Avakian addressed this question, as well:

"Let us take the question: have the people of the U.S. made contributions to the world in the sense of science, culture and the arts? Yes. And so have the Chinese, the Iranians or any nation you can name, and that's exactly the point. So with our outlook and our scientific understanding what is so special about the fact that it happens to be in America that this or that invention was made? What is there particularly about this or that cultural expression that we would want to uphold as 'American.' I don't think that has anything to do with it. It just happens to be the masses of people in different countries, including the petty bourgeoisie and even other classes which were previously progressive, like the bourgeoisie, made contributions to the cause of humanity. What difference does it make to us and why should we make a big deal out of it that they were from America or France or whatever? Now, if someone wants to make an argument—and the imperialists do—that the 'the people of Africa are inferior', then, yes, we have to say, 'Look, it's important that they were *African* people who did this' as a refutation of that line. But we should not say the important thing is that it was people from this or that nation in Africa or Asia or the U.S. or Canada or what have you.

"That's internationalism, and if you practice it then you're accused of national nihilism, of wanting to just wreck and destroy and deny any positive aspects to the history and contributions of

different people of your nation. It was correct, for example in China, for them to preserve those historical relics that they found. What the revolutionaries used them for was to educate people about the old society and class struggle and the role of the masses. That's why it's good for us to save these things. There are some things that are generally of historical value, historical relics. It's not that their value is monetary, but that it is historical, to educate the masses.

"I do not, however, believe in the classless theory that this is a 'classic piece of art and should be preserved.' I do not happen to believe in that and I think this can be analyzed with historical materialism: If they had an important role in history then they are important to preserve because the masses should understand history.

"Why should a communist of any particular nation make anything about the fact that this came from their nation. They should not, other than in the colonial countries to combat feelings of national inferiority, which is an ideological expression of imperialism. And even there the point should not be, 'and therefore we're such a great nation.' That is the revisionist and nationalist line of Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping about 'What a great *nation* the Chinese nation is.'

"No, we're not going to go around after taking state power in this country smashing everything ever produced by any other members of the other class or during any historic epoch previous to the one of proletarian revolution. But neither should we go around elevating these things to prove how great the American nation is. I think we should draw a *class* analysis of these things, analyzing them according to historical materialism and put that in the context of the whole development of mankind historically and educate the masses here in that. And we ought to put more attention on showing how people in Africa developed things than we should on the 'great contributions of the American nation' because we're coming from an imperialist nation, not a colonized situation."

Class Capitulation in the Face of War

Especially as the threat of world war mounts, the temptation to make communism more "acceptable" by dressing it up in the national flag mounts. But in the imperialist countries, to do so ulti-

mately means being acceptable to the imperialist bourgeoisie. It means assisting them in throwing dust in the eyes of the workers, who in such times more than ever need to have their eyes firmly fixed on the red flag, on their internationalist class interests, on the revolutionary way forward.

Leninism stands opposed to all such capitulation, no matter how refined or well-intended. In "The Junius Pamphlet", written in 1916 in reply to a pamphlet by the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg (whose alias was Junius), Lenin takes on the line of opposing imperialism by being "true defenders" of the nation. While overall applauding Luxemburg's stand against the social-chauvinists (socialists in word, national chauvinists in fact), Lenin takes on her mistakes including especially her efforts to hold onto the national banner:

"Junius, however, while brilliantly exposing the imperialist character of the present war as distinct from a national war, makes the very strange mistake of trying to drag a national programme into the present, non-national, war." (Vol. 22, p. 313)

Junius wanted to oppose Germany's part in the war on the basis of the true interests and "best traditions" of Germany. It was precisely an attempt to make internationalism more acceptable by trying to reconcile it with nationalism. Lenin raked this tailism as "a plan 'to outwit history'" and said that instead, the communists should have opposed the imperialist war of plunder with the war for socialism by the workers of all the fighting countries.

In imperialist countries the banner of the nation must be exposed, not idealized and upheld. "Defending the country" must be shown to be imperialist talk for defending their exploitation and

expansion, instead of looking for a "better", "more just" way to defend it.

"Opposing national nihilism" became a recipe for straight up national chauvinism. A case in point was Dimitroff's line in this same report on the tasks of the German communists in response to the Versailles Treaty which imposed "loser's conditions" on Germany after the end of World War I. The Nazis blasted this treaty and used opposition to it to build up national chauvinism. Dimitroff argues that the German communists' approach should have been to beat the Nazis to the punch. He states "Our comrades in Germany for a long time failed to reckon with the wounded national sentiments and indignation of the masses at the Versailles Treaty; ... they were late in drawing up their program of social and national emancipation..." (p. 21) Instead of arguing for exposing this treaty as an imperialist peace which would itself again give rise to an imperialist war, and for concentrating on exposing your "own" bourgeoisie, Dimitroff argues that the German communists should take up the national fight of Germany to retrieve her "sacred lands", etc. Here, chauvinism has gone from the backdoor right up to the front door. Contrast this to Lenin's attitude toward another, different treaty (the Brest-Litovsk Peace) which the Bolsheviks concluded to get out of World War I—and gave up large amounts of land to do so. Lenin said, "At the time of the Brest-Litovsk Peace we had to go against patriotism. We said that if you are a socialist you must sacrifice all your patriotic feelings to the international revolution, which is inevitable, and although it is not here yet you must believe in it if you are an internationalist." ("Report on the Attitude of the Proletariat to Petty-Bourgeois De-

mocrats," Vol. 28, p. 206) One attitude is an attitude that will train people in a revolutionary spirit, the other in imperialist gangster logic.

When all is said and done "national nihilism" is a straw man; the real danger has historically been shown to be falling into siding with one's own bourgeoisie, especially when war approaches. In the imperialist countries, the banner of the nation can lead you there and nowhere else, no matter if, on the surface, this flag is raised in competition with the imperialists.

Summing up these departures from Marxism by the communist movement historically is an important part of preparing for the future. To successfully navigate the rocks and shoals that lie ahead, and to come out fighting for the class interests of the proletariat will require nothing less than Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought. To seize the opportunities that lie ahead means we need more of the attitude described here by Lenin:

"The German workers would do it even more successfully if they began a revolution *disregarding* national sacrifices (that alone is internationalism), if they said (and backed their word by actions) that they prize the interests of the world workers' revolution *higher* than the integrity, security and peace of any national state, and of their own in particular." ("The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," Vol. 28, p. 112). □

(Reprinted from the Revolutionary Worker, August 1, 1980. One sentence, referring to the Comintern's line during WW2 after the attack on the Soviet Union, has been changed in accord with Comrade Avakian's later paper on the subject.)

“You Can’t Beat The Enemy While Raising His Flag”

MLPUSA Tries It

The preceding article drew some blood. Within weeks of its first appearance in the *Revolutionary Worker*, there was a copious (if somewhat thin) gushing from the “Marxist-Leninist Party of the USA” (MLPUSA) in a special supplement to their *Workers’ Advocate* (August 25, 1980).

The MLPUSA, formerly known as COUSML, is most notable for its strange trajectory from its bizarre zombie parody of “Maoism” in the early seventies, which seemed almost designed to discredit revolutionary China and Mao Tsetung Thought, down to today, when, as equally zombie-like followers of Enver Hoxha, they openly seek to discredit it. They pose as theoreticians, as champions of the “ideological struggle” which they accuse their Hoxha-ite rivals of opposing. But they caricature such struggle by combining cut and pasted quotes from Lenin—cleverly cut off just before they disprove their own point—with lies and slander designed to fool the ignorant.

“The ‘RCP, USA’ which lives in an oppressor country, is looking down its nose at the oppressed nationalities,” they say, and this assertion is the foundation of their polemic. First, it is a lie. Like the rest of the lies around which the MLPUSA has built this article, its only hope of survival is if the reader doesn’t know anything about what the MLPUSA is talking about. Second, this assertion reveals the MLPUSA’s own imperialist outlook, for the “oppressed nationalities” whose nationalism the MLPUSA is defending against our alleged “national nihilism” are the imperialist countries of Western Europe, Japan and Canada. In fact, it is Mao’s (and of course, by implication Leninism’s) distinction between op-

pressor and oppressed nations that is the target of the MLPUSA’s polemic.

The MLPUSA itself is not worth refuting. But their arguments can be put to use. What is useful about this polemic of theirs is that it puts our criticism of the nationalist deviation that has stunk up the scene for so long, especially since the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, squarely in the context of the struggle around Hoxha and Mao that has divided the international communist movement today, and also brings out very sharply the current practical implications and actual place of this deviation.

Since their article is not very available, we’ll quote it at some length. It begins with the standard Hoxha-ite trick of labeling Deng Xiaoping’s counter-revolutionary (and little heard lately) three worlds theory “Mao Zedong Thought,” attacking it for upholding the bourgeoisie and negating the revolution in the imperialist countries of Japan and Western Europe “first on the pretext of the need to fight U.S. imperialism, and later on the pretext of the need to fight Soviet social-imperialism.” But then they add a fascinating twist.

“But Maoism is an eclectic brew, an amalgam of anti-Marxist-Leninist theses. It vacillates from one extreme to the other and combines both extremes. Thus there are those followers of Maoism who denounce the anti-imperialist struggle in a capitalist or imperialist country on the pretext of supporting the socialist revolution. This is fully a Maoist position. It preserves the basic Maoist stand of separating and

putting a Chinese wall between the anti-imperialist struggle and the class struggle. Moreover in practice it too amounts to submission to all imperialism, both foreign as well as domestic, for it justifies the U.S. imperialist hegemony over its imperialist allies in Western Europe, Japan and Canada and supports this dangerous weapon against the proletariat.

“The ‘RCP, USA’ is just such a follower of Maoism. The ‘RCP, USA’ has taken up the superpower chauvinist position of denouncing the struggle of the proletariat of capitalist countries against U.S. imperialist hegemony. Traveling along the same road of the Progressive Labor Party which justified great-power chauvinism under the slogan ‘all nationalism is reactionary,’ the ‘RCP, USA’ has openly taken up the banner of national nihilism. We denounce this position in this article as it is the duty of all internationalists to expose and fight against the chauvinists who defend the imperialism of ‘their own’ bourgeoisie. This is especially pressing in a superpower such as the U.S., which rules over a vast world empire . . .

“On the one hand, such countries as Germany, France, Japan, Great Britain or Canada are imperialist powers in their own right. These are highly developed industrial countries where the moribund monopoly capitalist system has long been fully established. Internally the big monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie of these states ruthlessly exploits and oppresses the working class and the broad masses of working people. Externally these imperialists are bloodsucking neo-colonialists (some also maintain parts of their old colonial holdings) and international marauders. One the other hand,

particularly since the conclusion of the Second World War, to one degree or another, these imperialisms have been placed under the jackboot of U.S. imperialist domination . . .

"In the 1930s Mao Zedong defined as a fundamental characteristic of 'capitalist countries' that 'in their external relations, they are not oppressed by, but themselves oppress, other nations.'" (*Selected Works*, Vol II, p. 219) Taken literally this Maoist formula means that by definition a capitalist country cannot be oppressed and, conversely, if a country is oppressed by others it is therefore by definition not a capitalist country. And nearly half a century later we find Mao's followers pontificating that for a country to be truly capitalist and imperialist it cannot be oppressed by U.S. imperialism, and must have its full and complete sovereignty intact. Such a conception of imperialism, however, may agree with Kautskyism or Maoism, but not with Leninism. As Lenin pointed out in his famous work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, "The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely that it strives to annex *not only* agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialized regions (German appetite for Belgium; French appetite for Lorraine)." (p. 109) This characteristic feature of imperialism means that the world system of imperialism is a system of the ruthless oppression of nations, both capitalistically undeveloped nations and developed capitalist and imperialist ones. And as witnessed in recent years, the two most powerful imperialisms, the United States and the Soviet Union, are attempting to completely subjugate the entire capitalist-revisionist world between themselves. Thus, apart from possibly these two superpowers, the search for a 'pure' capitalist and imperialist country which fits into Mao's schematic formula will simply have to be pursued on some other planet besides this one with which we have become acquainted. . . .

"In particular these positions are based on Mao's social-democratic schematism which creates an artificial Great Wall between the bourgeois democratic and the socialist revolution and which divides with a gaping chasm the democratic or anti-imperialist and the socialist tasks of the revolution.

"It was this artificial barrier created by Mao that blocked the uninterrupted transition of the Chinese bourgeois democratic, anti-imperialist revolution

into a socialist revolution . . .

"Regarding the advanced capitalist-imperialist countries of the so-called 'second world' the Maoists have constructed the same kind of anti-Marxist Great Wall. . . .

"Whether from the angle of the 'danger of the Soviet threat' or from the angle of the open championing of national nihilism, the followers of Chinese revisionism have also thrown overboard the major problem of the struggle of the West European peoples against U.S. imperialist domination."

The method of these Hoxha-ites is simple: now you see it, now you don't. "Imperialism is a system of the ruthless oppression of nations," they tell us, and then—poof—the distinction between imperialist countries and those oppressed by them, between the monopoly capitalist countries and the semi-feudal, colonial, and semi- and neo-colonial countries just disappears, all with the wave of the hand and the magic words "both capitalistically undeveloped nations and developed capitalist and imperialist ones." Imagine that: *both* "countries like Germany, France, Japan, Great Britain and Canada" . . . and countries like India, Puerto Rico, South Korea.

The MLPUSA's approach here is significant. It was not Mao but Lenin who first summed up that with the advent of imperialism the world was divided into oppressor and oppressed nations. The MLPUSA doesn't try to weasel out of this division by pointing to more complicated countries, such as, for instance, Portugal, which some people argue are both imperialist and dominated by foreign capital. No, they take Lenin's line straight on—although they try to pretend it's only "Maoism" they're after. After all, they must know that in the same article they quote so much, Lenin wrote: "In the Western countries the national movement is a thing of the distant past. In England, France, Germany, etc., the 'fatherland' is a dead letter, it has played its historical role, *i.e.*, the national movement cannot yield here anything progressive, anything that will elevate new masses to a new economic and political life." ("A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," Vol. 23, p. 39)

Of course Lenin didn't deny that these imperialist great powers fight each other—the question was, over what? In the very next sentence in *Imperialism*, after the part about annexation the MLPUSA so dishonestly tries to use to

try to prove that the essence of imperialism is big imperialist countries taking over littler ones, Lenin goes on to say that the cause of this "striving for annexation" is "1) the fact that the world is already divided up obliges those contemplating a *redivision* to reach out for *every kind* of territory, and 2) an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several Great Powers in the striving for hegemony, *i.e.*, for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony. (Belgium is particularly important for Germany as a base for operations against England; England needs Bagdad as a base for operations against Germany, etc.)" (*Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Peking edition, p. 109)

Lenin's whole point here is that war between imperialists is war for redivision of the world. Referring to what the opportunists who thought otherwise considered their strongest argument, Lenin replied, "Let us suppose even that the Germans take Paris or St. Petersburg. Would that change the nature of the present war? Not at all. The Germans' purpose—and more important, the policy that would bring it to realization if they were to win—is to seize the colonies, establish domination over Turkey, annex areas populated by other nations, for instance, Poland, etc. It is definitely not to bring the French or Russians under foreign domination. The real nature of the present war is not national but imperialist. In other words, it is not being fought to enable one side to overthrow national oppression, which the other side is trying to maintain. It is a war between two groups of oppressors, between two freebooters over the division of their booty, over who shall rob Turkey and the colonies." ("Caricature," pp. 33-34)

This exposure of imperialism is what the MLPUSA is trying to hide. "A given imperialism does not become something else when gigantic sums of foreign capital are invested in its industries or when it incurs massive indebtedness to the foreign imperialist banks," they (correctly) declare, aiming their polemical arrows at the easily disproven argument that Western Europe is a "colony proper." But having made what they think is a sufficient rhetorical flourish about this to prove the "Leninist" credentials under whose authority they attempt to indict Mao, they go on to try to hide the imperialist bourgeoisie of West Ger-

many, France, Japan, Canada, etc. behind the masses in those countries. "But according to the Marxist outlook," they claim, "the oppression of a nation, whether or not it is capitalistically developed, means in the first place the oppression of the working class and the working masses, the further destruction of their livelihood, the suppression of their culture, the further limitation of their political rights and freedoms, and so on. This is true in the capitalist countries as in other countries."

Again the old magic wave of the wand—but saying "this is true" doesn't make truth out of falsehood. The "Great Wall" (or "Chinese wall," as they chauvinistically stoop to call it) that they are trying to batter down is not only Mao's distinction between the national-democratic and socialist stages of the proletarian revolution in oppressed countries—Mao's theory of New Democracy, which showed how the proletariat could lead the national-democratic revolution and how this revolution could prepare the conditions for socialist revolution—but also the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations itself. This is the real "Great Wall"—and basic principle of Marxism-Leninism—that they object to, a distinction not maliciously invented by Mao but rather formulated by Lenin, who first summed up the division of the world that had taken place with the advent of the era of imperialism.

If they would allow their readers to continue just a little further on in Lenin's "Caricature" that they abuse so badly, Lenin himself testifies against them: "Is the *actual* condition of the workers in the oppressor and in the oppressed nations the same, from the standpoint of the national question?"

"No, it is not the same.

"1) *Economically*, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the *superprofits* the bourgeoisie of these nations obtains by extra exploitation of the oppressed nations. Besides, economic statistics show that here a *larger* percentage of the workers become 'straw bosses' than is the case in the oppressed nations, a *larger* percentage rise to the labor *aristocracy*. That is a fact. To a *certain degree* the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of *their own* bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

"2) *Politically*, the difference is that,

compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a *privileged* position in many spheres of political life.

"3) *Ideologically*, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for the workers of the oppressed nations." ("Caricature," pp. 55-56)

Lenin's point here is that this is the economic, political and ideological basis for imperialism to corrupt a section of the workers who cling to imperialism and for opportunists to justify and base themselves on that corruption and spread it, crying "defend the fatherland" in the face of inter-imperialist conflict and ignoring or attacking the anti-imperialist struggle in the oppressed nations. Why does the MLPUSA attack Mao's perfectly correct summary of Lenin's principles, that capitalist countries, in their external relations, "are not oppressed by, but themselves oppress, other nations"? Because it is exactly the difference between oppressed and oppressor—in other words, national privileges, national oppression—that they are seeking to defend.

Even the MLPUSA's mandatory pretense of internationalism reeks of nationalism, covered with a drop of moralism: "As Marxism-Leninism teaches, the proletariat of Japan, West Germany, France, Britain, Canada, etc., must shoulder their proletarian internationalist duties in regard to the crimes of their 'own' imperialisms against the oppressed peoples if they are going to succeed in realizing their own social emancipation. However, to portray the outrages which one's 'own' imperialist rulers perpetrate against the oppressed peoples as simply the responsibility of U.S. imperialism is to embellish one's 'own' imperialist marauders. It is, of course, correct and necessary to explain to the masses that many of these crimes are committed in direct collaboration with and even under the immediate direction of U.S. imperialism. But the condemnation of one's 'own' bourgeoisie as 'lackeys,' 'front men' and 'agents' of U.S. imperialism must always be used to instill in the masses a burning hatred against this bourgeoisie. . . ."

The rulers of Western Europe, Japan, Canada, etc. are not "lackeys," "front men" or "agents" of U.S. imperialism—they represent independent imperialist ruling classes within these countries, despite the fact that due to their less favorable position in the world at

the moment they find themselves presently obliged to pursue their imperialist aims as members of the U.S. bloc. For instance, in the context of present world relations France's intervention in Africa may help the U.S. against the Soviets, but France is no mere messenger boy—above all, France's moves are dictated by its own imperialist interests, which include keeping the U.S. restricted in France's "sphere of influence." To criticize them as "lackeys," etc., even while mentioning that they are "also" imperialist, is to say that what's wrong with them is that they're not *strong enough* imperialists.

But what is most significant is what is *not* being said here. It is not an accident that the MLPUSA's argument is couched in such academic terms, with so little reference to the current world situation, for that is precisely what they seek to obscure most. The contradiction between the U.S. and Western European imperialists, etc., is not taking place in a vacuum. It is conditioned by the much more powerful contradiction between the U.S. and Soviet blocs. In fact, the only way all the imperialist powers, including those of Western Europe, can actually move to redivide the world—which, impelled by the laws of imperialism in ever-sharpening crisis they are bound to do—is precisely by lining up into war blocs behind one or the other superpower. This is not because the superpowers have some magical ability to transform lesser imperialists into lambs (or sheep), but because each is the only one strong enough to take on the other, or in other words, to really lead in bringing about the world's forcible redivision. Under these circumstances, what is the practical meaning of berating the Western European imperialists for being "lackeys" of the U.S.? Doesn't this amount to a cover-up of their imperialist nature, no matter how many times it's said, "Of course, they're imperialists, too"? And doesn't it at least leave the door open to the idea that if they "stood up" more to U.S. imperialism—i.e., served their imperialist interests by entering into some other imperialist alliance which under today's conditions could only mean an alliance with the other superpower—that somehow this would be better?

The main exponent of "national communism" in Western Europe today is not the Hoxha-ites, although they'd like to claim that mantle. It is the so-called Eurocommunist parties, which openly

claim the “national communist” label. The *Basic Principles for the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement*, in analyzing the pro-Soviet revisionist parties of Western Europe, points out, “one of the essential aspects of this strategy [“to bring about . . . a form of state capitalism in which they play a major or if possible a dominant role in alliance with some sections of the traditional ruling class”] is the attempt to reconcile or ‘merge’ the ‘national interests’ of their countries and of the Soviet Union. While in colonial and dependent countries such parties seek to replace one form of imperialist domination with another in which they can act as major comprador capitalists, especially through the state, in the imperialist countries they are genuine patriots—that is, defenders of the imperialism of their countries—seeking only to alter the form of the imperialist state and to move it from one imperialist bloc into or toward another. Thus, particularly in the latter countries, their stance of combining allegiance to the nation with support for the Soviet social-imperialists is not simply an attempt to appeal to the philistine chauvinism of their social base—a philistinism and chauvinism they actively promote—but represents these revisionists’ actual highest aspirations and in particular their efforts to unite with sections of the bourgeoisie on the basis that their common interests are best served by moving toward accommodation with the Soviet bloc.” (p. 29, paragraph 145)

The point here is not to identify the MLPUSA with the Eurocommunist

revisionist parties—whatever it is that they are, it isn’t exactly that. In fact, they criticize the Eurocommunist parties for “negating the struggle against U.S. imperialist domination.” The point is that their arguments fit well with the Soviets’ own purposes and outlook, despite their occasional burps of impolite anti-Sovietism. (The MLPUSA does criticize the Soviet rulers for, believe it or not, “national nihilist cosmopolitanism.” The Soviets, however, do not concede to this charge. An article called “Proletarian Internationalism and the Battle of Ideas” in the Aug. 15, 1980 *Pravda* [Reprints from the Soviet Press, Sept. 15, 1980] denounces “national nihilism.” While it emphasizes the importance of social-imperialist “proletarian internationalism”—the subordination and subjugation of other countries by the Soviet Union—it specifically denies that there is anything contradictory in other countries between upholding social-imperialism as well as nationalism, denouncing “futile attempts to present communists as people who abhor patriotism,” including in imperialist countries.

This is not to argue that it is only the Soviets who can use and benefit from the confounding of Marxism and nationalism, but only to show this line in its most ugly and naked form. In fact, once you start defending one or more imperialist countries against the others in the name of resisting “hegemonism” or “annexation,” then not only do you end up supporting imperialist war and opposing turning it into revolutionary civil war in Europe, but—to follow the argument to its logical conclusion—also supporting

one or each of the superpowers against the other’s attempts to dominate it. Clearly this is imperialist logic which can be used by any imperialism.

In passing, the MLPUSA makes some snide comments on how the “‘RCP, USA’ and its predecessors supported cultural nationalism”—referring to our support for the *revolutionary* nationalist (not cultural nationalist) thrust of the Black liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Then they go on to shriek that we’re following the same tradition today, since we “rave hysterically against the flag” and even—horror of horrors—burn it, which offends “the revolutionary traditions of a people and all national culture.” For whatever reason, they don’t hesitate to speak of the “jackboots” of U.S. imperialism and in general compare the U.S. to Nazi Germany—implying, in a grotesque caricature of the Comintern line, that the peoples of the world should unite with their imperialist rulers (including in the USSR) against the U.S. But the MLPUSA’s own reactionary outlook means that even within the U.S. they prefer the imperialists’ nationalism to revolutionary struggle against national oppression and to revolution in general.

At any rate, regardless of which camp the MLPUSA’s pro-imperialist nationalism serves, they have done well by providing a fine example of how the attack on Mao Tsetung Thought and “Maoism” is an attack on Leninism as well, and some of what is at stake for the international working class in regard to this question of “national nihilism.”



Forces of the Republic rout fascist troops on the Sarcogossa front in 1936.

I. Introduction

“The people milling around Madrid’s railway station at Antocha could hear the gunfire from the lower barrios in the suburbs of Usera and Carabanchel, see the flashes in the sky. Victoria Roman, a university student, saw young children beginning to drag cobblestones to where men and women were raising barricades. She was due to leave the city but now felt she couldn’t go.

“‘I’m staying,’ I told the evacuation people who wanted me to accompany the children I had been looking after to the Levant. ‘No one can leave Madrid at a time like this,’ I told them.

“Franco’s troops had reached almost to the very outskirts of the city. ‘To the front, five centimos,’ the tram conductors began calling out, for you could take

a streetcar right to the front lines by now. José Bardasano, a painter and poster designer, saw a tram leaving—it was full of barbers who hadn’t even had time to take off their white smocks and were still carrying their combs . . .”

During the month of July, 1936, mighty social forces—forces which convulsed the whole world and were at that time beginning to shove the world irreversibly towards its greatest inter-imperialist conflict—erupted in Spanish society.

On July 18 and the days following, the Spanish Army, with General Francisco Franco soon to emerge as undisputed leader, rose up to overthrow the Republic, now run by a Popular Front coalition which had won recent parliamentary

elections. With the backing of virtually all of Spain’s ruling class, the active support of Italy and Germany and the consent of Britain, Franco’s forces struck in eight strategic military areas of the country with the aim of quickly converging on the capital, Madrid. It didn’t work out that way. Instead, this attempt to impose fascism gave rise to the broadest and deepest revolutionary upsurge to hit Europe in the entire pre-WW2 period. In all but the most conservative and socially backward area of the country—the Navarre—the masses flooded the streets, seized arms and formed militias, surrounded and won over many of Franco’s troops, and beat back the ruling class’s attempt to save the reactionary order that had been crumbling since the beginning of the decade.

The masses of workers, small peasants



“In Spain, to be blunt, the possibilities for big revolutionary advances in that country and worldwide were sacrificed...”

The Line of the Comintern on The Civil War in Spain

and rural laborers arose in such a way as to defy the most basic foundations of bourgeois rule. Symbolic of this was spontaneous and extremely popular revolt against the Catholic Church, one of the major spokesmen for the ruling class left behind in Republican-held territory, as the big capitalists and landlords fled for the safety of Franco's lines. The Spanish Church was far more than a religious symbol. It owned more than 15% of all arable land, with large holdings in bank capital and other financial enterprises. As a legacy of Spain's colonial empire and sign of the continued parasitism of its ruling class, its 35,000 priests, 20,000 monks and friars and 60,000 nuns—out of a population of 24 million—formed a political machine which was one of the ruling class's main props, especially in the countryside.

The Church hierarchy supported Franco, not only politically, but in more direct ways as well. In Teruel, where Franco's army was besieged by Republican forces, the bishop gave his blessing to holding the town's women and children hostage to guarantee the fascists' safety. Captured, he replied to demands that he explain his actions by saying “No one resigns himself easily to defeat.” During the opening months of the civil war, churches were burned down by the hundreds and laughing crowds danced in the ashes. Not only the most exploited sections of the people who most hated the Church but also a great many intellectuals (such as teachers sick of the Church's anti-educational control of education) cheered the church burnings, although some better-off sections were aghast.

The factories and farmlands left by the capitalists who fled to the safety of Franco-held territory were taken over. Trade unions, factory committees, peasant co-ops and the quickly formed militias ran much of daily life, especially in Barcelona. Here, in Spain's most industrial city, visitors from “civilized” Europe felt they had touched down in another world: the cafes, street corners and trolleys vibrated with the intense political debate going on among the workers. The feeling that it was these workers who were now in command was so strong that people from every class dressed in workclothes. Even the remaining financiers took to describing themselves as “bank workers.”

Only in the colony of Spanish Morocco were the generals able to consolidate a reliable force of Foreign Legion merce-

naries and Moroccan troops (whose participation was not inevitable, as we shall see). Italian and German aircraft airlifted these troops from Morocco over the Straits of Gibraltar into the cities of southern Spain from where they swept towards Madrid.

But after three months of advances in which Franco's Nationalist armies broke through Republican resistance and freed many of the besieged garrisons, they were finally stopped dead in their tracks on November 7, in the outskirts of Madrid, where hastily armed workers and others, organized by their political parties and unions, fought Franco's well-equipped professionals to a standstill in a ferocious battle that raged from building to building and floor to floor in the University City and in the trenches cutting through the city's western suburbs. The next day, the Republican militiamen and women were joined by the first of the International Brigades, formed of revolutionary-minded volunteers from all over the world to aid the Republic, and the line held. From this point on, Spain coalesced into two parts, two opposing regimes, fighting a civil war between them that would last for three years. Organizing support for the Republic, and soon, leading the Republican forces in the Civil War, became the main work of the Communist International (Comintern) during that period.

"Now the line was decimated, there was nothing between us and the fascists but disorganized groups of weary war-wrecked men . . . I saw another IRA comrade, Jock Cunningham, assembling a small crowd, we hurried up, joined forces . . . The crowd behind us was marching silently . . . I remembered a trick of the old days when we were holding banned demonstrations in Ireland. I jerked my head back, 'Sing up ye sons of guns!' Quavering at first, then more lustily, the song arose from the ranks—the *Internationale* boomed out over the ruined countryside.

"On we marched nearer the front; stragglers in retreat stopped in amazement, then turned around and joined us, cheered, the song continued. I looked back; behind the forest of upraised fists, what an unkempt band! 'Manuel, what's the Spanish word for forward?' 'Adelante!' he yells back. 'Adelante!' we shout in a half-dozen foreign accents. . . ."

The victory by Franco's forces in

March, 1939 marked the conclusion not only of three years of civil war, but in fact a decade of intense and intensifying class struggle by the Spanish masses, especially the proletariat. The civil war, however, saw this revolutionary spirit progressively extinguished. By the time Franco's forces again attacked and finally took Madrid at the end of the war, the professional army that the Republic had come to depend on crumbled under the defeatism and treason of its own generals. The civilian masses whose armed heroism had previously saved the city now watched in silence. The decade of revolutionary struggle had led neither to revolution nor to any advances; instead, the wine turned sour, as the Spanish saying goes. After accumulating this whole rich body of experience, the Spanish proletariat was left without revolutionary understanding or organization. Despite the awesome achievements of the masses in the war, it is simply a fact that even had the Republic somehow defeated Franco's forces militarily, the war as a whole would have resulted in a setback for the proletariat anyway: the revolutionary leadership, the Comintern and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), had capitulated politically well in advance of the military defeat.

How did this happen?

At the root of it was the Comintern's entirely wrong—and disastrous—view of the kind of historic conjuncture into which the world was heading at that time. As Bob Avakian put it in his report to the Central Committee of the RCP in 1979, in a passage which applies strikingly to Spain:

"The rub is this: it is precisely the bringing to a head of the contradictions on a world scale—the approach of the resolution of a major spiral, with the imminent prospect of world war—that at one and the same time creates the very great likelihood that the socialist country will face all-out attack by an imperialist power or powers, sharpens, brings into being, or brings closer, the objective conditions necessary for revolution in many countries, perhaps even including the imperialist powers themselves. This raises the contradiction between defending the socialist country and assisting, supporting and accelerating the revolutionary struggle in the other countries to a much intensified level. How have the socialist countries and the international communist movement handled this so far?

"Not too well. In general, as we know,

the overwhelming tendency has been to subordinate everything to the defense of the socialist country. . . ."

In Spain, to be blunt, the possibilities for big revolutionary advances in that country and worldwide were sacrificed to the defense—on a state-to-state level—of the Soviet Union. The strategy of the Soviet leadership called for an alliance with the Anglo-French bloc against Germany. Nothing, including revolution, could be allowed to jeopardize the possibility of that alliance, as a Soviet-backed revolution in the British junior-partner Spain certainly would. Moreover, this analysis of the Comintern coincided with the capitulationist views the PCE was developing on its own, that the masses in Spain and the party were in over their heads, particularly after the invasion of the fascist powers, and really could only hope for intervention or massive aid from the "democratic" imperialists, England and France.

Many revolutionaries around the world have long sensed that this was not a revolutionary course. But on the other hand, the military move by the Spanish ruling class against the masses, and the intervention by Italy and Germany, unarguably created a difficult situation for the Spanish proletariat; moreover, the world crisis was fraught with danger to the socialist state. Was any other course possible? What is needed is not only a summation of the Spanish Civil War, but a clear and correct understanding of World War 2 in order to help dispel a murky, defeatist aura around the whole question of the possibilities of revolution during times of inter-imperialist war, or impending war.

This article is not in any way a complete and definitive summation of the Spanish Civil War, nor still less an attempt to answer all the basic questions concerning the nature of Spanish society and the course the proletarian revolution must follow there. Rather, it is an examination of the Spanish Civil War done in the context of and to serve a broader summation of the historic conjuncture which confronted the world's revolutionaries around WW2, and the wrong line taken by the Comintern on the nature of this conjuncture and the relationship between the defense of the USSR and the advance of the world revolution.

The international communist movement needs no more excuses on behalf of the Comintern. It needs the kind of blunt appraisal we can find in the discus-

sion between Mao Tsetung and Kang Sheng concerning the Spanish experience. In it Kang Sheng says (in the context of what is mainly a long talk by Mao, and clearly expressing Mao's viewpoint also):

"They did not concern themselves with the three points: army, countryside, political power. They wholly subordinated themselves to the exigencies of Soviet foreign policy, and achieved nothing at all."

"The scene remained engraved on his mind. The jubilant right-wingers sweeping through the working-class quarter; the workers didn't attack them, didn't shout back. It was the look of hatred and despair on their faces that José Vergara would never forget. 'They knew there was nothing they could do. They had lost the war.'

"'It was easy to say,' thought Paulino García, communist student and commissar, 'that the war was being lost because Germany and Italy were helping Franco, and England and France were not helping the Republic. Who could deny the importance of this? But it was not the sole answer. We had to be asking, what lay in our power to do, what possibilities were there which we hadn't seized, what tasks we hadn't carried out...'"

II. The Asturias Rebellion; Dress Rehearsal for Civil War

In the late 1920s, as the world crisis was beginning to hit Spain full force, the British and French imperialists, who dominated the Spanish economy, began to export their own beginning economic crisis by dumping cheap coal onto the Spanish market. Spain replied with tariff barriers, the British and French in turn cut off trade in key Spanish agricultural commodities. The bottom quickly dropped away from the Spanish economy and the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Soon after the fall of the governing military junta, Spain's King, Alfonso XIII, resigned also—to avoid, he said, the "disaster of civil war."

On April 14, 1931, for the second time in its history, Spain was declared a Republic. The bourgeoisie hoped to draw

the petty bourgeoisie—led by Republicans and Socialists—into the running of the bourgeois state, and provide the stability which the ruling class so desperately needed. Suddenly, generals and other lackeys who had served the old monarchy became enthusiastic supporters of the Republic. "The regime was changed in order not to change," as a Socialist put it.⁷

The honeymoon lasted only two short years. The year 1933 was the hardest year of the depression in Spain, driving the proletariat and poor peasantry into open, often armed rebellion, and ruining the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. The Republican government showed itself as repressive as any of the hated constitutional monarchies of the past.

The new situation culminated in the October, 1934 uprising by workers in the mining valleys of the northern Asturias region. This revolt, the last of several large and small rebellions which shook Spain in the early 1930s, directly set off a 20-month chain of events which led to the outbreak of civil war.

On October 5, 1934, miners armed with homemade dynamite charges occupied the police station at Sama; at Mieres, a hundred workers surrounded the barracks of the Guardia Civil, firing their ancient rifles from many points to make it seem as if they were heavily armed. Within forty-eight hours, nearly seventy Guardia Civil outposts had been occupied by the workers' militias. In a few days, over ten thousand workers had been mobilized, town halls occupied, in many cases flying red flags, and "soviets" set up to run local affairs.

An account of a talk with one Socialist youth member shows something about what the workers felt their aims were:

"In the small township of Figueredo, just south of Mieres in Asturias, Alberto Fernandez of the Socialist youth had been waiting two nights for the signal. At 2 AM on 5 October, he heard the sound of an old car advancing and jumped out onto the road. It was the *Avance* car (the Oveido Socialist newspaper). Antonio Llaneza, son of the great mineworkers' leader, was in it.

"He took my hand and said with great feeling: 'This is what we have been waiting for. A la calle (Into the street)' 'To the very limit?' 'Yes'. That meant it was the revolution. The seizure of power. The inauguration of socialism. Not simply to restore the Republican regime to what it had been in its first two years, as some later said. We set off...'"

But despite the feelings of this rank and file militant, and in all probability the similar sentiments of the many workers who inscribed hammers and sickles on their red flags (and later visited the Soviet Union by the thousands), the left wing of the Socialist Party (PSOE) that led the rebellion never intended it as a revolution or preparation for revolution. Overall, it was ill-prepared, half-serious at best. Only in Asturias was there much fighting; elsewhere, after the failure of some initial forays, the rebellion collapsed. The Socialist and left Republican leaders who initiated it had no plans to carry it through. Instead, they spent most of the rebellion hiding in an attic, waiting for it to be over. The PCE, although at that point much smaller than the Socialists, did play an active part.

The Socialist and left Republican leaders never intended to seize power. The leading Socialist J. Alvarez del Vayo (later associated with the PCE) makes this painfully clear in describing the original call for insurrection made by the Socialist Executive in January, 1934:

"Confronted with threatened aggression by the reactionaries, and a government incapable of Republican defense, the Left had no choice but to take the defense of the Republic into its own hands, making known to the government and the country that it would not tolerate a Monarchist or Fascist coup d'état cloaked in a fictitious parliamentary proceeding... if power were handed to the right, the Socialist Party would start a revolution..."

The "parliamentary proceeding" to which del Vayo refers was the entry of the Church-sponsored fascist-like political organization, the CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas), into the government, which probably *was* meant to lay the groundwork for a move to fascism. But the response of the Socialists and the PCE, even though it involved armed struggle, was entirely within the confines of bourgeois "pressure group" politics.

The problem was not that they had opposed a move towards fascism, and certainly not that they had acted without a guarantee of victory, but rather that they had no thought at all of ever winning, of seizing power. Instead they limited the uprising's objective to keeping the CEDA out of the government, to maintaining the Republican form of the ruling class dictatorship, ra-

ther than carrying through the insurrection, if not yet as the action of a class ready to seize power, at least as a powerful means of preparation for the eventual seizure of power. The result of course was the Socialists and the PCE worked to strengthen bourgeois democratic illusions among the workers, while the bourgeoisie, far from giving in to this "pressure," instead lashed out at the revolutionary movement.

In all, the Asturias rebellion raged for two weeks. Workers effectively controlled and administered the region for this time, all the while fighting local police forces, and defeating and winning over troops from the local barracks. Only with the arrival of troops under General Franco, trained in counter-insurgency warfare in Spain's recently-ended colonial war against the Moroccan people, was the revolt crushed. It was followed by a wave of savage political repression.

The Asturias revolt became the pivot point for all the major forces in Spain, as will be detailed below. The uprising is often referred to as a sort of "dress rehearsal for revolution" like the 1905 revolution in Russia. But, given the line that led it, it was even more a dress rehearsal for betrayal. Amid the burgeoning resistance of all the oppressed classes in Spain, a new force had emerged more fully than ever before—the proletariat. But the sorry leadership of the Socialists and their PCE allies indicated what was in store: the arising, increasingly radicalized proletariat was in the coming years to be tailed, fed with illusions, suppressed, and betrayed by those who claimed to be its revolutionary leadership. But never was it trained in a class-conscious way, in a Marxist understanding of the dangerous but also fertile new situation opening up before it, as a force which could lead all the oppressed to advance towards communism.

III. Spain's Ruling Class and the World Crisis

For a year and a half following the Asturias events, the "solution" favored by the big bourgeoisie was quite obvious: the most important sections of the ruling class were openly preparing to "restore order" by a repressive move against the masses. The CEDA, whose leader, Gil Robles, had visited Hitler and called himself, Nazi-style, "el Jefe" (the Chief), now had five ministers in the government. Others in high positions,

generals and monarchists, contacted the Italian Fascist government, and began to solidify Italian help for the planned move. Moreover, it would seem the opportune time to make such a move, from the point of view of the Spanish ruling class, having brutally put down the 1934 rising and imprisoned tens of thousands of its militants and leaders.

Nonetheless, the move could not be made. It was only in July, 1936 that the bourgeoisie was able to act in the way it had long ago deemed necessary, consolidating forces only a few days before the coup, which even then, of course, ended in initial failure. In fact, while the government of the period 1934-36 measured up formally to the worst fears of the Socialists—that is, the CEDA was a major influence in the government—these months are marked not by the strength of the ruling class but by its weakness, and even some concessions to the mass movement. For example, only two leaders of the Asturias rising were ever executed, many others released.

The ruling class, weak and divided, could not take decisive action *on its own*. The "reserves" necessary for a fascist move would have to come from outside Spain's own borders, from more powerful imperialists. The problem was, for the Spanish ruling class, that they could not accept such help from Britain, because the British imperialists' "help" was already squeezing so hard on their weaker and somewhat unwilling partners.

This weakness went very deep in the history of Spanish capitalism. During the nineteenth century, a nascent bourgeoisie arose and challenged the landed aristocracy in a series of wars. This class consisted of some small manufacturers, landowners who had accumulated capital from colonial oppression, and along with them, a vocal intelligentsia. But these forces were too flabby to seize power, and by the end of the abortive First Republic in 1873, the different warring classes had come to terms. The landowners, urban bourgeoisie and Church all began to merge into one ruling class.

The Spanish bourgeoisie had never been strong enough to carry through a bourgeois-democratic revolution and free the country's industrial development from feudal fetters, as had happened elsewhere in Europe. Far more importantly, in terms of its development, it was too weak to compete successfully with the imperialist great powers, not only within Spain itself, but also in the

export of capital and the division of the world. Spain had been stripped of its most important, most profitable colonies by the U.S. in the 1898 Spanish-American War. Even in those colonies it continued to hold on to, the lion's share of the benefits of imperialism were reaped by Spain's "protectors," especially Britain, who both really did "protect" Spain (in the sense of keeping other imperialists out of Spain's remaining empire), but in true gangster-style forced Spain to pay dearly for that protection.

Spain held three sets of islands—the Balearics in the Mediterranean, the Canaries in the Atlantic, and Fernando Po, off the coast of "Spanish Guinea" (today, Equatorial Guinea). On the African mainland, aside from the latter, it held Rio de Oro (the so-called "Spanish Sahara"), Ifni and a zone of Morocco just across the Straits of Gibraltar. Important banking and other interests were maintained in Latin America and the Philippines. This was often in league with Church interests, particularly in the Philippines. There, too, the feast was shared with the now-dominant U.S. imperialists.

Many of these holdings were enormously profitable; but just as important was the strategic position of certain of them. Morocco in particular became the lynchpin of the Spanish "arrangement" with British imperialism. This strip had been assigned to Spain as part of the "Entente Cordiale," a gangster-like imperialist division of colonial territory among Britain and France, which was arranged in 1904. Among the terms of this agreement, Britain allowed France to move into Morocco, but insisted that Spain be given the zone of Morocco immediately across from the important British military base and colony at Gibraltar. This flanked the key British routes to the Middle East and India which at all costs had to be kept out of the hands of Britain's rival, France. Secret protocols were attached to this agreement, certainly including worldwide and Spanish domestic trade and other agreements between England and Spain. But Spain was barred from fortifying the territory, that is, from using it to its own advantage in pressuring Britain. Spain was also expected to pacify the territory—and it was this that was to become a towering problem for the Spanish ruling class.

The Moroccans were enraged at this cynical carving and crushing of their

country. By 1923, Spain had over 200,000 troops tied down, and was taking a beating at the hands of the nationalist forces of Abd el-Krim. Over 10,000 Spanish troops were annihilated by the Moroccans in one battle alone, at Anual. (It should be noted that this enormous commitment would be equivalent in its impact on Spanish society to a U.S. force of 2 million troops.) Large numbers of Spanish troops were only withdrawn after Moroccan fighters also attacked into the French zone, bringing the French into the war.

In Morocco can be seen the dead-end alley into which the Spanish bourgeoisie had run. Spain's military dictator during this period, Primo de Rivera, summed it up quite well in a 1924 interview with a UPI reporter:

"I personally am in favor of withdrawing entirely from Africa and letting Abd el-Krim have it. We have spent untold millions of pesetas in this enterprise, and never made a centimo from it. We have had tens of thousands of men killed for territory which it is not worth having. But we cannot withdraw because England doesn't want us to."¹⁰

Of course, this is more than a little exaggeration. (For instance, Primo de Rivera neglected to mention Spain's extensive holdings in Moroccan iron mines.) Spain's ruling class certainly got more than a few centimos from its status as the junior pig at the imperialist feed trough. In fact, it grew rather fat and bloated, with not only finance capitalists and landowners linked to finance capital, but also an enormous Church and army bureaucracy, both part of the legacy of the colonial era, sharing in the spoils.

Within Spain itself, the Spanish bourgeoisie's holdings were most concentrated in industries, which produced for the world market, such as fishing, leather, copper, coal, iron ore and shipping. Because of the semi-feudal nature of much of Spain's countryside and its overall underdeveloped state, there was little national market. Industry as a whole was stunted and distorted. Foreign capital often edged out Spanish. (For instance, the telephone/telegraph system was foreign-owned, as was the railway system.) But at the same time, the Spanish ruling class did enjoy a profitable relationship with this foreign capital, which was another aspect of its links to world finance capital. Often this took the form of Spanish financiers literally becoming junior partners of

British-owned firms in Spain. As one historian describes it:

"A certain number of Spanish capitalists were shareholders in the [British-owned] Basque-Asturian mining company and in the companies which brought out the mercury from Almaden or worked the iron deposits of Penarroyo or the copper of the Rio Tinto. Spanish ministers and Spanish generals sat on the boards of directors of these companies. The collusion between Spanish oligarchical forces and foreign capital guaranteed to the latter a de facto monopoly over the major activities of the Peninsula."¹¹

What resulted from all this was a ruling class both in contradiction to the dominant imperialist powers, especially Britain, whose grip the Spanish rulers found far too crushing—and at the same time dependent on their financial arrangements with foreign capital and their "share" of imperialism, as well as their ownership of capital in Spain itself and of the vast tracts of land that was controlled by them. This ruling class had little interest in developing Spain's backward economy—in fact, through their control of finance (and through, in turn, the control of foreign finance), such industrial and all-around economic development was strangled.

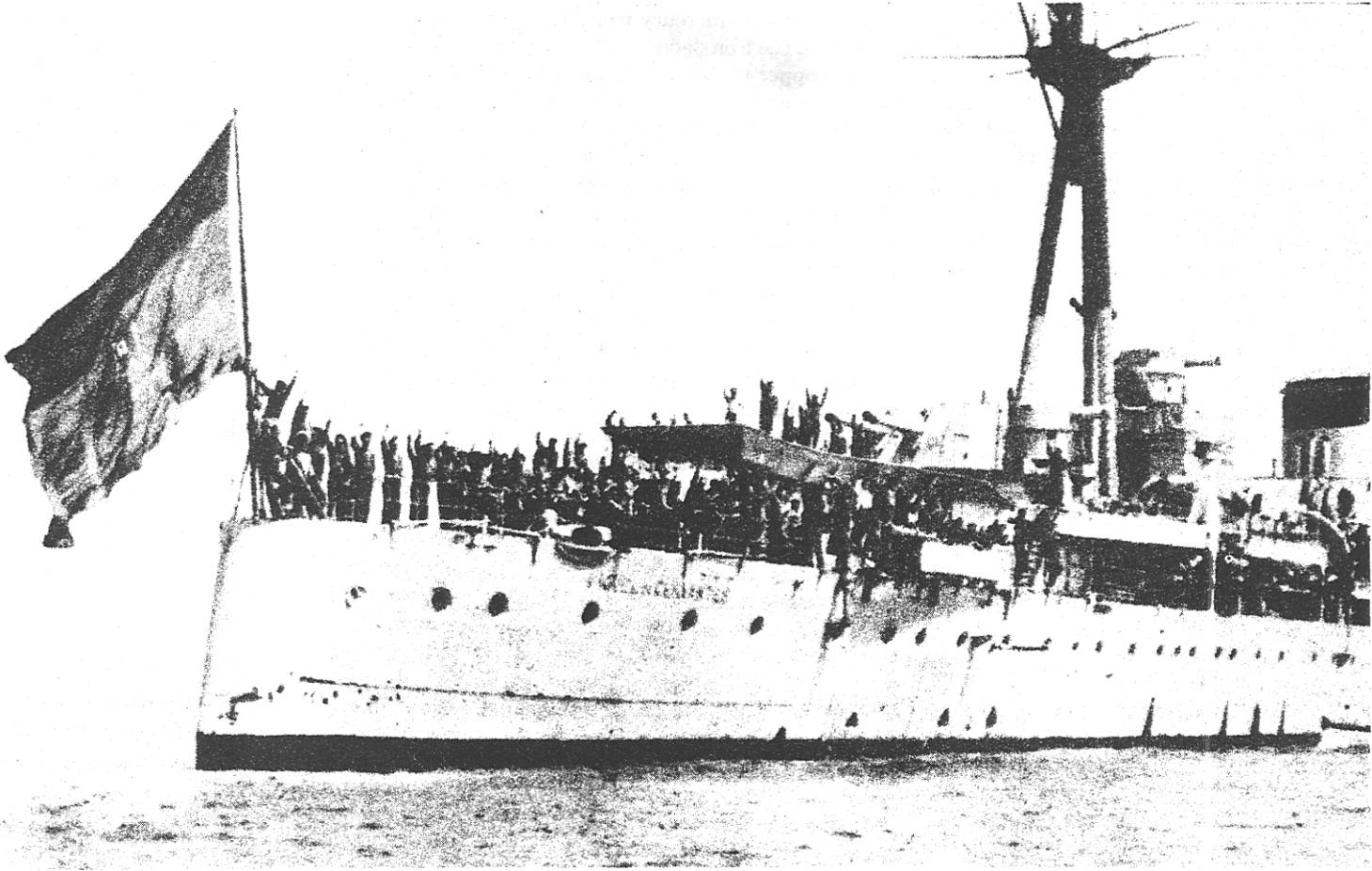
The dry Spanish farmlands, for example, would have needed large capital expenditures for irrigation and other improvements in order to increase their productivity, but this kind of expenditure could gain much larger and more immediate profits elsewhere. Consequently vast stretches of farmland lay fallow. The huge unworked stretches of land owned by absentee owners seemed to mock the small peasants and braceros (rural laborers) who starved for want of land and work. This stagnation in agriculture was the main obstacle to the development of an internal market for industry.

Another result, particularly in industry, was the most extreme uneven development. Spain, like Czarist Russia, is a "prisonhouse of nations." The geographically, economically, culturally and linguistically distinct Basque (Euskadi) and Catalan regions, oppressed nations within the Spanish state, were actually far more economically advanced than the rest of the country. Especially in Euskadi there was massive foreign (mainly British) investment in mining, as well as shipbuilding. There was also considerable foreign (especially

French) investment in Catalonia. In fact, Catalonia had almost half of Spain's total industry and over half of its workers, concentrated principally in the textile industry, which consisted of over 400,000 workers laboring in relatively small factories. The upshot was that a kind of a "sphere of influence within a sphere of influence" developed in the industrial areas, with bourgeois forces there either tied to foreign capital and/or more or less independent of the central ruling classes, adding to the national contradictions which had long existed between these oppressed nationality regions and the central government in Madrid. These two areas tended to form a counterweight, favorable to England and France, against Madrid. The industrial bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals there were the core of Republicanism, which, significantly, included the autonomy of these regions as one of its central tenets.

During the 1920s, the Spanish ruling class enjoyed the post-war boom that swept through all the powers feasting on the spoils of the world's redivision. The war years, in fact, had been especially good for the Spanish ruling class, which while openly pro-German (out of desire to be free of British "protection," and because the Germans enticed them with certain colonial bait), still made profitable sales to all sides. It was during this period that the Spanish ruling class moved to strengthen its position within Spain, buying the railroads from Britain and buying into the foreign-owned power monopoly. But all this, rather than resolving Spain's contradictions, only exacerbated them. By the 1930s, with the beginning of the intensification of all the contradictions of international imperialism heralded by the stock market crash, the Spanish rulers found themselves squeezed ever tighter out of world and domestic markets. Politically, both the international situation—especially the growing formation of two blocs for a new world war—and the internal class struggle (which was sparked mightily by the Russian revolution as well as by the desperate situation of the proletariat and poor peasants) meant growing crisis.

Most of the proletariat and poor peasantry had been driven to the wall, while the Spanish ruling class had developed only a flimsy petty-bourgeois "buffer." In the international arena the bourgeoisie was drained and battered by its "arrangement" with the British, but



July 1936. The crew of the Spanish cruiser Miguel de Cervantes, having arrested their pro-Franco officers, assemble on deck and give revolutionary salute.

its moves to gain a better position were countered by the powerful influence of British imperialism right within the Spanish economy—and opposed, too, by the English-leaning class of small industrialists and intelligentsia, and other segments of the people under their influence, including a section of the workers. Yet, these were the very “better off” strata whose support for the Spanish ruling class was so desperately needed as a stabilizing factor among the masses. As a result, this loose grouping, which came to be represented by the left Republicans under Manuel Azaña, came to play a crucial role far out of proportion to its size or economic weight.

Because of Spain’s position in the international imperialist order, the ruling class could not afford to bribe these in-

termediate strata to the degree that was done, for instance, in Britain, France and the U.S. Add to this the fact that these strata and much of the proletariat itself were concentrated among the oppressed nationalities, and the weakness of the Republic as a form for suppressing the masses, and it is clear why, as far as the Spanish ruling class was concerned, the Republic had to go—at least for now—and why this had to be done principally through an open military move, rather than a more disguised maneuver. At the same time, underlying all this was above all an attempt to change Spain’s international position that could be accomplished only by hooking up with the other imperialist powers arrayed against Britain and its allies.

The ruling class had no choice but to

gamble everything on a radical move, to tear apart much of the existing institutions and accepted social relations that had been so long and carefully built up in a political crisis which drew the masses of people into political life and struggle—into civil war—on a scale so vast the whole West shook with the reverberations.

Many historians have searched for something specific about Spain, something in its economic and political structures or in its “national character” to explain why fascism arose the way it did there, and why Spain came closer to revolution than any other country in Europe in the period preceding WW 2. (Although, of course, towards the end of WW 2 and immediately afterwards there were revolutionary upheavals and



Barricades in the streets of Barcelona, July 1936. "... where the masses were in the streets in great numbers and took the offensive, the fascist troops soon found themselves cut off and paralysed."

revolutions in a number of European countries, not to mention the revolutionary warfare raging particularly in China and developments elsewhere in the colonies and neo-colonies.) But even what is most particular about Spain in this period—its very backward agriculture, the volatile character of its petty bourgeoisie, its relatively revolutionary-minded working class—was tied up with what was going on on a world level: the worldwide imperialist financial, political and military web which Spain was caught in, and especially by the crisis sweeping through the entire imperialist world and pushing it towards world war, which, as Stalin had said of WW 1, "gathered all these contradictions into a single knot and threw them on to the scales, thereby accelerating and facili-

tating the revolutionary battles of the proletariat."

Spain became one weak link of imperialism, one of the places where the gigantic forces of the historic conjuncture which was to result in WW 2 were concentrated and burst into open warfare between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and its allies. Blinded by nationalism and reformism, the PCE and the Comintern failed to see things in this way, failed to see the revolutionary possibilities that this conjuncture opened up for the proletariat internationally. Instead, they saw only the difficulties, only the possibilities of minimizing defeat and subordinated everything to the defense of the Soviet Union. This, in Spain and wherever this line of the Comintern dominated, is what lies behind the

fact that a tremendous opportunity for the advance of the world revolution was simply and criminally thrown away.

IV. Forces Line Up

The early years of the thirties saw the contradictions in Spanish society stretch to the breaking point.

Certain events symbolized this, such as the rising and brutal repression of anarchist-led peasants and braceros at the village of Casas Viejas in 1933. The masses here had risen as part of a larger rebellion, seizing rich lands in the immediate vicinity of the village—lands which were used to raise fighting bulls. In the furious retribution directed against the peasants and braceros by the Republican government, units of the Guardia Civil moved from house to

house, slaughtering whole families, and burning homes in their wake. All this became the focus of a massive political movement, including among the working-class parties, reflecting the explosion of anger and disgust that had been building against the Second Republican government.

The events at Casas Viejas show that Spain, though dominated by finance capital, was still a mainly rural society, where land remained a crucial question. Even at the outbreak of the civil war, 66% of the people lived in the countryside. These included an immense and smoldering agricultural proletariat—the 1 1/2 million *braceros*—who worked the huge *latifundia* estates of the south, lands stretching over *Andalucia* and *Estremadura*. These workers earned barely enough to survive by their summer earnings, and this had to last the five or six months out of the year that they were unemployed. They were drawn in huge numbers to the anarchists.

Smallholding peasants also existed throughout the countryside, their pitiful lands further divided up at each lapse of their short-term lease arrangements. Only in *Navarre* and some other scattered portions of the country were a class of middle-peasants managing to hold their own—these formed the base for Church and monarchist social movements.

But it was the proletariat which was really the cutting edge in the social movements that had been shaking and splintering Spanish society in the twentieth century—in the general strikes which swept the country following the February 1917 Russian revolution, in the bitter struggles against the imperialist war in *Morocco*, in the uprisings and revolts which marked the first three years of the 1920s (called by Spanish historians, “The Bolshevik Triennium”). The class was growing fast in numbers. By 1930 over 26% of the country were industrial workers, double the number in 1910.

The Russian Revolution had been an especially catalytic revolutionary element among the proletariat in Spain, as elsewhere in the world. As one reactionary historian, Cattell, has to admit:

“Symbols, terminology, and methods were copied from the Russian Revolution, without regard for the Communist Party [of Spain]. It was not unusual for a village without one communist member to revolt and establish a Soviet on the Russian model. They would often raise

the hammer and sickle and call themselves communists without any reference to the Communist Party of Spain. Likewise, Russian movies and stories of revolutionary heroism appealed to the masses, and as a result Russian novels and showings of movies were widespread.”¹²

As Cattell implies, this enormous respect and enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution was not the same thing as a conscious movement for proletarian revolution. But even this spontaneous movement and revolutionary sentiment pointed a powerful threat at the Spanish bourgeoisie.

The Republicans

On a cold, sunny fall day in 1935, Manuel Azaña looked out over the crowd flowing unendingly over the gentle hills in the town of *Comillas*, just outside of *Madrid*. Over 400,000 people had gathered for this speech, the largest political meeting in Spanish history. Red flags mingled with the tricolor of the Republic, and many of the hundreds of thousands were workers. Azaña’s speech would be an appeal to these masses to oppose the fascism that everyone could see coming—and rally around the flag of bourgeois democracy.

The Republic “must destroy absolutely the privileges of the moneyed classes who now subjugate the people. . . All Europe today is a battlefield between democracy and its enemies, and Spain is not an exception. You must choose between democracy, with all its shortcomings, with all its faults, with all its mistakes or errors, and tyranny with all its horrors. There is no choice. Ours is made. In Spain one hears frivolous and vain talk of dictatorship. We find it repugnant, not only by doctrine but by experience and through good sense. . .”¹³

The infamously arrogant Azaña had been jailed after the *Asturias* revolt although he had pointedly kept his distance from the action. (The government was not exactly acting irrationally in jailing him, though—Azaña had also signalled that he would be available for the Presidency should the revolt succeed.) President of the Second Republic for its first two years, leader in the recent merger of three “left Republican” parties, Azaña had become the outstanding symbol of English-leaning bourgeois democracy in Spain.

The Republicans were really an assortment of groupings. Their economic core

could be found in the small industrialists of the country, and as part of this they looked to the oppressed nationality bourgeoisies, especially the Catalans, as natural allies. By 1934, Azaña was characterizing the Catalan nationalist party, the *Esquerra* (“Left”), as “the only true Republicans left in Spain.” (The Basque bourgeoisie had an ambivalent relationship to the Republicans. Tied closely to the British, it had contradictions with *Madrid* and natural sympathies for the Republicans. But five out of the six leading Spanish banks were located in *Bilbao*, reflecting that the Basques were also tied in to the Spanish big bourgeoisie certainly more than the Catalans. This made for a politically centrist role for the Basque bourgeoisie.)

Aligned with the small industrialists were the urban non-exploiting petty-bourgeoisie—professionals, white-collar workers, civil bureaucrats, teachers, students and others whose numbers had greatly expanded during the relative boom times of the 1920s, but were restricted and crushed down by the big bourgeoisie. The intelligentsia especially came to articulate the interests of all the groupings who labelled themselves Republican. Meeting in literary salons, such as the *Ateneo* of *Madrid*, the intellectuals hammered out a programme expressing open admiration for “English-style parliamentarism,” giving voice to the needs of industry, and hitting particularly at the Church whose general backwardness and control of education and other parts of the superstructure stood squarely in the way of the intelligentsia.

The *Ateneo* became a center for the Republican movement. During the beginnings of the Second Republic in 1931, it was rumored that the *Ateneo* librarians had stocked guns between the books. Here, Azaña, who was secretary of the *Ateneo*, grouped around him figures who would play crucial roles in the civil war.

The Republicans tended to oppose the ruling class in its international dealings, also. In the speech at *Comillas*, for example, Azaña held that “Spain is too weak a power to engage in further adventurist expansion. . .” This was a warning to the big bourgeoisie not to break with its status as junior-partner to the English, a position long held by Azaña. (In fact, Azaña came to prominence in WW I, when he led mass demonstrations in support of the Anglo/French imperialist bloc, in opposi-

tion to the openly pro-German sympathies of the ruling class.)

Yet, despite these sharp contradictions with the Spanish big bourgeoisie, the Republicans also had much in common with it. The first years of the Second Republic had been nothing but a crass collaboration between the Republicans and the Spanish rulers, in spite of the revolutionary fanfare with which the founding of the Republic in 1931 was surrounded. These years deserve the same terse description which Lenin applied to the Kerensky government: "reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished." He also says, and this also snugly fits the Second Republic: "In particular, it is the petty-bourgeoisie who are attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and are largely subordinated to them through this [state] apparatus, which produces the upper sections of the peasants, small artisans, tradesmen, and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet and respectable jobs raising their shoulders *above* the people."¹⁴

The first years of the Second Republic were just such an attempt to "subordinate" the Republicans and use them as a buffer against the masses. But by 1935, as the crisis ripped open all actual contradictions in society, this arrangement fell apart. The honeymoon was over; Azaña's speech at Comillas is fighting words.

As can be seen by their history, the Republicans were opposed to the coming fascist move, but they were also opposed to a revolutionary break with the existing order. This was strikingly symbolized as the speech at Comillas concluded and tens of thousands of clenched fists were raised by the cheering crowd in a revolutionary salute. Azaña watched, refused to return the salute in kind, turned his back, and left the stage.

Socialists and Anarchists

Closely linked to the rise of the Republicans was the Socialist Party, which had originated among the printers and other skilled workers in Madrid at the turn of the century. These social-democrats had a long and opportunist history paralleling that of the Republicans: mass struggle against the regime with the aim of securing a niche in society for those they represented... and open collaboration whenever that niche seemed to be in the offing. Largo Caballero for example, later to be the leading figure in the plans for the October, 1934 Asturias revolt,

had been made Councillor of State under the military dictatorship of the 1920s, and Minister of Labor in the early Second Republic.

The Socialists' political ties to Republicanism were even more clear and direct in the case of Caballero's traditional rival in the party bureaucracy, Indalecio Prieto, who had risen politically under the sponsorship of the Basque banker Horacio Echeverría. There were big differences in the social base of each of these two politicians, however. In contrast to the business-like Prieto, Caballero represented the trade-union base of the party which was strongest around Madrid and central portions of the country. Caballero had made his career as a demagogue; with fewer direct ties to the Republicans, and engaged in constant competition with the more militant CNT (the anarchist-led union), Largo Caballero was forced to, and did maintain a social base of his own.

The 1934 Asturias revolt signified a major turn in the Socialist Party. The party's membership had quadrupled in the preceding eighteen months, with nearly half now members of the poor and middle-peasant Landworkers Federation. Despite this, the Socialists still mainly represented relatively upper-stratum workers and, even more than earlier, the petty bourgeoisie, but these groups had been crushed down by the terrible crisis of 1933 and disillusioned by the brutal repressive policies of the Second Republic. In short, the Socialists and their base had been radicalized. They were willing to take the most extreme measures—but still with the aim, as we have seen, of Republicanism, bourgeois democracy.

The Socialists began to attract large numbers of revolutionary-minded youth who openly admired the Comintern. They advocated the "Bolshevization" of the Socialist Party and actually moved to merge with the PCE. (The Socialists and the PCE merged in Catalonia during this period, and the youth groups of the two parties eventually merged in early 1936.) How the PCE would "train" these forces when they did merge we shall touch on later. The point here is that the changes in the Socialists reflected a radical shift in the mood of the masses. Much more was happening here than (as it is usually put by bourgeois historians), "Largo Caballero read Marx when he was in jail."

The anarcho-syndicalists, including the more or less purely anarchist FAI

(Federación Anarquista Ibérica) and the more syndicalist trade union it led (the CNT—Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores) were mainly absent in the events of October 1934, having exhausted their followers in the insurrections launched earlier in the 1930s (there were three major ones), and additionally, no doubt, had their own opportunist reasons for not joining the 1934 Asturias revolt. Even so, the spread of the anarcho-syndicalist movement was one important barometer of the changing character of the mass movement, along with the radicalization of the Socialists and the enormous prestige of the Soviet Union.

Anarcho-syndicalism had arisen among the rural semi-proletariat of the south, who brought it with them when they were recruited into the textile mills of Catalonia. It flourished in these and other small factories, usually of less than a hundred and very often only 20 or so workers, and among fishermen and woodcutters, as well as rural laborers. These were conditions especially favorable to the idea of factories (and farms) being taken over and run as autonomous economic and political units by those who worked them. As an anarchist leader Isaac Puente wrote, "There is no need to invent anything, to create a new organism. The nuclei of the organization around which the economic life of the future society will be organized already exist in the present society; the trade union and the free municipality..."¹⁵

This doctrine is at bottom conservative, closer to the outlook and interests of the petty bourgeoisie than of the proletariat. It sees no need for the proletariat to seize power and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat because it really sees no need to transform society. Instead of doing away with classes and the material and ideological basis for class differences in order to liberate *all mankind*, the anarcho-syndicalists advocated a "liberation" factory by factory and farm by farm, where workers and peasants would "liberate" themselves by (cooperatively) going into business for themselves.

There is much to criticize in the anarchist line, but it is unarguable that something about the spirit and style of their work much more challenged the masses, was much more rebellious, than the stuffed-shirt trade-unionism of the Socialists and what was soon to be the

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- April 14, 1931–Following resignation of King Alfonso XIII, the Second Republic is proclaimed
- October 5, 1934–Socialist-led rising begins in Asturias, lasting two weeks
- May, 1935–Soviet-French mutual assistance pact signed
- July-August, 1935–Seventh World Congress of Comintern
- October, 1935–Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia)

1936

- February 16–Popular Front wins elections
- March 25–mass Socialist-led land seizures in Extremadura
- April 1–Socialist and Communist youth groups merge
- July 17-20–military coup in Spain and Morocco
- August 4–Franco's Army of Africa begins march to Madrid
- September 9–British-dominated Non-Intervention Committee meets for first time in London
- November 7-23–Franco's forces are battled to a standstill at Madrid

1937

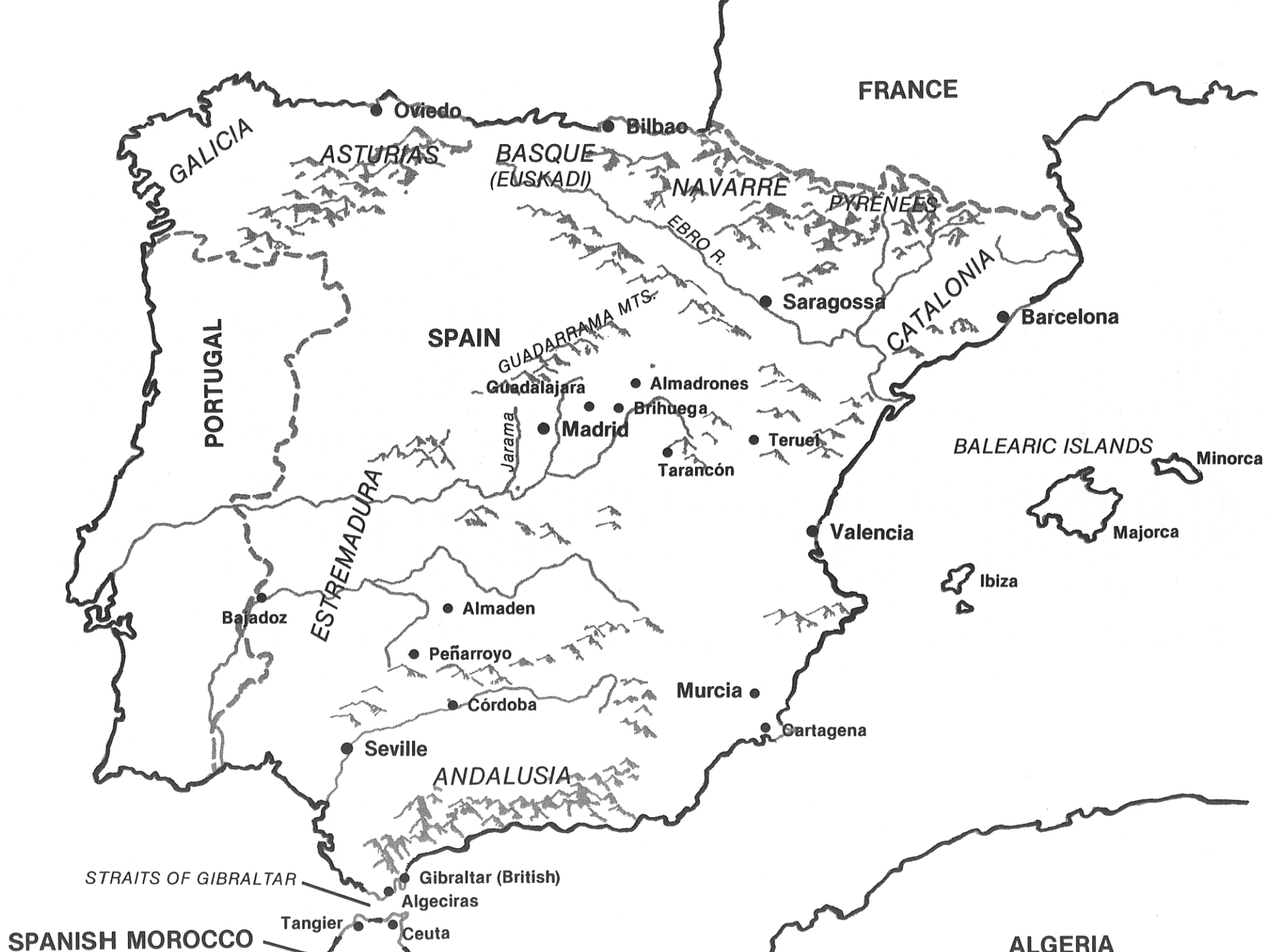
- February 5-24–Fascists are checked at Jarama; suffer important losses
- March 8-18–Italian troops backing Franco are routed in Battle of Guadalajara
- March 31–Franco's offensive on north begins with attack on Vizcaya
- May 3-7–Street fighting in Barcelona–Anarchists, POUM, against government and Communist Party (PCE) forces
- October 19–fall of Gijon completes loss of the north to Franco

1938

- April 14–Franco's forces reach Mediterranean–cut Republic in two
- July 24–People's Army launches counterattack on Ebro
- September 30–Munich Pact signed
- October 28–International Brigades' farewell demonstration in Barcelona
- November 16–Republic's forces defeated at Ebro, retreat across river with huge losses

1939

- January 26–Fascist offensive succeeds in occupying Barcelona
- February 27–Britain and France recognize Franco government. Azaña resigns and leaves for France
- March 6-12–Casado group launches coup against Negrin-PCE government. Fighting in Madrid between Casado and PCE-led forces
- March 27–Fascists occupy Madrid
- April 1–Franco declares end of war. U.S. recognizes Franco.
- August–German-Soviet non-aggression pact
- September–Germany invades Poland–World War 2 "officially" begins



“respectable antifascism” of the Communist Party. Why wouldn’t revolutionary-minded people be drawn to ideals, such as those expressed by the anarchist Durruti in this interview with the Canadian reporter Van Paasen, a more revolutionary statement than the Communist Party ever made during the war:

“Van Paasen: You will be sitting on top of a pile of ruins if you [the anarchist programme] are victorious.

“Durruti: We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a time. For you must not forget, we can also build. It is we who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. The world is growing, this minute.”¹⁶

Nothing comes to mind so much as Lenin’s admonition that “anarchism was not infrequently a sort of punishment for our own opportunist sins.”¹⁷

The problem, however, was that without Marxism-Leninism, and by and large opposed to it, the anarcho-syndicalist movement became a tail on various reformist dogs, including the Socialists, its members criticizing the PCE from the “left” in a way that concentrated on tactics and forgot about political power.

The Falange and the World’s Redivision

In the 1930s, the whole division of the world was thrown into question, with each of the imperialists desperate to redivide it to its own benefit. Spain both sought such a redivision and became a part of the ambitions of more powerful predators.

For the great powers, influence in Spain was a key part of being able to dominate Europe. A position in Spain would enable each of the opposing blocs to turn the flank of the other. Germany would be able to encircle France, while England would retain in Spain a link to the Mediterranean.

Beyond this important strategic role, Spain and the Spanish colonies provided other advantages to the great powers. The Iberian Peninsula and the colonies together fronted the Atlantic trade

routes in four places, including, most significantly, the Gibraltar passage between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Additionally, Germany eyed Spain as a possible stepping stone back into Africa (in fact, before the war German economic penetration into Spain had concentrated in Spanish Morocco and not on the Peninsula itself). Finally there was of course, the high-grade iron ore that was produced in the Asturias region, with its cheap and convenient access to European industry.

From the point of view of the Spanish ruling class, this sharpening international situation opened up some new possibilities. Already, after an abortive coup attempt by General Sanjurjo in 1932, contacts had been made with the Italian Fascist government by the Spanish military, and from this time on, links were progressively strengthened. Visits to Italy were made by monarchists of both the Alphonine and Carlist parties; paramilitary troops of these parties were even trained in Italy. To the Spanish bourgeoisie, more and more it began to seem that the Italian connection was “the way out.” Italy could provide the military might and the reliable forces which the Spanish rulers did not possess but desperately needed to suppress the growing mass movement. At the same time, the Italians might become the pry-bar with which to loosen or even break the hold of the British imperialists. Further, there was reason to hope that a new imperialist redivision of the world—and especially the defeat of Britain (and, to a lesser degree, the U.S.)—could mean that Spain could achieve the spheres of influence and opportunities for capital accumulation that were now being denied it.

Of the several groups which made connections to Italy during the Civil War, and which openly put forward the idea of the fascist form of dictatorship, the Falange was destined to become the leading political party under Franco. Formed in 1933, the group was financed by Juan March, Chairman of the Central Office of Spanish Industry and certainly had other important ties to the bourgeoisie as well, as indicated by the fact that its leader was none other than José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the military dictator to whom the bourgeoisie had turned in the 1920s. After the February 1936 elections, when the Church-sponsored CEDA failed miserably, most of CEDA’s membership

moved en masse into the Falange.

The Falange programme was, then, in advance of most of the groupings within the Spanish ruling class, but nevertheless, well-concentrated its aims: to “restore order,” to “eradicate Marxism,” and fulfill the so-called Spanish “will to empire.” What other, more-entrenched forces were unwilling to do, at least so openly, the Falange did wholeheartedly: it took on the English imperialists, condemning the current division of the world, and the status of Spain within it. Its programme called for the establishment of “Hispanidad,” an imperialist “Spanish unity” stretching from Latin America to the Philippines. This was not exactly a new idea. The Spanish rulers had long retained important interests in former colonies, and carefully kept alive their cultural ties in Latin America. But now the Falange proposed to seize on the world conjuncture, and cash in the chips.

The PCE

The Asturias rebellion also set the stage for the rise of the PCE (Communist Party of Spain) and the influence of the Comintern in Spain. Before this, the PCE had remained small in numbers and influence, and wildly uneven in its line. But starting with the major role played by the party in the rebellion itself and in the turmoil and struggle which followed it, the PCE expanded until, in the course of the war it was to become the single most important influence on the course of the Republic.

The party began in 1921, as a grouping of about 10,000 mainly young revolutionaries split off from the anarchists and Socialists. It passed through a period of effective illegality during the 1920s, during which time its numbers shrank to perhaps 800. In 1931, a letter from the Executive Committee of the Comintern laid out the course the party was to follow until at least the end of 1933: it would “win the majority of the working class” by gaining organizational leadership of the immediate struggles of the proletariat, and these struggles, especially the economic struggle, would lead straight to the overthrow of the “bourgeois-landlord government,” and the establishment of the “revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.”¹⁸

In general, there was a certain revolutionary potential in the party at this time, bursting out at such moments as in the 1927 mutiny among sailors in Cartagena, led by PCE cadres in opposition

to the war in Morocco. Nevertheless, and without attempting to follow the many shifts and contradictions in the PCE's early line, it can be said that the PCE was early bogged down in "left" economism, tailing the furious battles of the masses for reforms and against repression, hoping that these would lead to revolution. The PCE, like most Comintern parties at the time, saw a veritable dream road to revolution: automatically as the crisis played out, "millions will be awakening, and are already losing their illusions," and as the masses increasingly looked to the PCE as the leadership in their immediate struggles, all other forces would soon openly oppose the masses and stand thoroughly exposed. As for the bourgeoisie, the jig was up—the crisis would drive it in a straight line down.

What a shock, then, to this mechanical and narrow way of thinking when by 1935, Azaña was able to mobilize nearly a half-million people at Comillas, when the CEDA won a social base among the peasants and upper petty bourgeoisie, when the Socialists' numbers exploded, and the anarchists began challenging the very heart of "responsible trade-unionism" in Madrid and elsewhere (although they had lost a lot of support in their traditional base, Catalonia). Nor did the PCE seem to be fully aware of the Spanish bourgeoisie's international "reserves"—its ability, and necessity, to reach abroad to other powers to aid in propping up its rule.

The point is not that the small size and relative isolation of the party sealed its fate. The rapid development of world events reverberating in Spain were soon to provide extremely favorable conditions for a party guided by a revolutionary line to play a decisive role in the future of Spain and to deeply affect the world. Nor did the fact that they had been so weakened by economism mean that they could not change into a party capable of playing this role, although it did mean that a powerful inertia had been gathered, pushing it along the wrong course. But for the PCE, as for other Comintern parties during this same time, as it became clear that the "left" economist line would not lead to revolution, what got dropped was the goal of revolution, which while not eliminated from the party's programme was at least dropped into the indefinite and meaningless future.

If the PCE was already set up for a retreat, the trumpet call for the step

backward was sounded by the line of the Comintern's Seventh Congress, which although it took place in July-August 1935, consolidated and announced a line formulated by the Comintern leadership some time earlier.

The effects of this line were broad, deep-going, and utterly bad. As stated in the RCP document appearing elsewhere in this issue:

"Especially after the crushing defeat of the communists in Germany with the rise of the fascist form of dictatorship (1933), heavy defensive and defeatist tendencies grew in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Together with the growing danger of world war, especially of attack on the Soviet Union, openly rightist deviations, of a fundamental nature, became predominant—the promotion of nationalism, reformism and bourgeois democracy, the subordination of everything to the defense of the Soviet Union, etc., in a qualitatively greater way than before... all this was concentrated in the Dimitroff Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern (1935) and the implementation and further development of this line—which, as we know, involved, among other things, as one of its key ingredients, the basic repudiation of the Leninist position on 'defense of the fatherland.' This whole line was in its essence erroneous..."

In June 1935, to implement this Comintern line the PCE called for the formation of a Popular Front Coalition on the basis of a five-point programme of lukewarm reforms (excluding even the PCE's former, more revolutionary democratic demands, such as independence for Morocco and agrarian revolution), designed to be acceptable to the Republicans and to the British and French imperialists. Just as the class struggle in Spain was approaching the boiling point, the PCE decided to become an electoral party—in the name of fighting off the danger of fascism.

V. It All Goes Up For Grabs

The orientation of the PCE that it was in a bad position for revolutionary advance and in a good position only to "hold back the fascist tide" was not borne out by events. A great wave of struggle was about to break over Spain and spread in ripples throughout the world.

At the end of 1935, a falling-out between forces on the Right caused the Cortes, the Spanish parliament, to be

dissolved, and new elections called. Especially the CEDA looked forward confidently to the elections, fully expecting to consolidate its base and become an unchallenged reactionary center.

On the part of the mass groups and parties, an electoral Popular Front was formed, including several petty bourgeois Republican parties, the Catalan Esquerra representing the Catalan industrialists, the Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, and semi-Trotskyite Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM). Other Republican parties representing big bourgeois and rural petty bourgeois interests, the Catalan big bourgeois Lliga, and the Basque separatist and autonomist parties formed a Center. The anarchist-led CNT, though not officially represented in the coalition by political choice, supported the Popular Front also. The programme of this coalition was almost entirely the longstanding set of Republican demands: minor industrial and agrarian reforms (not including redistribution), educational schemes, measures to promote industry. It also included a demand which caught fire among the masses of people, the call for the release of the Asturian political prisoners.

When the voting on February 16, 1936 came to a close, millions had cast their ballots against the bourgeoisie and landlords—and for the Popular Front. A shaken Right coalition went down to a narrow defeat.

But the election results were just the beginning. As it turned out, the Republican programme was considerably more conservative than the mood of the masses of people, who were quick to jump on the opportunity provided by the election victory. On the very day following, huge crowds descended on the prison in Valencia, and forced the release of the political prisoners there. In the town of Oveido in Asturias, and many other parts of Spain, this "demand" was enforced before any law was passed.

The poor peasants and braceros swept over many of the big holdings, occupying them forcibly. These *asentamientos*—seized land farmed cooperatively—occurred first in Badajoz and Cáceres, but then spread to many other parts of the country.

Strikes also multiplied including many political strikes for the suppression of fascism. On several days alone, the number of strikers reached 450,000.



"Dinamiteros"—miners from Asturias, armed with the tools of their trade, who early in the war came to defend Madrid against Franco's tanks.

Along with this, political debate, struggle and mass meetings took place on every street, in every city. One bourgeois observer says, "there were meetings of tens of thousands at which workers applauded with enthusiasm the speakers who announced that the end of capitalism was near, and for them to do as they did in Russia."¹⁹ Thousands of Socialist Youth marched in Madrid in uniform on May Day, chanting slogans for a "red army" and "a workers' government."

Still relatively small but with rapidly growing influence, the PCE found itself carried forward on the crest of this struggle. The masses were occupying lands and overturning city councils, as José Díaz, party general secretary, described it, "not through legal channels, but through revolutionary channels, placing them in the hands of Communists, Socialists, and Left Republicans."²⁰ Dolores Ibarruri and other Communist deputies in the Cortes pressured the regime to grant land to the poor peasants (of course, this would in effect have only legalized what had already been taking place).

The PCE was walking a certain line here. It was not yet the major influence in events as it was to be later; nor were the interests of the Soviet Union yet directly involved. It would in some ways support the raging struggles of the masses, while at the same time it was already beginning its long honeymoon with the "antifascist" elements of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, especially the group around Azaña.

The military's plans for a coup became an open secret. Rightist newspapers and politicians consistently hinted and threatened that such plans were in the works as the various class forces maneuvered. The Azaña group, which was now in power, pushed to come to some arrangement with the forces grouped around the fascist generals. This is admitted in effect by the editor of Azaña's writings, Juan Marichal, who says that the preparations for a military move "did not play in Manuel Azaña's anguished mind the same role as the attitudes and actions of the extreme left."²¹ Azaña writes that, in a private talk with Gil Robles, he told the CEDA leader, "Your friends should give me a margin of confidence. They should not make difficulties for me. I have enough problems on the other side."²²

Certain moves were made by Azaña to supposedly tie the hands of the *golpistas*

(coup plotters). Franco was sent to the Canary Islands (from where, however, a secure and convenient command post was easily set up with his main base of support, the Moroccan-based Army of Africa); Gen. Goded was sent to the Balearic Islands (from where he ultimately directed forces in Catalonia); and Gen. Mola to Pamplona (the base of monarchist support, within striking distance of, and directly across the Guadarrama mountains from Madrid).

As one right-wing historian sneers, the government assumed it possessed "control of the army from above, the most effective method, based on the operation of hierarchical discipline in the armed forces."²³ It did not possess such control, despite the illusions and deceptions of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Republican politicians and their supporters, including the PCE.

The Generals Move

By early July, the various sections of the ruling class had ceased their mutual throat-cutting long enough to agree on a plan of action. Falangist and monarchist cadres were unleashed in a wave of bombings and assassinations, in order to "destabilize" the situation and whip up mass sentiment for "law and order."

By now the mass movement was straining at the bounds in which the Republican and left organizations had wrapped it. The unions and every major political party had created militias, among which the best-organized and fastest-growing was the Fifth (Quinto) Regiment of the PCE. One issue of the Caballero Socialist newspaper *Claridad* displayed huge headlines: "Armas! Armas! Armas!" as the masses pressed for arms. But this the Republicans would not do, since as one said, arms in the hands of the masses would be "pregnant with inconceivable dangers politically."²⁴

The masses were tense, but these policies had put them on the defensive, waiting for the bourgeoisie to make its move.

On July 17, Franco made plans to fly out of his exile in Las Palmas in a plane piloted by a British agent. On the 18th, the military launched attacks from the Moroccan garrison at Melilla; at the same time, Franco touched down in French Morocco where a *pronunciamiento* was issued: "The Army has decided to restore order in Spain . . ."

From barracks around the country, often in long-planned collaboration with

"Republican" mayors and local politicians, the military moved on union and party headquarters, the working-class barrios, town halls and other strategic points. In every city, crowds, sometimes numbering up to hundreds of thousands, came out into the streets demanding arms. Now finally, a certain amount of weaponry was distributed to the people, while others dug up the rifles that had been buried since the defeat of the 1934 uprising. But with or without weapons, where the masses were in the streets in great numbers and took the offensive, the fascist troops soon found themselves cut off and paralyzed. In Barcelona, hundreds of thousands of people fought the troops in unequal battles where lines of people were mowed down, only to be replaced by those behind. In Madrid, the soldiers were caught in the Montaña Barracks and annihilated there.

The generals had counted on swift, violent action, using a minimum of forces. Leaders of the mass organizations sometimes hesitated—they were fooled by reactionary government officials promising "the support of the authorities," or were intimidated by a show of force, or simply tailed after the Republican officials when they vacillated . . . but where the masses had a healthy disrespect for "bourgeois legality" they took action immediately, and smashed the military in their barracks.

Of the eight fascist divisions assigned to the equivalent regions of Spain, three were given the crucial role of marching on and suppressing the capital. With the collapse of these plans at the hands of the aroused masses, all was staked on Spain's occupation army in Morocco, the so-called Army of Africa, which was to land at southern ports and sweep northward to the capital. However, the Spanish sailors, in their great majority from a working-class background, had been deeply influenced by the upheavals among the civilian working class. When a radioman at the Communications Center of the Admiralty in Madrid discovered the officers' plans, he telegraphed the radio personnel on all ships, and all hell broke loose. Keepers of the ship arsenals seized arms and distributed them to the sailors. Bloody battles ensued between officers and crews. At 5 p.m., July 20, a telegram was received by the "liberated" Communications Center from the ship *Jaime Primero*:

"We have had serious resistance from

the commanders and officers on board, and have subdued them by force. Killed in the fight were one captain and one lieutenant. . .urgently request instructions as to bodies."²⁵

The mutineers seized nearly all the fleet for the Republic, putting a major barrier between the generals' only reliable and consolidated force in Morocco and their strategic objective, Spain. Several thousand troops had to be flown over the Straits in Italian and German aircraft, the first major intervention of these powers. The mutiny in the fleets had established a critical bottleneck for Franco's troops.

The coup failed to be decisive. The major population centers, industrial areas, and most of the richest farmlands were left in the hands of the people. Politically, the country was splintered and largely up for grabs—nationalist bourgeois governments were soon to coalesce in Catalonia and the Basque country, while the strengths of the various parties varied from region to region.

People's War in Madrid

Madrid shaped up as the setting for the first major showdown between the Army of Africa and the Republic. The promised German support to the generals had been predicated on capture of the capital; so too, the Republicans, already set on their "English strategy," believed that the other European "democracies" and especially Britain would come to their aid if they held control of Madrid. And from a purely technical view, Madrid was an invaluable center of road, rail and communications, as well as a major location of military stocks.

Troops were deployed defensively: the regular troops of the Madrid garrison, many of whom had stayed loyal, were sent to the Guadaramma passes to defend against Mola; other troops were called in from Badajoz and Murcia. As for the militia, by its very nature it fell into a defensive posture. Units were formed within each town, operating according to no overall plan. They fought bravely, but were outflanked, surrounded and annihilated again and again by the Foreign Legion. The militias took to defensively bunching along the roads, ready to retreat, but in this way fell prey to artillery and strafing runs by aircraft.

By November 6, ten thousand of Franco's troops were fighting through Madrid's outer suburbs and an equal number of reserves fast coming up in the

rear.

The PCE, though it did not begin the battle of Madrid as the largest political force in the city, soon developed into its leadership. In truth, the party had no choice but to take on this task if it was to play any kind of further leading role in the Republic. Moreover, Madrid would have to be defended by people's warfare, as we shall see, since at the outset the city faced the organized and well-armed fascist troops with little more than the will to resist of a million inhabitants.

The government ministers, now headed by Largo Caballero, had evacuated several days earlier, designating one General Miaja as the "President of the Junta of Defense." The eminent "People's Ministers" of the government had left hurriedly, early in the morning so as to "avoid an impression of flight." However they had got no farther than the suburb of Tarancón when they were intercepted by the infuriated Rosal Column of the anarchists, threatened with execution for desertion, and sent scurrying back to the city. That night they left by air.

Meanwhile, the Junta of Defense which the government had so formidably named, existed only in Caballero's mind. Miaja's calls to government offices, including those in charge of military stocks and personnel, mostly went unanswered; others greeted Miaja with a laugh and hung up. Miaja was becoming desperate; he knew he had but ten rounds of ammunition for each of the ten thousand rifles left in the city.

In the War Ministry, the Chief of Operations and six top assistants deserted. *Pravda* correspondent Mikhail Koltsov, pictured the sorry state of affairs:

"I went to the war ministry. . . I climbed the stairs to the lobby. Not a soul! On the landing, two old employees are seated like wax figures, wearing livery and cleanly shaven. . . waiting to be called by the minister at the sound of his bell. . . Rows of offices! All the doors are wide open. . . I enter the war minister's office. . . Not a soul! Further down a row of offices—the central general staff with its sections; the general staff of the central front, with its sections; the quartermaster corps with its sections; the personnel department with its sections. All the doors are wide open. The ceiling lamps shine brightly. On the desks there are abandoned maps, documents, communique, pencils, pads

filled with notes. Not a soul!"²⁶

Around the world, Franco's victory was thought to be imminent. Winston Churchill predicted that "this disagreeable Spanish situation" would be finished in a week. The U.S.-bankrolled managers of the Madrid phone company prepared a banquet to greet "the new government."

But Miaja's call to the headquarters of the PCE's Fifth Regiment found a very different picture. The Quinto had grown to a size of at least 60,000. It included not only military but block organization, and plans for mobilization of the entire population in defense and support work. Committees were organized to root out fifth column agents (the word originated in Madrid: the fascist troops were marching on Madrid in four main columns, the fifth "inside the city"). A few days later, in the midst of the fighting, Miaja was to receive a telegram from Caballero requesting the silverware that had been left at the Prime Minister's residence. Miaja shot back a message: "We who remain in Madrid are still eating!"

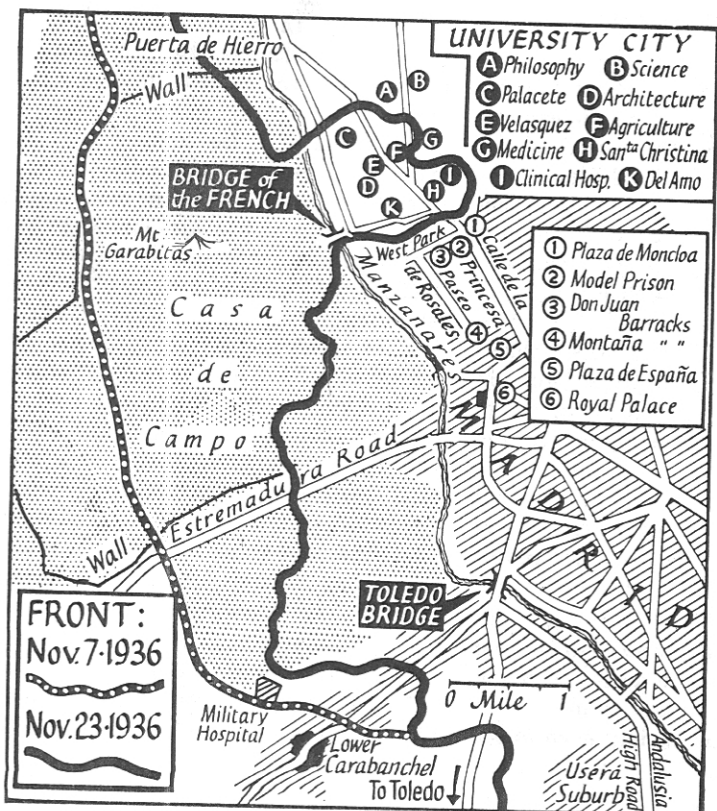
The masses again rose to meet the attackers: at least fifty thousand militia men and women laid down a wall of human bodies. Brigades from the unions—railway men, barbers, construction workers; an artists and graphics workers battalion; a sports battalion; a women's battalion engaged in bitter fighting at the Segovia Bridge. Miners from the Asturian region formed sapper units, the *dinamiteros*, and distinguished themselves in anti-tank fighting.

The elite troops of the Foreign Legion, who revelled in their reputation of brutality and the bizarre slogan "Down With Intelligence, Long Live Death!" now found themselves nailed to the very edge of the city. Bitter hand-to-hand fighting erupted even from floor to floor in the university, but the militias wouldn't back off. (One unit reported sending an inquiry to its headquarters asking what position it should retreat to if necessary. "To the cemetery" came the answer.)

It was the tanks, planes and artillery which most threw the inexperienced militiamen. At first there was not much at hand to fight off the tanks. One U.S. newspaper reported in all seriousness that the Spanish militias had invented a new anti-tank device called "echando coniones al asunto" (literally, "putting your balls on the line"), for that was the answer to the tanks which fighter after



Above and right, Madrid, July 1936. Caches of arms are broken open and weapons distributed. A key part of the planned fascist coup was to be an attack on the city by troops of the great Montaña barracks. But the barracks were surrounded and the soldiers pinned down. Below, right, November 1936. Trolley at the front. "You can take a streetcar to the front line," the Madrileños never tired of telling us, "but don't take the Metro, you might come up on the wrong side" recalled one member of the International Brigades who fought in Madrid.



fighter had given: "guts." Militiamen, consciously imitating the Soviet films playing all over Madrid, threw themselves in the path of enemy tanks, let them approach to a few feet, and threw dynamite charges.

With the first arrival of the International Brigades, organized by the Comintern, the fighters learned to dig trenches and also deal more scientifically with tanks and artillery. The impact of the Brigades filled the Madrileños with inspiration. Disciplined cadres of the Commune de Paris (French and Belgian) Edgar André (German and British), and Dabrowski (Polish) Battalions marched through the streets singing the *Internationale*, fists raised. Other signs of the influence of the international communist movement: huge portraits of Lenin and Stalin dominated the city, especially during the celebration of the Russian Revolution which took place at the height of the fascist attack. As part of this, minute-by-minute accounts of the fighting were broadcast to Moscow, and played on loudspeakers to crowds gathered in Moscow for the celebrations of the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Brigades brought more than help—they brought military training. For one thing, they mostly came from countries which, unlike Spain, had fought in WW1, so that many were veterans. Many, too, were veterans of another sort: of the 1919 Hungarian insurrection, of street battles in Germany and so on. The small British contingent in the Commune de Paris Battalion was from Oxford and Cambridge, upper-crust British colleges whose curriculum included some useful military education. Such people became valuable teachers—but their necessary technical knowledge was accompanied by a bourgeois military line that the PCE later embraced wholeheartedly.

During these November days, and in the major battles following in which the Republic beat back attempts to encircle the capital, the enthusiasm and rich creativity of the masses in war came flooding forward. Typical is this description by a Communist union leader, written after the first Soviet arms shipments were sent to the Republic.

"When they received their first Soviet tanks, crews had to be rapidly trained; a specialized business which in the Soviet Union could take a year. Madrid taxi drivers were pressed into service. This is exactly like driving a taxi, except that

instead of a wheel you've got two levers.' People who knew trigonometry were needed to operate the range-finders; the latter were removed. So, too were the radio receivers which were replaced by signal flags. Where the radio had been there was room for three more shells. The Soviet advisors found it difficult to believe the crews were being trained in forty days. They came to see. Julian watched the taxi-drivers maneuver their tanks in perfect formation..."²⁷

An armaments industry had to be rigged up—but where could it be located in a city subject to daily carpet bombing? One city engineer drew up a plan to use the incompleting tunnel of the Madrid subway; when the various small plants were moved into this area, the Republic had probably the safest, and most strangely shaped, arms factory in the world.

The front finally stabilized on the outskirts of the city. The following battles to the southeast at Jarama Valley, and north of Guadalajara, also resulted in stalemate. The PCE, with nothing to rely on but the masses of people, had made its most prestigious achievement. But it was the last time the party was to lead in this manner. From now on, just as it relied on bourgeois politics, the PCE was also to stand, above all else, for bourgeois warfare.

VI. "They Did Not Want Political Power"

"They did not want political power." These words could serve as the epitaph for the PCE during the period of the Popular Front and the Civil War.

This summation, expressed in the conversation with Mao cited earlier, is ironic, since according to countless bourgeois historians, the PCE was "guilty" of a ruthless power grab. The truth is that while the PCE was quite ruthless in combatting the bourgeois forces in the Republic who wanted to capitulate to Franco, and was certainly involved in plenty of jockeying within the government to keep these forces from winning out, overall they subordinated the war against Franco to what was acceptable to the British and French imperialists. While they might have lost anyway, this subordination in fact weakened the war against Franco considerably. To put it another way, they fought to maintain a bourgeois state and society even in the

midst of a war against the main forces of the Spanish bourgeoisie and Spanish state. The revisionist "parliamentary road" adopted by the PCE in 1934 under the influence of the Comintern developed into the *politically* capitulationist line carried out by the PCE when that parliamentary road failed and the masses were thrown into armed struggle against the bourgeoisie by the bourgeoisie itself.

The 1964 comments by Kang Sheng, expressing what seems to have been Mao's views, are worth quoting more extensively:

"On New Democracy is of great significance for the world communist movement. I asked Spanish comrades, and they said the problem for them was to establish bourgeois democracy, not to establish New Democracy. In their country, they did not concern themselves with the three points: army, countryside, political power. They wholly subordinated themselves to the exigencies of Soviet foreign policy, and achieved nothing at all. (Mao: These are the policies of Chen Tu-hsiu!) They say the Communist Party organized an army, and then turned it over to others. (Mao: This is useless.) They also did not want political power, nor did they mobilize the peasantry. At that time, the Soviet Union said to them that if they imposed proletarian dictatorship, England and France might oppose it, and this would not be in the interests of the Soviet Union. Also, when they fought, they waged regular war, in the manner of the bourgeoisie, they defended Madrid to the last. In all things, they subordinated themselves to Soviet foreign policy."²⁸

The heart of these comments is not that Spain had to go through an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal (new-democratic) stage exactly of the sort suited to the conditions in a colonial or neo-colonial country before going over to the socialist stage of the revolution. Clearly, Spain's revolution had very crucial democratic tasks to accomplish, especially in relation to the oppressed nations within Spain and the semi-feudal survivals in the countryside; but it is also clear that Spain was not primarily a feudal country nor a semi-colony like China. (Here there are some similarities to Russia which, though not a neo-colonial country, was backward and still went through a democratic stage.) The point here is that it was wrong to make the PCE's strategy the defense of bourgeois democracy and not the seizure of politi-

cal power.

Without defining a programme for revolution in Spain (which is far from our purpose), there are some general questions which must be dealt with. The civil war did not represent a "revolt against the legitimate Spanish state" by Franco & Co., as the PCE claimed. What the PCE "forgot" was the same thing it had "forgotten" when it formulated the parliamentary road line: that the state in bourgeois society represents a dictatorship by the bourgeoisie (and other reactionary classes) over the masses of people, a dictatorship which, while sometimes adorned with the trappings of parliamentary democracy, ultimately rests on the bourgeoisie's armed forces. This Leninist truth was demonstrated by the fascists themselves—when the Popular Front's parliamentary majority and the Republic itself proved to be in contradiction with the ruling class' interests, they resorted directly to their army, navy, police, etc. to suppress the opposition and institute a new form of rule.

In other words, regardless of the Popular Front's election, and even without taking into account that the programme of the Popular Front was simply a series of reforms and in no way revolutionary, even regarding purely democratic questions—still, no matter what the programme of the Popular Front might have been, the bourgeoisie still had the army and essential elements of the police forces, courts, bureaucracy, etc.—in other words, the bourgeoisie still had power.

What was launched by Franco and the other generals in June 1936 was not an "insurrection" as the PCE called it, nor were these men "rebels," although this was the terminology used to paint the anti-Franco forces with the brush of bourgeois legality. The fascists were not out to overthrow the state—in fact they were part of and utilized the main armed forces of the state. They certainly did not represent a different ruling class from that which had previously ruled through the Republic. This fascist move represented an attempt to change the form of bourgeois rule, as well as Spain's place within the web of international imperialist relations. But once the bourgeoisie, having overcome a period of near paralysis, had launched this civil war for aims completely in contradiction to the revolutionary interests of the masses, the proletariat had no choice but to fight—and civil war became the main form of class struggle.

Although the bourgeoisie had seized the initiative, the international and national political and economic conditions were very favorable to the revolutionary proletariat. The Spanish bourgeoisie had become unable to govern through the Republican form of rule and unable to impose fascism either. The international crisis of imperialism had a concentration point in Spain, and the jockeying of all the imperialists in preparation for war to redivide the world made it impossible for them to gang up on revolution in the way they might have during other periods. There is no guarantee that the Spanish proletariat could have successfully seized power, but there is every reason to believe they could have waged a battle for power that at least would have changed the political climate in Europe and affected the whole world, a struggle which, even if it had not been successful (and it might have been), would have constituted a powerful dress rehearsal for a revolution.

The central task and the main form of struggle facing the Spanish working class was the defeat of Franco. This constituted a particular phase or substage of the Spanish revolution no matter what other stages it might or might not have had to go through after the defeat of Franco. Certainly there were powerful bourgeois forces that had to be united with or neutralized, that couldn't simply be driven into the camp of the enemy. These forces were mainly those who had traditionally rallied around the banner of the Republic. But even if it was correct to continue to raise the banner of the Republic in order to facilitate isolating Franco's forces to the maximum—and insofar as the Republic at least symbolized, for instance, opposition to the oppression of nations within the Spanish state—still, in such a situation the Republic would represent mainly "an order of battle," to borrow a phrase from Lenin, a temporary and conditional alliance of forces for the duration of the civil war against Franco and not, principally, a form of state to be consolidated.

The essential question was whether the proletariat and its strategic allies would be politically and militarily prepared to establish socialism, even if the proletariat had to share political power with more temporary allies before going over to the dictatorship of the proletariat—or whether the proletariat's leadership would attempt to restrict the struggle to defending bourgeois democracy in order not to offend those

they saw as allies. And in regard to these allies, the question was whether the proletariat would lead them or be led by them, whether it would unite all who could be united to move forward toward ending all exploitation and oppression as part of the international struggle of the proletariat and oppressed peoples, or would fight to continue a form of exploitation and oppression—its "democratic" form which had already proved intolerable to so many millions.

Franco's "revolt" posed the question of power. This was not grasped by the PCE's "left" critics, the anarchists and the Trotskyites. The anarchists in particular were determined to carry out a kind of wartime economism, concentrating the struggle on seizing land and factories and establishing co-ops, without regard to the central question of the war. Their programme, which called for seizing the wealth of the landlords and capitalists and opposed seizing political power, actually had much in common with the outlook of the petty proprietor. Since the main form the revolutionary struggle had to take under the circumstances was the civil war against Franco, the insistence by the anarchists and others that the war had to take a back seat to the "Revolution"—that, for instance, the wealth of the "rich" should be seized indiscriminately, without regard to who could be won over to the war against Franco and who could be neutralized, or that any kind of centralized command in the armed forces and the economy was wrong, no matter what was needed to wage the war—all this was not revolutionary at all, despite the widespread revolutionary spirit and heroism among the ranks of the workers and rural poor attracted to the anarchists, and despite the fact that many members of the anarchist organizations actually "betrayed" these anarchist principles and fought for revolution.

The PCE did grasp the centrality of the war, but "they did not want political power." This latter, and decisive, point they actually had in common with the anarchists, though the PCE's programme in this regard was more reformist, less revolutionary in spirit. They did not see the war as a method for building up the forces of the proletarian revolution and isolating and annihilating the forces of the enemy. Their whole point of view was that the proletarian revolution had to be in recess during the war, that instead of being the main form of revolutionary struggle, the war was

an interlude in the revolutionary struggle which could only proceed again after the defeat of Franco, *i.e.* after the re-establishment of bourgeois democracy.

Compare the view expressed in the conversation with Mao with the PCE's views, as expressed by Dolores Ibarurri, also known as "La Pasionaria," probably the most famous PCE leader:

"It would have been nothing but criminal adventurism had the Communist Party attempted to seize power in a Spain divided by a civil war of such a special nature, and in the midst of a capitalist world pandering to Hitler and preparing for World War II. We would have had to push aside all our allies in the Popular Front, thus clearing the way for the Fascist Powers and international reactionary circles to intervene openly in Spain. . . . neither the Socialist Party nor the Anarchists would have sat back peacefully before a change of this nature. . . ."²⁹

Santiago Carrillo, a former Socialist youth leader who rose rapidly into the PCE leadership, put it this way:

"There are some who say that at this stage we should fight for the Socialist Revolution, that we are practicing a deception. . . nevertheless, comrades, we are fighting for a democratic republic, and furthermore for a democratic and parliamentary republic. . . we know that if we should commit the mistake of fighting at this time for the Socialist Revolution in our country—and even for some considerable time after victory—we should see in our fatherland not only the fascist invaders, but side by side with them the bourgeois democratic governments of the world that have already stated explicitly that in the present European situation, they would not tolerate a dictatorship of the proletariat in our country."³⁰

Another PCE leader, Jesús Hernández, was also extremely explicit:

"It is absolutely false that the present workers' movement has as its object the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship after the war is terminated. It cannot be said that we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We, communists, are first to repudiate this supposition. We are motivated exclusively by the desire to defend the democratic republic established on April 14, 1931, and revived last Feb. 18 [with the election of the Popular Front]."³¹

The way the question is posed here is wrong. The PCE leadership used the position of some anarchists and especially the POUM Trotskyites (that the proleta-

riat should make the bourgeois Republican forces the main target of its struggle) as a straw man, as though the only alternative was to completely capitulate and tail these forces. Even if the *immediate* object of the struggle was not the dictatorship of the proletariat (but rather some form of dictatorship by the proletariat in alliance with other classes over the main reactionary classes), and even given that the class struggle had to be adjusted to unite all who could be united against Franco, still, to promise that "for some considerable time after victory" Spain would continue to be a "democratic and parliamentary republic" was to consign the peoples of Spain and those oppressed by it to the hell this republic had already proven to be. Further, while Spain's imperialist neighbors could not fully gang up on the revolution there, at the same time the attitude taken by Britain and France—fellow "parliamentary and democratic republics"—towards the Spanish Republic was itself a complete exposure of the class nature of such governments; though torn by contending imperialist interests, they clearly preferred Franco's fascism. Of course such governments would not tolerate the dictatorship of the proletariat—in fact, they would not tolerate anything less than a fully consolidated bourgeois dictatorship subservient to the interests of one or another of the great powers—but since when had the proletariat ever been bound by what the bourgeoisie will tolerate!

All the imperialist governments were wracked by crisis and on the verge of even greater crisis as world war approached, and their room to maneuver and much of their economic and political reserves were squeezed more and more tightly. Mussolini's government, which seemed to be the Spanish revolution's strongest enemy, was to collapse in the midst of World War 2, only a few years later. This approaching world war certainly involved grave dangers—but it also was stretching the whole imperialist system to the limit, creating increasingly favorable conditions for proletarian revolution. Mao recognized this in terms of the Chinese revolution, yet the PCE and the Comintern saw this situation as an excuse *not* to make revolution in Spain.

On the part of the PCE's leaders, what was clearly going on was something not exactly unknown in the previous history of workers' parties: in the face of the grave dangers and tremendous opportu-

nities presented by the conjuncture, they saw only the dangers and politically capitulated to the bourgeoisie—specifically to bourgeois forces in Spain, and to Britain and France—at the same time that they were leading the military struggle against Spain's ruling class. (As we will see, other forces in the Republic, especially those around Azaña, were willing to capitulate directly to Franco.) The PCE's capitulation fit in with and was encouraged by the line taken by the Comintern on Spain, a line which grew out of the Comintern's line on the overall conjuncture.

The "English Strategy"

At the end of 1936, after the successful defense of Madrid, Stalin, along with his foreign minister, Molotov, and Voroshilov, head of defense, sent a famous letter to Largo Caballero, then head of the Republican government:

"The Spanish Revolution traces its own course, different in many respects from that followed by Russia. This is determined by the differences in the social, historic, and geographic conditions, and from the necessities of the international situation. . . . It is very possible that in Spain, the parliamentary way will prove to be a more effective means of revolutionary development than in Russia. . . . The Republican leaders must not be rejected, but on the contrary, they must be attracted and drawn closer to the government. It is *above all* [emphasis added] necessary to secure for the government the support of Azaña and his group, doing everything possible to help them to overcome their vacillations. This is necessary in order to prevent the enemies of Spain from regarding her as a Communist Republic, and in this way to avoid their open intervention, which constitutes the greatest danger to republican Spain."³²

What is being said here, is this: the revolutionaries must not do anything that might offend Britain and France. Stalin is not proceeding from a general theoretical statement that Spain might see the first "peaceful" transition to socialism—nor could he, because the proletariat was already at war with the bourgeoisie. Nor was he necessarily wrong in principle to call for unity, at least some tactical unity—above all, a battlefield alliance—with the Azaña forces linked to British imperialism. Such a course might have resembled the efforts of the Chinese Communists led by Mao to establish a united front with the pro-U.S. Chiang Kai-shek KMT against the

Japanese invaders (although it should be kept in mind that what was going on in Spain was not *principally* an invasion by foreign imperialism, but a civil war). But Stalin is saying much more than this. He is saying that due to "the necessities of the international situation," the struggle must be confined to bourgeois democracy. What are these necessities? The "open intervention" of "the enemies of Spain." Leaving aside the formulation "enemies of Spain" (which is more than a little laden with great-nation chauvinism—the Spanish state, after all, itself oppressed other nations), which enemies of Spain was he referring to? Italy and to a lesser extent Germany were already intervening. Did he think that the "greatest danger" was that Britain and France would also intervene? This was not likely, nor did he likely think so. Frankly, the "greatest danger" here is the danger a Soviet-backed revolution or openly revolutionary struggle in Spain might have presented to the USSR's strategy for defending itself through an alliance with Britain and France.

At bottom, there is Stalin's line that the defense of the USSR and the world revolution were identical, and that the world revolution, in order to progress, should everywhere be subordinate to the defense of the USSR. The Comintern and the USSR defended the Republic while the bourgeois democracies feared it and worked to see it crushed—but at the same time, Stalin and the Comintern opposed revolution in Spain. This line was the inevitable result of a wrong overall line on the world conjuncture and the defense of the USSR in that context.

The revolutionary goal was to disappear from the party's agitation, the independent revolutionary preparation of the masses was to be dropped. And why? "The essential thing is to seek the collaboration of the European democracies, particularly that of England," explained Juan Comorara, secretary-general of the PCE's sister party in Catalonia. "In the democratic bloc of powers, the decisive power is not France, but England." Comorara also said, "It is essential for party comrades to realize this so as to moderate their slogans at the present time."³³ The truth is, though, that what the PCE called for was not a tactical adjustment of the revolutionary struggle but its complete abandonment.

This course followed the diplomatic strategy of the Soviet Union, that of at-

tempting to align Russia and the Anglo-French bloc directly against Germany. In 1935, the Soviets signed a mutual defense treaty with France, but this remained largely a paper alliance; the key, as Comorara stated, was to win Britain to such an agreement. Nothing was to stand in the way of this projected alliance. It became the reactionary policy of the PCE to wean the British away from Franco by proving that the imperialists had nothing to fear in Republican Spain, even one with major PCE influence.

Britain, however, was looking out for its own imperialist interests which, as it turned out, did not involve defending the Spanish Republic against fascism. In fact, for Britain, what was involved was more than its interests in Spain—these were to take a back seat to Britain's overall interests, particularly their schemes to achieve the most favorable conditions to isolate and defeat Britain's most important rival, Germany.

Winston Churchill, for example, first looked forward eagerly to a Franco victory, but then towards the end of the war, with German influence somewhat on the upswing, and the "danger" of revolution in Spain ebbing thanks to the PCE and its allies, Churchill changed his position, saying, "Franco has all the right on his side because he loves his country. Also Franco is defending Europe from the communist danger—if you wish to put it in those terms. But I, I am English, and I prefer the triumph of the wrong cause. I prefer that the other side wins, because Franco could be an upset or a threat to British interests, and the others no."³⁴ But despite this, Britain continued to pursue a policy of "non-intervention," including organizing a naval blockade of the Republic to prevent it from receiving arms from abroad, while Franco continued to receive huge arms shipments and troops from Italy and Germany. Why? Because for Britain, its attempts to block the development of the Italian-German alliance and win Italy over to its bloc or at least neutralize it—and even more, its maneuvering to have Germany tied down in a war with the USSR while Britain avoided directly clashing with Germany for as long as possible—were far more important than whether or not Italy increased its influence in Spain at Britain's expense.

Britain had even gone along with the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), which more or less fell within Britain's

"sphere of influence." In early 1936, the English were pushing for detente with Italy in the Mediterranean, an extremely crucial part of Britain's empire. To this end an Anglo-Italian Naval Agreement was drawn up, and it actually came into effect in the course of the civil war. In the period before the civil war, especially, this idea of winning over or at least neutralizing Italy was not a forlorn hope (although it obviously did not work out, at least not fully), since Italy and Germany already had conflicting interests in the Balkans, over Austria, and over the Mediterranean generally. In line with this, the British were not about to oppose Italian fascist intervention in Spain—and they were not displeased in the slightest by Franco's efforts to restore "order" and keep the virus of revolution from spreading to where it could infect all Europe.

Britain's dealings in Spain with Italy were quite different from Britain's dealings with Germany. It was Italy which, by tacit agreement with Germany, took on the main role in the massive intervention, including sending in very large numbers of ground troops, aircraft, and armor. Germany, by contrast, sent only the Condor Legion air fleet, and a good flow of materiel. Since Germany never did intervene in a really massive way, the British imperialists were able to carry out their policy of avoiding a direct collision with Germany, while keeping a wary eye on it (and on Franco's dealings with it). Germany, for its part, did keep its distance. But its policy was not a passive one, any more than was Britain's. Rather, by allowing Italy to take the front lines in the Spanish intervention, it hoped that this unpredictable and volatile war would drive Britain and Italy further apart rather than bring them together.

In sum, Britain did not oppose a Franco victory, nor Italian intervention, although it continued to have grave and growing reservations about German influence. This made for a contradictory (but again, not hostile) stance. The best solution, from the point of view of the British imperialists, was not a straight-out Franco victory, but rather some kind of imperialist compromise. The British and their political representatives in the Republic consistently pushed for a big-power agreement dividing Spain into spheres of influence, and quite possibly would have achieved this if the war had stalemated. (In fact, much to Hitler's dis-

gust, Spain remained neutral—though pro-Axis—during WW2.)

This was Britain's motive in becoming the moving force in the so-called International Committee for the Application of Nonintervention in Spain. Twenty-five big and smaller imperialist countries ultimately joined the Committee, and of course worked within it to strengthen their own world positions; the Committee became quite a complex forum for the maneuvering leading to world war. Still, as the French chargé in Berlin put it, "The committee and its powers are . . . an invention of the English." As such the Committee was aimed at stemming the flow of arms and volunteers to the Republic, as well as granting a degree of legitimacy and thus freedom of action to Franco and his Italian ally. This it did very effectively, choking off most arms from everywhere except the Soviets and Mexico. The Committee also provided a vehicle for the British collusion (and contention) with Italy, focusing on their gangster-like "detente" in the Mediterranean. Italy was not a member of the League of Nations; for this and other reasons, the Committee was set up outside the League's structure.

The Non-Intervention Committee also became a form of contention between Britain and France. France had originated the idea for a nonintervention committee. But its motives were very different from those of the English—it genuinely wanted to oppose German and Italian intervention. This was *not* because of the Popular Front (including the French Communist Party) running the French government and its supposed "progressive ideas," and not *simply* because a Franco victory would put France's old rival Italy in a menacing position on her southern flank. The French imperialists also were, it would seem, unhappy about the whole policy of "appeasement." England's Spanish policy would, like all its strategic moves of that period, strengthen Germany and Italy, and even if this was intended to pit Germany against the Soviet Union, France would sooner or later absorb the first and greatest blows of war on the continent. France hoped that the Committee's diplomatic "controls" would make it difficult for Italy and Germany to aid Franco—or at least expose Axis duplicity so sharply that France would gain freedom to carry out its own policies.

Thus France occasionally opened the

border to materiel being shipped through France to the Republic, and to a degree funneled arms through Mexico. But the dominant policy in the French bourgeoisie, carried out scrupulously by the Socialist Leon Blum, was founded on the Anglo-French entente. Thus, after Blum shipped some weaponry to the Republic right at the outbreak of hostilities, a French journalist reported from England: "It is not well recorded here."³⁵ The British were not about to allow such aid. By December 1936, it was already clear that Britain had "eaten up" the French in this hidden battle. What started as a loose but genuine initiative for nonintervention by the French was taken over and used as a screen and a weapon against the Republic by the British. Said Blum, "A certain number of our hopes and expectations have been disappointed."³⁶

The U.S. was not a formal member of the Non-Intervention Committee, in line with its own "neutrality" strategy of hoping to see its rival imperialist powers and the Soviet Union weakened before the U.S. stepped into the coming conflict. Nevertheless, like its soon-to-be allies, the U.S. was "neutral" on the side of Franco. U.S. oil companies supplied Franco with a major portion of the fuel supplies without which there could have been no successful invasion and no large-scale use of mechanized warfare. The trucks transporting Franco's troops through Spain were more often than not provided by the U.S. as well. At the same time, of course, the U.S. government used its pious claims of strict neutrality to try to prevent American citizens from fighting on the side of the Republic. (Later, starting in the midst of World War 2 itself, the U.S. was to begin to emerge as Franco's main backer and eventually the dominant foreign power in Spain—a development which sheds some light on the imperialist appetites behind the U.S.'s "neutrality" during the civil war.)

Meanwhile, even in the midst of the most cynical and thoroughly reactionary maneuvering over the issue of Spain by *all* the major imperialist powers, in order to win over the British and other imperialists and in line with overall Soviet policy, the Comintern did its best to portray the Spanish Civil War as principally a great patriotic war waged against the fascist invaders, Germany and Italy, against whom the whole world should unite. Togliatti, the chief Comintern representative in Spain, declared in Oc-

tober 1936, "The struggle of the Spanish people bears the character of a national revolutionary war. This is a war for the rescue of the people and the country from a foreign enslavement because victory of the rebels would mean an economic, political and cultural degeneration of Spain, her dissolution as an independent state, and the enslavement of her people by German and Italian fascism."³⁷

In this way, the work done by the Comintern to build support for the Spanish Republic, probably one of the most extensive worldwide campaigns in history, rather than building proletarian internationalism—the support of the world's proletariat and oppressed peoples for the advance, anywhere and everywhere, of the world revolution—instead built up illusions about bourgeois democracy and twisted the support of the world's peoples for the masses in Spain into support for one imperialist bloc against the other.

As the PCE-leaning Socialist del Vayo put it after the war: "Not a day passed almost until the end when we did not have fresh reasons to hope that the Western democracies would come to their senses, restore us their right to buy arms from them. And always our hopes prove illusory."³⁸

Betrayal of Morocco

The PCE, of course, seldom argued that revolution in Spain had to be held back for "internationalist" reasons, that is, for the sake of the USSR's alliance with Britain and France. Instead they argued, as we have seen, that flying into the arms of British and French imperialism was the only way out for the "Spanish people." The example of Morocco is one of the sharpest exposures of how what the PCE was clinging to was imperialism.

By the end of the war, over 135,000 Moroccan troops had fought under Franco. Especially in the first few months they were probably decisive. They constituted at first the only large reliable force, and continued to be the fascists' most effective shock troops, snipers, and commandos. But from the first, the Moroccan masses had opposed and even in some places had risen in arms against Franco—only the Caliph and Grand Vizir were on friendly terms with the generals, while the main nationalist leaders were antagonistic. Why couldn't the Moroccans be neutralized or won over? Why didn't the Republic declare that Morocco should be uncondi-

tionally independent?

From even before the generals' move, a series of appeals to the Popular Front government had been made by Moroccan nationalists in the camp of Abd el-Krim. In the fall of 1936, two leaders, Muhammed Hassan al-Ouezzani and Omar Abdeljalil, visited Republican Spain, promising to organize against Franco in Morocco in return for a promise of regional autonomy such as had been granted to Catalonia. But they were refused and sent packing. Why?

The official history of the PCE complains, "If Spain's Socialist leadership could have liberated itself from the sick obsession of 'not irritating England and France'... if they could have taken a clear and positive position on the nationalist aspirations in Morocco, then a most difficult situation indeed would have been created for Franco."³⁹

All the evidence shows that this is hypocritical bullshit.

It is true that particularly the Socialist Indalecio Prieto, aligned with the Azaña group, was responsible for turning down the Moroccan delegation and even denying them a hearing in the Cortes (parliament). But one has to ask, not why did the social democrats act like social democrats, but why did not the PCE itself continue to press for independence for Morocco?

There were fertile grounds for a different and revolutionary course for the PCE. The party had a history of struggle against the colonial wars in Morocco, while the small party in Morocco (at one time a branch of the PCE Andalusian District) had itself led rebellions against Spanish domination. And, of course, all this had taken place in the context of a protracted struggle for national liberation on the part of the Moroccan people. (Even after the betrayals of the PCE and Comintern, some Moroccan revolutionaries showed genuine internationalism by still fighting with the Fifth Regiment of the PCE and the International Brigades.)

But during the whole period of the civil war, the party did no consistent work to raise the issue, even later when the PCE was largely determining the course of the Republic. Even in the first Popular Front government platform, the Moroccan question appeared only as the demand for "introduction of a democratic regime"⁴⁰ (which was vague to the point of being meaningless), and the PCE built no public opinion even around this. A weak excuse is offered by Alva-

rez del Vayo: the Moroccan troops were "totally immune from all political propaganda of a democratic nature."⁴¹

The problem was not that the Moroccan people were "immune" to revolution. The problem was that the leadership of the Republic was opposed to it. The Socialists feared "irritating Britain and France" because what they were fighting for was the preservation of the existing imperialist world order, including not only the dominant position of these great powers in Europe, but also Spain's position within that worldwide imperialist system, including its colonies and all the bloodsucking that Spain's ruling class lived on in Spain and abroad.

With the civil war against Franco, history had thrown the revolutionary proletariat and the masses of people together with many other forces in a common battle; and in the sense that the bourgeois forces were divided and on opposite sides in this civil war, this was a very good situation. But to let the outlook and interests of these forces determine the course of the war and then to complain that it was their pro-imperialist "sick obsession" which prevented the PCE from carrying out the most basic revolutionary duties—this claim by the PCE cannot be allowed to stand. The truth is that in the name of defending the USSR, the PCE was passing over to the camp of imperialism.

Barcelona and the Ebb of the Revolutionary Upsurge

As previously stated, Franco's attempted coup came in the midst of (and was in part a response to) a massive revolutionary upsurge. This upsurge took a qualitative leap after Franco's move, as the masses, liberated by the breakdown in the bourgeois order, rose up in their millions to take the initiative and beat down the tottering ruling class. We have described, in the beginning of this article, the exhilarated mood of the masses and their heroic actions which, for a time, stopped Franco's forces dead.

This revolutionary upsurge did not last. Beginning in the winter of 1936-37, and especially by the following spring, the PCE led the way in restoring the bourgeois order. By the following winter, the militias were disbanded and replaced with a bourgeois-style army. Certainly the militias could not remain the main military force if Franco were to be defeated, but the PCE's alternative

was worse than the militias. In August, many of the peasant co-ops were forcibly disbanded. There had been a serious problem with poor peasants seizing the land and politically alienating many better-off peasants and small landowners who need not have been driven over to Franco, but the PCE's alternative was to let the rich peasants and landowners who remained loyal to the Republic determine policy in the countryside.

The workers' "collectives" in the factories whose owners fled to safety with Franco, taken over by the government, were smothered as arenas of political struggle. Certainly "workers' power" does not mean that the workers in each factory become its owners and in the most immediate sense there had to be more central control, but the PCE's alternative was just to send in bureaucrats or old bosses and confine the workers' committees in the factories to, at best, "winning the battle of production."

Linked to all this was demoralization spreading among the people about the course of the war itself, a mood not unrelated to the way in which the war was being fought—and the course of the war itself was greatly determined by its conduct.

The end of this first revolutionary period was punctuated by the May events in Barcelona, the capital city of Catalonia, following an attempt by the Catalanian Generalitat (Catalonian nationalist government) to clear out the anarchist and POUM-led "collective" which controlled the telephone exchange, an occupation which had allowed these opponents of the government to freely determine communications between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. (The POUM upheld the Trotskyite line of no unity at all with the bourgeois forces in the Republic, although for complex reasons, its leaders, who had been former followers of Trotsky, had come to oppose him.)

This is probably the single most controversial event in the entire Spanish Civil War, infamous at the time and a cause célèbre for "anti-Stalinists" ever since. It is certainly not our intention here to relive it. But a few words must be said to describe the political course of the war within the Republican zone.

The attempt by the Generalitat police and security forces organized by the PSUC (the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya—the PCE's sister party in Catalonia, formed by the PCE, the So-

cialists and others) to dislodge the men holding the telephone exchange led to gunfire, and the fighting extended throughout the downtown area. It raged for five days, with several hundred people shot dead by one side or the other.

We cannot here settle the argument as to whether this was a deliberate provocation by the PCE to create an excuse to wipe out the forces opposed to it in Catalonia, as anarchists and Trotskyites claim down to today, or whether it was a provocation by a section of the anarchists who sought the immediate overthrow of the Republic and especially the POUM, with some egging on by Franco agents. Frankly, it does not seem out of the question that both sides have some truth to them. (It should be pointed out that, especially after it became clear that the situation was one that Franco could and was taking military advantage of on the northern front, most of the main anarchist leaders in Spain strongly opposed the *Barcelona uprising*. It should also be said that regardless of the question of the role played by counter-revolutionaries and actual imperialist agents, a great many of the workers and others who were swept up into the fighting against the security forces still were undoubtedly motivated by righteous revolutionary anger at the way the PCE and the bourgeois forces were trying to halt the general revolutionary upsurge.)

The point is this: the anarchist and POUM line (for similar reasons) was counterrevolutionary. The PCE quite rightly pointed to the deathly stillness on the nearby Aragon front, where militia units led by the anarchists and POUM had failed to mount any kind of offensive against the fascists and thus allowed Franco's forces free rein to split up the Republican zone. But the PCE did not oppose the anarchists' and POUM's thinly disguised reformism and military passivity with something more revolutionary. It simply aligned itself with the forces of the small industrialists and well-to-do grape growers of Catalonia and their counterparts throughout Spain to restore things to the way they had been before all this messy disruption. Looking at how things developed, especially after the *Barcelona events*, can it really be said that the PCE's line was any better?

After the *Barcelona* affair, the Republican government openly moved rapidly rightward. The left-talking Socialist demagogue Caballero, who had been lionized by the PCE and hailed by jour-

nalists as "Spain's Lenin," was dumped. He was replaced as prime minister by Juan Negrín, a more right-wing Socialist tied to the Republican President, Azaña. Indalecio Prieto, from the most extreme right of the Socialist Party, the man who had threatened to resign if the Moroccan delegation was allowed to present its case to the Cortes, was made Minister of Defense. The PCE maneuvered to get Negrín and Prieto in, with the excuse that this was necessary to step up the war effort—yet Prieto, once in charge of the war effort, was such a notorious capitulationist, so sure of Franco's eventual victory and so unwilling to mount any real opposition to Franco's forces, that Jesús Hernández a PCE leader who later became a rabid anti-communist, claims that the PCE kept Prieto in check through blackmail by threatening to reveal all this to the masses.⁴²

Whether or not this is true about the PCE, it is clearly an indication of what kind of men and line it promoted. Their appointment seems to have had one sole purpose—to please Britain. All this bourgeois politicking and flagrant sacrifice of the war effort in the name of securing the conditions for winning it could not but further demoralize the masses. Among civilians, especially, political life and activity trickled off. The war became something for the soldiers to take care of—and increasingly, the soldiers were not volunteers, but draftees.

Especially in the countryside, many people apparently concluded that it was all the same no matter what happened. There the failure to carry out revolutionary political work and a revolutionary agrarian policy was one of the Republic's greatest weaknesses. In the areas which fell to Franco's forces, Franco was able to draft and use for the bulk of his army hundreds of thousands of peasants as well as others. Why didn't the PCE carry out work behind Franco's lines among these strata—and especially why didn't it rely on them to carry out guerrilla warfare? Because the Republicans (and Britain) recoiled in horror from the idea of mass peasant revolution, which, even if centered on democratic and not directly socialist tasks, still would have unleashed a revolutionary torrent. Rather than relying on the poor peasants and rural laborers and, as part of raising their political consciousness, winning them to a policy of alliance with the middle strata in the countryside so as to isolate the main enemy, instead the

PCE became the strongest champion of private property in the countryside, relying on the middle peasants (who joined the PCE in huge numbers) and small landowners and opposing, including by force of arms, the land seizures carried out by the rural poor at the start of the war. Thus a large part of the rural population who should have been activated under the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat was instead kept passive and utilized by Franco.

In fact, it was this overall tailing of the Republicans that was to be the most direct cause of the defeat of the Republic. Azaña, the President whom the PCE and Stalin considered the most essential asset of the Republic, never believed that a victory against Franco was possible—nor did he really want to see the army which had been the pillar of bourgeois rule in Spain destroyed by another one which, although also fairly bourgeois, was of more doubtful stability. In reality, he and Prieto and the forces around them devoted their energies to achieving the conditional capitulation to Franco that corresponded to British imperialism's interests and instructions.

"From the beginning of the war," wrote Juan Marichal, who was Azaña's editor, "he saw that his only possible role was the very limited one of representing a symbolic brake on the revolutionary violence."⁴³ And as Azaña himself admitted, writing in a letter after the war, "No one is unaware of the fact that I did everything possible from September, 1936, to influence a compromise settlement, because the idea of defeating the enemy was an illusion."⁴⁴

Throughout the war, there was constant struggle between the PCE and these Republicans, with Azaña and Prieto doing everything they could to limit the role of the PCE and the Comintern, on the one hand, and to negotiate a settlement with Franco on the other. For its part, the PCE used its influence among the masses, which these Republicans lacked, and the ace in the hole of Soviet arms funneled through the PCE, to keep Azaña and Prieto in line, until these forces finally did surrender to Franco.

Our point is not that it was completely wrong for the PCE to have made some compromises with Republican forces, however vacillating, who could be united for the purpose of defeating Franco. But in relying on them and in failing to build the independent political and military

strength of the proletariat, the PCE was only setting up the masses for an inevitable betrayal—inevitable not because it was inevitable that all those who vacillated would go over to Franco, but because only the independent strength of the proletariat could keep them from capitulating, or keep the revolution from necessarily being defeated if they did.

VII. Military Line and Policies

Since the main form of class struggle was the civil war itself, the military line of the PCE and the Comintern concentrated the political questions.

It would be wrong to think that with a correct political line in command, victory in the Spanish civil war would have been inevitable. Our point is just the opposite: the whole war needs to be seen from the point of view of the advance or retreat of the worldwide proletarian revolution, whose interests are higher than taking or losing state power in any one country. But it is also true that the proletariat faced a relatively favorable situation in Spain, which the line of the PCE and the Comintern failed to take advantage of.

The military struggle in Spain unfolded in roughly three stages. The first extends from the July 1936 coup attempt through the revolutionary upheavals in the weeks following, and reaches a culmination in the battles in and around Madrid in November '36-March '37. It was a back-and-forth period, with the fascist offensive giving rise to a series of popular insurrections, but overall the Franco forces maintained the initiative and continued to gain ground until the astounding victory at Madrid in November and the Republican triumphs at the battles of Jarama and then Guadalajara, in which Franco was forced to throw increasingly greater forces into thwarted attempts to surround the capital. This period ended in a stalemate, with the fascists occupying the west and part of the north of Spain.

The second stage, the year 1937, comprises a complicated picture. The PCE had, after Madrid, risen to political and military leadership, and concentrated on building a regular and unified armed force. Franco's forces launched an offensive against the north, which surrendered in October. By the end of the year, the regular Republican People's Army was ready for action, but at the same time men and materiel had poured into Fran-

co's Nationalist zone. Meanwhile it had become clear that Western aid was not an immediate prospect, and Soviet aid was limited by various factors. The upshot of all this was that by the time the PCE-led regular army was consolidated, the Franco forces had attained a vast technical and strategic advantage.

In the last stage, stretching from December 1937 to the end of the war, the Republican People's Army fought a series of engagements with great courage and against increasing odds. By the end of 1938, the Franco forces numbered a million men, mainly conscripts but also including 50,000 Portuguese troops, 50-80,000 Italian volunteers, 135,000 Moroccans, and German technical personnel. At the opening of 1938, the Nationalists outnumbered the Republic in armor and guns by about 2 to 1. By the end of the year the Republican army was fighting virtually without air or artillery support. This series of battles included the Republican offensive which temporarily took Teruel (December 1938), the great crossing of the Ebro (July 1938), the defense of Valencia province (December 1938) and some other smaller-scale battles. These battles were aimed at holding the line against Franco and demonstrating to the imperialists that the Republican army was still alive and capable of battle. At no time was there a strategic plan to change the balance of forces in preparation for an eventual strategic counter-offensive. The Republican forces spent this stage, as indeed the whole war, strategically buying time, pending aid in weaponry from abroad.

The fragility of Franco's strategic position in the first months is evident. In the north his forces were overextended, precariously hanging on to Valladolid and Saragossa. In Seville, the old anarchist and PCE base, a vulnerable Nationalist island of control existed. The main body of Franco's troops moving across the Straits of Gibraltar was exposed to attack at this bottleneck. However, as we have seen, the Republic fell back into defense of the capital, while the militias were eaten up piece by piece, the very same way that the Spanish ruling class had defeated peasant uprisings for hundreds of years.

Kang Sheng's criticism of the PCE for "defending Madrid to the last" is somewhat wrong, somewhat reflecting the idea that in Spain, the revolution had to first build up strength in the countryside and then surround the cities. This

form of protracted warfare, where the revolution must pass through a long period of strategic defensive before it is strong enough to go on the offensive, was necessary in China but not in Spain, where what happened was different in its development. The popular forces held Madrid from the start, and while the PCE and others basically looked at this as necessary to their strategy of winning support from England and France, still there were good political (and military) reasons to strive to keep control of the capital city. In fact, the political impact on the masses (in Spain and internationally) of the victory there was electric. But it was not pursued. Still, Kang Sheng does have an important point here: the Republican forces centered everything on the defense of Madrid (which Franco had besieged), not daring to send forces to attack Franco at his weak points, and thus generally neglecting the main point of warfare, which, as Mao pointed out, is not to preserve yourself but to destroy the enemy.

What was needed above all was the revolutionary policy of *attack*. Any concentration of force which threatened Franco's lines of communication to the fascist outlying areas would have had serious consequences. An attack on the enemy bridgehead at Algeciras was certainly called for, as was a declaration of Moroccan independence.

The navy, in the hands of radical sailors who had mutinied, could have snapped shut the bottleneck in the Straits, cutting Franco off from his rearguard, and moved against Franco's forces in Algeciras. But such a move, revolutionary warfare in the Mediterranean, would have angered Britain, which considered the Mediterranean its "sphere of influence," and perhaps even led to open conflict with it, since Britain maintained warships in the area to prevent such an occurrence. (In fact, British warships moved into Barcelona harbor during the May 1937 fighting there, presumably poised to intervene if the Republic proved incapable of controlling the situation.)

As the war continued, Franco's technical strength became formidable indeed. Even in the early going, when the fascist forces were far outnumbered, they still possessed large numbers of tanks and artillery of fairly uniform make and supplied with ammunition. The Republican troops, who fought with widely different makes of weapons assembled from many different sources, often found themselves unable to match up their weapons



Bishops and Franco's generals indulge in an orgy of mutual saluting and blessing. The Spanish army and the Church—each with an enormous bloated bureaucracy—were two of the main pillars of the Spanish ruling class.

with the right ammunition—and often their weapons were so old as to be practically useless. Later the Germans provided Franco with new and fine weaponry such as the fastest planes in the civil war, the Messerschmidt, and the feared 88-millimeter artillery. The Republicans were hampered very much by inexperience, and the fascists could use their weaponry in a far more coordinated and effective manner.

But technical inferiority, as Mao points out, is always a condition of revolutionary forces. In coming to grips with this problem in China's war against Japan, Mao makes a very different kind of assessment: "The enemy forces, though strong (in arms, in certain qualities of their men, and certain other factors), are numerically small, whereas our forces, though weak (likewise, in arms, in certain qualities of our men, and certain other factors) are numerically very large.

Added to the fact that the enemy is an alien nation invading our country while we are resisting his invasion on our soil . . ."⁴⁵

Similarly in Spain, Franco's forces were numerically very small both in relation to the Republicans' military (until quite near the end) and among the masses, a largely isolated repressive force. This meant that Franco's lines would often be spotty, held by patrols moving among fortified points, vulnerable to a sudden thrust (as the People's Army often proved). Often, although an area might be "occupied," it could not be secured for lack of personnel (even after the usual round of executions and terror). This made for long, exposed lines of communication back to secure bases. Finally, Franco's forces were beset by a weakness which the Japanese imperialists did not suffer from—although not a foreign invader, he was dependent on

the strength of other powers, and this support was not as firm as the Republicans and PCE made it out to be. By the end of 1937, even after the fall of Santander and the north, unexpected resistance by the Republic had seriously concerned Italian Foreign Minister Ciano, who "feared a Republican offensive to push back the whole nationalist front. 'Either we strike the first blow,' he mused on Jan. 14 [1938] 'or skillfully disengage ourselves, and rest content having inscribed on our banners the victories of Malaga and Santander.'"⁴⁶

The defensive strategy of the Republic, however, could not seize on this contradiction. The Italians thereafter decided not to pull out but to step up their support. As a result, the Republic increasingly became locked into this defensive strategy. After the fall of the north in 1937, the Republic was fighting on interior lines, having lost its chance



Civilians and militiamen (organized by political parties and unions) escort a captured fascist officer to immediate trial.

for the time being of an immediate strategic offensive; men and materiel poured into the Nationalist zone, widening the technical gap; the party failed to maintain a political movement among the masses in the rear, and as a result, guerrilla and militia auxiliary forces became less possible.

The typical pattern of military operations in the war might see a long period of gathering forces on both sides. The People's Army might stage a breakthrough at some point through surprise and pure boldness. A certain amount of territory would be seized; Franco would then concentrate all available forces on the occupied zone and force the People's Army back at great cost to both. The Republic would fight to hold this territory so bitterly because, after all, the point was not to defeat the fascist army but to impress the Western imperialists (or sometimes to divert a major enemy

offensive elsewhere). Upon seizing the initiative, the Republicans would then concede it back to the enemy.

But as before, the party did not look to change this situation, to find ways to take the initiative. As Mao says, "In any war, the opponents contend for the initiative, whether on a battlefield, in a battle area, in a war zone or in the whole war, for the initiative means freedom of action for an army. Any army which, losing the initiative, is forced into a passive position and ceases to have freedom of action, faces the danger of defeat or extermination."⁴⁷

Lacking the initiative, the People's Army found itself on exactly this downhill slide.

Why, especially in the early stages of the war when they faced more favorable conditions, did the PCE and the Republic fail to seize on the contradictions underlying Franco's military position

and seek to annihilate Franco's forces? Many of the military advisers the Comintern sent to aid the Republic were aware of the ineffectiveness of the Republic's military line and were quite capable of implementing another one, since they had gained tremendous experience and skill in rapid mobile warfare and guerrilla fighting as well during the Russian civil war and elsewhere (including in China). But the military strategy served the overall political line and goals of the PCE and the Comintern.

Discussion of an alternative strategy of people's war is beyond the scope of this article. But certain elements of such a strategy are apparent: the need for less rigidity in holding territory and strong points, the need for a policy of concentrating troops to attain *local* superiority in operations, the need to disintegrate the enemy's troops, the need for a politi-

cal movement in the rear, the need for guerrilla and militia components.

The Republican People's Army adhered to a rigorously conventional military strategy. In certain situations, such as the defense of Madrid and the crossing of the Ebro, the People's Army had no choice but to rely on some of the basic principles of people's war. But for the most part, in the conventional bourgeois manner of the time, it maintained a rigid front and tended to hold territorial strong points at any cost. It abandoned the use of political agitation at the front and rear to disintegrate the enemy forces. It did not rely on the masses for logistical support but became almost wholly dependent on conventional supply systems. Perhaps most telling, guerrilla warfare was not a component of the Republican strategy.

The Republican army, working in a relatively small and blockaded territory, needed to hold a certain amount of territory. But within this, there was room for much more fluidity, including the use of strategic retreat and establishment of partisan base areas in the enemy's rear, that is, guerrilla warfare. Not that guerrilla warfare should have somehow become the main form of combat—nor, even as a secondary form, was it the "missing link" of the Spanish civil war—it would not solve all problems. Still, the lack of guerrilla warfare as a part of Republican strategy throws a glaring spotlight on key factors in the PCE's military line as well as its line on agrarian revolution.

Guerrilla warfare has a long history in Spain. The very word derives from the popular struggles against the French in the early nineteenth century. Partly this is because the Spanish terrain is very favorable. Nearly every part of the country is accessible from mountainous areas. Moreover, conditions in the civil war contained advantages for guerrilla fighting. Franco tended to deploy his numerically inferior troops in a chain of strong points and troop clusters, with lightly patrolled gaps existing between these points. This made them very vulnerable to infiltration. His troops tended to be "road-bound," existing at the head of long lines of communications, making them sensitive to attack and harassment in the rear.

There was spontaneous large-scale guerrilla fighting in the Estremadura. But the systematic organization of guerrilla fighting was limited to tactical "diversionary" operations, tied closely

to action on the front lines. It is hard to find a source which defends this policy. Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov specifically suggested employing guerrilla warfare as a (not *the*) strategic component of the war in their letter to Largo Caballero quoted earlier. While it is not clear exactly how much the failure to do so is directly due to the PCE and how much of it due to the PCE's tailing of even more backward Republican forces, there was an important political obstacle to waging guerrilla warfare successfully. Guerrilla warfare is linked to the revolutionary principle of arming the masses—it must be based on the conscious, active role of great numbers of people. Whether units are composed of "part-time" fighters or professional partisans, this form of combat cannot be widespread or consistent if it is not based on a political movement. But as one lower-level PCE cadre bluntly put it, "There was virtually no politics in the rear guard at all. We were all so absorbed in our tasks at the front that it was left to a few political leaders to express their parties' views in the rear. There was almost no mass political movement. That made us very vulnerable."⁴⁴

Obviously the effect of this lack of political work in the rear had significance far beyond the question of guerrilla warfare. What was true of the rear areas in the Popular Front zone was doubly true behind Franco's lines, especially given the PCE's line against agrarian revolution. It goes without saying that an underground movement behind the lines, including guerrilla warfare, would have had a powerful effect on demoralizing and disintegrating enemy forces. Neither the PCE nor any other force set out to build clandestine organization that could continue political work in areas that were or might be occupied by Franco. Since they opposed the political arousal and mobilization of the rear in the conditions of the Popular Front zone, it can come as no surprise that they also failed to do so in enemy territory.

The Republican "People's Army"

In the military, the PCE found its greatest source of "legitimacy." The PCE established itself as the force which most stood for unity of command and discipline. It became known as the "best fighter for Spain," and thousands of some of the most combative and revolutionary among the masses joined it on this basis. It was overwhelmingly

through the military that the PCE's phenomenal growth was channeled—from 30,000 in February 1936 to over 100,000 at the outbreak of civil war, to nearly 500,000 by the time the war ended.

One professional officer writes, "The Communist Party must be granted the credit in having set the example in accepting discipline. By doing so it enormously increased not only its prestige but its numbers. Innumerable men who wished to enlist and fight for their country joined the Communist Party.

"It often happened that, when I came across a man who was just leaving from the front I asked him,

"But why did you join the Communist Party? You were never a Communist were you? You were always a republican."

"I joined the Communists because they are disciplined and do their job better than anyone else."⁴⁵

The Socialist Oliveira says, "Army officers and officials who never turned the page of a Marxist leaflet became communists, some through calculation, others through moral weakness, others inspired by the enthusiasm which animated this organization."⁴⁶

The centerpiece of the PCE military policy became its drive to dissolve or amalgamate the militias and create a "legitimate" armed force. To set an example, the party dissolved its own armed wing, the Quinto, and then set about reconstituting and at the same time securing organizational control of the Republican army. In this it was quite successful—by 1938, over 60% of the officers, most of the commissars, and a good percentage of the rank and file troops (perhaps a third) were party members or supporters (although, in regard to Oliveira's comment, the initial enthusiasm which led many with little political experience towards the party was not, by and large, transformed into a Marxist line and outlook). But despite some new features modeled on the Soviet Red Army, and despite stubborn persistence in battle, this was a bourgeois army. What makes an army revolutionary is, above all, its goal; from this follows a strategy, tactics and organizational line which rely on the masses of people and their increasingly conscious participation. The People's Army did have some features in common with the Soviet Red Army that it (especially at first) emulated, but without an overall revolutionary line, they became either mere formalities or

else were dropped altogether.

The commissar system of political "delegates" to the command of a military unit was gutted of its content or, in many areas, abandoned midway through the war. The commissars were necessary to watch over the actions of the officers, many of whom were justifiably suspected of double-dealing. But even more important was their political role. As the Comintern representative Carlos Contreras put it (somewhat eclectically), the commissar was to be the "soul of the combat unit, its educator, its agitator, its propagandist. . . . He should interest himself in the stomach, the heart, the brain of the soldier of the people. . . he must see that his political, economic, cultural, and artistic needs are satisfied. . . ."⁵¹

The PCE came to rely on the commissars, most of whom were party members or supporters, as one pillar of its influence in the military, and for this reason, the commissariat became the focus of sharp infighting with the Republicans. By mid-war, Prieto was able to engineer the abandonment or severe reduction in responsibility of the commissars and generally restore the absolute authority of the officers.

Another indicator of the increasingly bourgeois character of the People's Army—and thus its weakness—was the role of women fighters. When the civil war broke out, many women put on the overalls, uniform of the militia, found a weapon and went off to fight. Moreover, women had long been a driving force in the Spanish revolutionary movement, as indelibly burned into the memories of the Spanish ruling class by the "Damas Rojas" in 1909, who led a series of church burnings and mutinies against the sending of troops to Morocco. In part, the impact of the PCE leader Dolores Ibarruri ("La Pasionaria") derived from the fact that she seemed to symbolize this force.

One woman living in Madrid describes a different atmosphere in the Republic in the relations between men and women: "It was so dark (because of the air raid precautions) that I often bumped into people on the streets. But never was I molested or in any way made aware that I was a woman. Before the war there would have been remarks of one sort or other—now that was entirely gone. Women were no longer objects, they were human beings, persons on the same level as men. . . ."⁵²

The ruling class saw all this as a threat

to their most sacred ideals and social order. Franco's forces killed many of the men they captured, especially those thought to be commissars, political party members or in some other way leaders. But they had a strict policy towards women who were captured: kill all of them immediately.

Even on the Republican side women in the trenches was more than some people could stand. After the March 1937 conclusion of the battle of Guadalajara (the final battle around Madrid in the early going), women were withdrawn from the front. "Dolores Ibarruri, La Pasionaria, came to the front to tell the women that their place was in the rearguard where they would be of more use to the war effort. Lories were drawn up to take the women back. But a childhood friend of mine and a number of others, didn't leave. I never found out what happened to my friend, but I believe she was killed in the fighting."⁵³ In the new People's Army geared to the expectations of the old-line Republican officers, and in the overall atmosphere of "respectability," women fighters had no place.

What actually happened to the various militia units, representing the different political forces in Spain? Those in the southern areas, Andalusia and Extremadura, fell to Franco's forces almost immediately; the forces in the Basque region never submitted to any discipline by central authorities, and were also wiped out quite early (by fall, 1937); CNT (anarchist) and POUMist militias resisted "militarization" by the central government until they were forcefully disbanded by units under the PCE commander Lister. The regular army that was finally consolidated at the end of 1937 under the effective leadership of the PCE was in the main recruited—and drafted—from fresh forces, and in reality only existed in the Central Zone.

In short, as said in the conversation with Mao, the PCE built up a bourgeois army and handed it to the bourgeoisie. Some of its generals were old monarchists, others at least presently members of the Communist Party, but politically it was an army built for bourgeois politics—in one way or another, the preservation of the old order—and not for revolutionary politics, not for fighting to permit the transformation of society and the elimination of classes and class distinctions all over the world.

The British imperialists, who were, in effect, handed over an army in this way

to replace the one Franco had tied to rival imperialists, could not help but notice. Winston Churchill made the following remark at the end of 1937, at the time the so-called People's Army more or less completely displaced the old militias and after the incident in Barcelona: "During the past year, a marked advance toward an ordered system of government and war has simultaneously produced itself in the character of the Spanish Republican government. . . . The Anarchists have been quelled by fire and steel. . . . An army which has a coherent entity, a strict organization, and a hierarchy of command has been formed. . . . When in any country the structure of civilized and social life is destroyed by atavistic hatreds, the state can only be reconstituted upon a military framework. . . . In its new army, the Spanish Republic has an instrument not only of military but of political significance. . . ."⁵⁴

What an exposure this quote contains! Not only of the PCE but also of the British imperialists, who, even though they recognized and admired the PCE's work in restoring the bourgeois order, still found it in their overall imperialist interests to see the Republic get crushed by Franco.

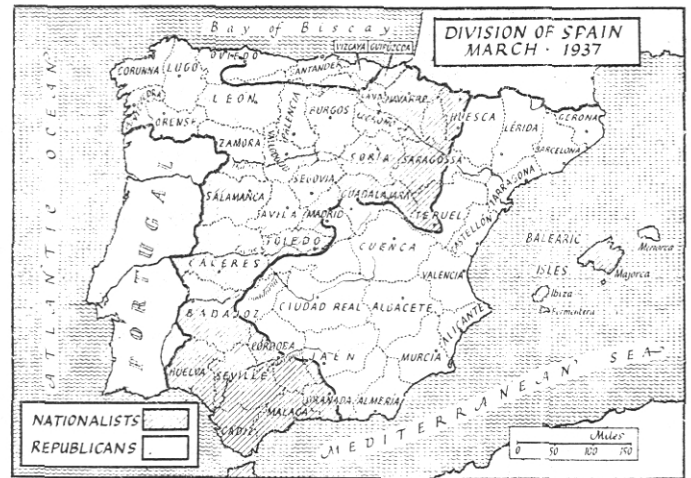
The PCE argued that it had to build up a regular army because the militias just couldn't defeat Franco. They pointed to the following situation: ". . . there was no central military body that could review the situation on all the battle fronts, formulate a common plan of action, and decide on the allocation of available supplies of men, arms and motor vehicles. . . ."⁵⁵

It was true that the spirit and audacity of the militia, so overwhelming in city fighting and in country with plenty of cover, was simply not sufficient in open country which required coordinated maneuver. One Republican officer reported after visiting the Aragon front, with evident longing for a regular army:

"What could they have achieved with good leaders, with sufficient war materiel, and with military discipline? I saw this later when I visited the different sectors of the front. There were no fortifications at that time. A position was taken by sheer courage, but since nobody bothered to fortify it, it was lost during the next enemy counterattack. The employment of war materiel was equally absurd. I was once in a position where there were several 10.5 guns, but there were no munitions. These were in

Division of Spain 1936-1939

1936



the possession of a nearby column, which refused to part with them although it had no artillery itself . . .

"The system of trenches was also in keeping with the situation. At some points, parapets had been thrown up with an eye to a neighboring column that belonged to a different political organization. There was a certain amount of satisfaction when a rival got a beating from the enemy."⁵⁶

The militias lacked nothing in heroism, but without a unified command, without coordination of personnel and materiel, an offensive could not be mounted, nor a defensive position sustained. Even the anarchist leader García Oliver, whose organization staunchly defended the militia system, had to admit, "They [the enemy troops] surround a small town and after a couple of days it is taken, but when we surround one we spend our entire life there."⁵⁷

But instead of the phony "People's Army," why couldn't the PCE have

built up a real Red Army, an army which in its military strategy and in its internal organization would both be able to fully mobilize the masses of people (along with other forms of fighting organization) to defeat Franco and serve to build up the political and military strength of the proletariat to eventually enable it to establish socialism? Why could such an army not have been built up alongside local militias in the Republican zone, guerrilla units behind enemy lines and other forms of organization under party leadership which would have served to train people and to propagate a revolutionary political and ideological line, as well as playing their principal, military role?

The argument that the other political forces would not have stood for an army under the leadership of the PCE, which

is the answer usually given to this question, is ridiculous. The anarchists and POUM were stripped of their military apparatus by the PCE anyway. While many of the rank and file of these organizations and other "left" tendencies may very well have refused to serve under *any* army led by the PCE, the fact is that their refusal to serve in the army the PCE did lead was more than a little mixed in with their own desires for something more revolutionary than what the PCE offered.

True, if the PCE hadn't handed the army over to them then perhaps Azaña, Prieto and other bourgeois forces might have encouraged the formation of separate armies under their own leadership. However, this has to be seen from the viewpoint of the goal. "Without a people's army the people have nothing,"

1938-39



as Mao wrote.¹⁸ Faced at the start of the war with the appearance of different armies under different political flags—a phenomenon which would tend to develop in any situation in which the bourgeoisie has lost control and the proletariat has not yet gained it—the PCE argued that the only way to beat Franco was to unite on the most widely acceptable basis: Republicanism. But without an army led by the proletariat and its party, the only possible outcome of the civil war was an outcome determined in one way or another by the imperialists. Without such an army, political power—revolution—was out of the question. So the building of an independent revolutionary army in the hands of the proletariat was a question of principle. At the same time, however, why couldn't the party fight to attain overall leadership of the fight against Fran-

co—that is, real *communist* leadership—political and, based on that, military leadership—not leadership by Communists on the basis of bourgeois politics? Although that might have posed tactical problems, it could not have posed any problems more insurmountable than that posed by the separate armies under the leadership of Mao Tsetung and Chiang Kai-shek in China. As we have pointed out, the Azaña Republicans and right-wing Socialists opposed all-out war anyway and generally acted as a brake on the Republic's war efforts.

The Republic boxed itself in, a box of its own making. The Soviet Union sent some military aid and the Comintern organized material aid and troops, but as the Union sent some military aid and the Comintern organized material aid and troops, but the only way the "People's

Army" long as the Republic simply "waged regular war, in the manner of the bourgeoisie," it could not defeat Franco's force, backed as they were by Italy and Germany, without massive aid from Britain and France. It wasn't the weakness of the "People's Army" that made British and French support the essential condition, but just the opposite: the weakness of the "People's Army" principally flowed from the line that considered such aid the most essential factor. Britain, for its own reasons, did not provide such aid and didn't permit France to do so either. Therefore, the "English strategy" that was at the heart of the PCE's military strategy was nothing but a recipe for defeat. In this, military line was subordinated to overall political line, as it always is—in this case a wrong and disastrous line with reactionary consequences.



VIII. The International Brigades, the Comintern and the End of the Republic

"The hold of the little fishing trawler was filthy with a stinking mix of oil, salt water, and fish scales; it rocked the little band of fifteen men pressed tightly to the wood-plank bottom till they were sure they would soon make their own contribution to the concoction...but the French coastal patrol was not fooled, its craft tied up next to the fisherboat and pointed flashlights directly downwards. 'Americains, encore une fois'... Pinched. It would take even longer now

to get across the French border to their destination at the International Brigades training base at Albacete, Spain....

"As the police took them from the dock to the provincial prison at Perpignan, villagers crowded around. Together with the volunteers for Spain, they turned the procession into a demonstration. 'Vive le republique,' they shouted at each other, flashing the clenched fist, 'Vive le front populaire!'"

* * *

From the first, the Spanish civil war stirred the masses around the world. In

countless countries, many were drawn to the struggle, some taking it on their own to come and join the revolutionary militias. Long before there were any such things as International Brigades, numbers of people who had come to Barcelona for the Spartacist Olympics (in opposition to the Nazi Olympics being held at that time in Berlin) volunteered to fight in the militias of Catalonia and Aragon. Revolutionary exiles from the fascist countries formed their own *centurias*, or joined the militias as individuals.

Over the summer of 1936, the Comintern leadership summed this up. Thorez of France and Wintringham of the Brit-

Left, anti-Nazi Germans of the International Brigades take a break in the streets of Madrid before returning to battle. Right, a Cuban volunteer serving in the International Brigades addresses Franco's troops across the trenches, agitating for them to desert.



ish party, who seem to have originated the idea, presented the Comintern Executive with a proposal for an international force of volunteers to be organized by the world communist parties. The force was seen as having primarily political, "propaganda value," and not as a substitute for direct Soviet military aid (which was also proposed). The Brigades would also, of course, have military value in stiffening the inexperienced Spanish troops.

So began a deep-going and worldwide social movement. In the years following, about 45,000 volunteers were to come to Spain to fight on the side of the Repub-

lic.⁶⁰ Many were to die for this cause—of the 3200 volunteers from the U.S., for example, only 1500 returned alive, and nearly all of these with at least one wound. Despite the line of the Comintern in building the Brigades, which was not revolutionary or internationalist, the Brigades and the movement around them touched a deep reservoir of internationalism which existed among the people of every country. About 300,000 people in the U.S. applied to the Spanish Embassy for permission to come to Spain, although most were stopped by the U.S. government.

A look at some of those who fought in

the Brigades gives a sense of the scope of this movement: Cunningham, one-time commander of the British Saklatvala Battalion (named after an Indian revolutionary), had been condemned to prison for organizing a mutiny in the British army in Jamaica, 1920; Berthel, commissar of the same Battalion, a leader in the Algerian party; Chapiev, leader in the Hungarian Commune of 1919, had been arrested there, later escaped from jail to Czechoslovakia from where he was extradited; Tabakoff, an officer in the Dimitroff Battalion, had taken part in the Bulgarian Revolution of 1924, went underground and only surfaced

again as a fighter in the Brigades at Jarama Valley outside Madrid; Kleber, commander of the Brigades, had been an Austrian officer in World War 1, taken prisoner by the Czar's army and won over to the Bolsheviks while in prison, later assigned as military advisor in China. . . .

In all there were fighters from 53 countries. Some, like the Polish miners of the Dabrowski Battalion, who had been recruited while working as immigrants in France, literally had no country. They had worked in France to replace a whole generation of French miners who had been wiped out in the previous inter-imperialist world war. While the largest number of recruits came from nearby European countries, volunteers also arrived from South America, Central America, China, Japan and Morocco.

The Internationals were at their best in some of the early battles (although they played a crucial role as shock troops in every major encounter in the war). They quickly became a model for units of every political tendency. In March 1937, for example, one of the initial series of attempts by the fascists to encircle and take Madrid was launched from the northeast, down the Saragossa-Madrid highway toward Guadalajara. 60,000 mainly Italian troops were used in this thrust, spearheaded by a force of 250 tanks and 180 pieces of mobile artillery.

On March 8, the Italians launched a sudden attack, achieving breakthroughs at several points in the Republicans' defenses, and on the next day took Almadrones. This point was not 25 miles from Guadalajara, the last defensible point before Madrid itself. The Eleventh and Twelfth International Brigades were rushed up to the battle, along with the Garibaldi (Italian International) Battalion, and El Campesino's guerrilleros. Seeing this, the Italian fascists threw everything they had into the battle, focusing on the town of Brihuega.

On March 13 a patrol of the revolutionary Italian Garibaldi's was moving in the direction of Brihuega when they heard some other voices speaking in their own language. The revolutionaries approached the group of Italian soldiers, asked directions to Brihuega, and continued on their way. It was not until later that both groups discovered they were on opposing sides. A few hours later the opposing Italian forces clashed, the battle being fought viciously back

and forth around the ancient fortress of Ibarra. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Garibaldi commissariat were making plans for a propaganda offensive. Planes dropped leaflets with rocks attached, and loudspeakers pulled up next to tanks, alternating agitation with gunfire: "Brothers, why have you come to a foreign land to murder workers?"

Now bad weather slowed the fascist Italian armor and prevented air support from reaching the fascist troops. Deserters from the fascist force got on the Internationals' bullhorns and agitated for the surrender of their former comrades. The fortress was encircled; four Russian tanks and some dinamiteros went into the attack, while loudspeakers played the Italian Communist song, "Bandiera Rosa" (The Red Flag). Suddenly, the castle was yielded, and a general rout of the Italian fascists commenced. When the battle was over, thousands of troops had deserted, and huge mounds of equipment had been left in piles along the route of the fascist retreat.

These battles of the Internationals concentrate in a vivid way the world forces which had come to play the major role in Spain. The fact that so many from countries around the world were willing to sacrifice their lives in Spain is in itself an indication of the fact that the Spanish civil war represented a tremendous opportunity for the advance of the world revolution, although, no doubt, a good percentage of the fighters did think of themselves more as "fighting for democracy" than as proletarian internationalists. The world conjuncture had indeed bound up the events in Spain with the life, the thinking, the actions of uncounted numbers of people in every country.

However, the leadership of the Comintern squandered this internationalist potential. The Comintern portrayed, and increasingly recruited, volunteers of the Brigades as exemplary fighters for bourgeois democracy and nationalism. It is a lasting shame that so many revolutionary-minded workers, youth and others from the U.S. were recruited into something which called itself the "Abraham Lincoln Battalion" (as well as another less well known battalion, named after that great slaveowner George Washington)—a military unit whose leadership promoted a line befitting that name.

In one incident, Claude Bowers, the U.S. ambassador to Spain when the civil war broke out, tells how the first volun-

teers from the U.S. staged a demonstration under the window of the U.S. consulate in Barcelona—a kind of "in your face!" to the U.S. imperialists—but capped the march by singing the "Star Spangled Banner." (Bowers notes, in a really grotesque part of his description, that when the Brigade sang *all three* verses of the national anthem he knew that Communists must be leading it!)⁶¹

This was quite typical of the Comintern promotion of the Civil War as a whole. The French Communist daily *L'Humanité*, for example, raised the slogan: "With Spain, for the safety of France!" And as usual the CPUSA was in the vanguard of the rightist deviations. Said Earl Browder, in a speech given to "commemorate Lenin" (!) and focusing on Spain, "In America, there still lives the fierce passion for liberty and hatred of tyrants which brought out country to birth and preserved it in many trials, the revolutionary traditions at the heart of Americanism—even though our government has betrayed Americanism.

"What arrogant stupidity to bring forward this blockade of Spain in the name of Americanism!"⁶²

Literally tens of millions around the world received this sort of "training" by the Comintern around Spain and in every event. Little wonder that under the conditions of occupation during World War 2—which in some ways bore a striking resemblance to the Spanish war—the revolutionaries and advanced among the masses "naturally" gravitated to bourgeois nationalism as the ideology of their struggle, and away from proletarian revolution as its aim. By the time of the war, the veterans of the U.S. Abraham Lincoln Battalion waged a struggle to be allowed to join the U.S. Army.

It would appear that the International Brigades were finally the victim of the Comintern's "English strategy." In early 1938, the Czechoslovakian crisis had cast an air of tension over all of Europe. World war was thought to be imminent. It was obvious that should war break out between the Axis and Allied imperialists over Czechoslovakia, the Allies would necessarily be thrown together with the Soviets and forced to aid the Republic. In these uncertain conditions, the Soviet aid increased to Spain; France opened its borders to let these materials through.

In July, the Republic launched a surprise offensive across the Ebro River,

crossing in boats at night, and throwing the amazed Franco forces reeling backwards. The attack, coming after a series of seemingly unstoppable assaults by Franco, had a political aim: to show the Western powers that the People's Army retained spirit and determination, and organization enough to carry on for some time. And the offensive did achieve temporary victories over the fascist forces.

But by the end of September, it became clear that the English and French had not changed their policy toward the Republic, nor their overall world strategy, but had merely been keeping all their options open. The Munich agreement was signed, making plain that the Western powers were set on maneuvering for a confrontation between Germany and the Soviet Union. Less than a month after Munich, in the midst of bitter fighting in sectors which had been seized by the Republic in the Ebro offensive, the International Brigades were withdrawn—from the battle, and from the war entirely. On October 28, farewell parades for the Internationals were held in Barcelona.

While the world situation in the period following Munich bears further study, it seems that the Soviet Union at this time bent all its efforts toward the tactic of forming an alliance with Germany in order to frustrate the moves of England and France to set Germany on the Soviets. The worldwide "antifascist movement" of which the International Brigades and the whole movement around the Spanish civil war were such a key part, was now seen as contradictory to the temporary needs of Soviet foreign policy.

From all this and from the general downplaying of the war in the propaganda of the Comintern, it would seem that the Soviets had decided to "cut loose" the Spanish war and the PCE. However, the PCE was not called on to militarily capitulate, but to continue its policies of resistance on its own. (One explanation has it that Spain was the Soviets' last hope to achieve an alliance with the Anglo-French.)

The military resistance led by the PCE did continue for some time. This had been openly based on the prospect of world war, which the party felt sure would force England and France to finally aid the Republic. Collaboration with the bourgeois democrats and imperialists sunk to its lowest depths. Working with the PCE, Prime Minister Negrín

had formulated a Thirteen Point Policy, revealed on May Day, 1938, calling for "all patriotic Spaniards" in both zones to unite. The Thirteen Points set the terms of that unity in such a way that the Western imperialists couldn't miss the capitulationist point. The *New York Post* got it quite well:

"If the loyalist Republic were ever 'Red' as its enemies call it, the great work of handing back mines and factories to their original owners certainly shows that the label cannot be properly applied. . . [A Republican] official we interviewed asserted that the Negrín government has become more conservative and capitalistic than the government existing before the Aragon offensive. . . . what this official did not add was that the government in decollectivizing had a political motive. It demonstrated thereby, for the benefit of Britain, France and the United States, that the loyalist government is not a 'Red' government."⁶³

But the Western powers didn't want to hear it. On February 27, 1939 (while the war continued), Britain and France recognized the Franco regime as the legitimate government of Spain; and true to form, Azaña resigned on the very same day and left for exile in France.

Meanwhile, other Republicans and their allies had plans of their own. For some time the masses in the Republican rear had been falling into apathy and defeatism. This had been dramatically shown by the collapse of the Catalonian front, still demoralized by the Barcelona events referred to earlier, but it was true even in Madrid, scene of the party's most prestigious achievements in mobilizing the masses. This collapse of popular support even in the party's stronghold was undoubtedly the reason for a rebellion on the staff of the Madrid-based *Mundo Obrero*. Late in 1938, the paper ran an editorial directly opposing the party's line, saying that it did not believe "the only solution to our war is that Spain should be neither Fascist nor Communist because France wants it like that."

The next day in a signed article, party General Secretary José Díaz delivered a sharp criticism of the editorial, saying that it "corresponds neither to the situation, nor the policies of our party, nor those of the Comintern. We want the (democratic) states to come to our aid. . . ."⁶⁴

By March of 1939, Republicans had succeeded in pulling together a clique of

disgruntled and demoralized leaders, headed up by Colonel Segismundo Casado, and including General Miaja and the anarchist General Mera. On the 6th, this group launched a coup in Madrid, aimed at PCE influence in government, including especially Negrín himself. PCE-led units counterattacked in Madrid and seized most of the city (even while the population, in sharp contrast to 1936, took no part in the events). Just at that moment, Franco's troops launched an offensive. The PCE units couldn't fight on two fronts, and the coup succeeded.

However, the same conditions which had opened up the chance for Casado and the Republicans to finally go for their "compromise" also meant that Franco had no need to agree to such a compromise. The talks between Franco and the Casado clique broke down, and these leaders fled to France, joining others of all political parties who were already exiled there. Pope Pius XII sent Franco his congratulations on "Spain's Catholic victory."⁶⁵

IX. In Sum

Even during its pre-imperialist history, Spain's internal conflicts were intertwined with the great international struggles of the day. Even at this earlier time, many were fooled into thinking that Spanish history would be wholly determined by conspiracies and military adventures of the great powers, that somehow the masses of people had no effect on the course of things. Marx pointed out that Spain was considered by Napoleon and all his contemporaries as "an inanimate corpse [but] was fatally surprised at the discovery that when the Spanish State was dead, Spanish society was full of life, and every part of it overflowing with powers of resistance."⁶⁶

Still, at the time of the Napoleonic invasion, Spanish society in general was not yet part of a world economy, a world imperialist system. Its struggles were for various reasons politically isolated. The resistance to Napoleon, for example, came to be led by the Church, and in this way strengthened for the time being, not the progressive and revolutionary forces arising in Spain and the world, but reactionary ones.

With imperialism, the "international character" of Spain has been strengthened and qualitatively changed as part of a general world system. In Spain this fact became so forcefully evident that it thrust itself forward at least in glimmer-

ings onto the thinking of even the most petty-bourgeois thinkers (Lenin once pointed out that the bourgeoisie is a class of *international* oppressors, while the petty bourgeoisie is most imbued with patriotic filth.) Azaña, for example, quite routinely at Comillas described the coming struggle in international terms: "All Europe is today a battlefield between democracy and its enemies, and Spain is no exception." Today it is a commonplace summation of bourgeois historians that Spain was "World War 2 in miniature."

In a mechanical and vulgar way, this view of Spain and its relation to the world conjuncture has some truth, but it is a view stamped with the ideology of the oppressor class. The Spanish generals and their imperialist partners, who also shared this view, thought they would finally suppress the mass movement by finishing off what looked to be the "inanimate corpse" of the Republic, but found the masses, as before in history, "overflowing with resistance."

The truth of the matter can be seen in the light of this passage, from a letter written by RCP Central Committee Chairman Bob Avakian and published in the *Revolutionary Worker*:

"...in an overall sense the development of the class (and national) struggle, the development of revolutionary situations, etc., in particular countries are more determined by developments in the world as a whole than by developments in particular countries—determined not only as a condition of change (external cause) but as a basis of change (internal cause). In my opinion, this was not so before the advent of imperialism—or before bourgeois society (and to put it that way, the bourgeois epoch) became dominant (qualitatively) in the world, and changes in societies throughout the world became integrated in an overall way into a whole (single) process."⁶⁷

In a particular way, because of Spain's history—and even more because of the advent of imperialism which tied together all nations in this way—these "developments in the world as a whole" had determined the trajectory of the events leading up to the civil war, and in turn, the grasping—or throwing away—of the revolutionary possibilities that opened up in Spain also had a profound effect on developments in the world as a whole, both at the time and afterward. It is this truth that the bourgeois historians have partly and mechanically expressed in the idea of a "world war in miniature."

By 1936, what had seemed like the "invincible" bulwark of the Spanish ruling class—its ties to British imperialism—had become its great weakness. The world conjuncture had indeed created a situation of rare weakness for the imperialists of the world, a condition which, as Lenin said (describing conditions during war but which obviously applies to an entire conjuncture, including the period of impending war): "All governments are sleeping on a volcano...The entire political regime of Europe has been shaken...never do governments stand in such need of agreement with all the parties of the ruling classes, or of the 'peaceful' submission of the oppressed classes to that rule."⁶⁸

This is strikingly clear of the Spanish bourgeoisie, which in 1936 found time running out; which had to secure "the agreement of all the parties" of the ruling class, precisely for the object of repressing the mass movement and bringing the masses back under its boot. The British imperialists, too, were deeply worried about revolution in Spain, speaking as did Churchill of the danger of the "Communists' tentacles snaking through Spain" to the rest of their imperialist bloc.⁶⁹ While the British support of Franco (with reservations) was of course also connected to their worldwide maneuvering for world war, it is unarguably true that the Spanish revolutionary movement pointed a dangerous threat at the British empire. And because of this, the British not only supported the "patriot" Franco, but also played the other side of the fence, and strung along with the Republicans in order to secure their interests against the dark menace of revolution.

All this reflected, as Lenin said, the weakness of imperialists during the conjuncture, the fact that as the same passage puts it, "the political foundations of Europe are being shaken more and more." On the *international* stage being set, the actions of the Spanish proletariat and its party would be "felt for decades and years to come," on a world scale. Due to the worldwide crisis of imperialism its "political foundations" were being shaken in quite a few countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as within the imperialist countries, but the very fact that the Comintern chose to center so much of its work on Spain, whether correctly or incorrectly, was itself a crucial factor in the impact Spain would have on the

world revolution.

The PCE, as we know, took the narrowest view possible. In its view, with the intervention of Italy and Germany, the masses were in over their heads; the whole question became narrowed to victory or defeat in Spain—"what else was there to do?" It became "obvious" that in order to fight the one imperialist bloc, it was necessary to capitulate to the other. And as the civil war closed in around it, the PCE plunged more and more deeply into the cesspool of capitulation. Thus in Spain, the Comintern's line, born at the Seventh Congress, grows to its repulsive maturity.

"In the beginning," wrote the PCE newspaper *Mundo Obrero* in August 1936, "it was possible to describe the struggle as simply one between democracy and fascism, between progress and reaction, between the past and the future. But now it has broken through these bounds and become transformed into a holy war, into a national war, into a defensive war of the people who feel they have been betrayed..."⁷⁰

But of course it was not the bourgeoisie which betrayed the masses, nor the "democratic" British and other imperialists. These reactionaries simply acted in accord with their class nature and interests. If there is a question of betrayal, it is a question of political line—a line which in the name of defending the gains of the proletariat and the masses in Spain, and, in a sense, in the USSR as well, was to throw away the Spanish revolution.

What if the PCE and Comintern had not retreated from revolution in this manner? One cannot help wondering about the consequence of the single act of declaring Morocco unconditionally independent, or even (dare we say it?) providing material aid to the national liberation movement in that country. While it has often been pointed out that Franco may never have recovered from this kind of blow—what of the worldwide consequences in a broader sense, in the context of the overall world situation and its development? Might this not have inspired and further inflamed the masses in all of North Africa and even the Middle East, at a time when the British were stretched thin and battered in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including mass uprisings against British rule by the Palestinians during the same years as the civil war in Spain? Wouldn't such a concrete

demonstration of the unity of the proletariat and the oppressed nations and peoples have had profound repercussions?

Further, if the Western powers had openly intervened against a revolutionary Spain, what effect would this have had on the masses in the Western countries and around the world, who were swept into the Western imperialist armies as a crusade for "democracy"? If by a revolutionary war, the Spanish proletariat had resisted into the period of World War 2 itself, in what position would this have put such a Western imperialist expeditionary force? If the civil war in Spain had been fought on a revolutionary basis, would this have affected the line and outcome of the revolutionary upheavals that shook Italy, France and elsewhere only a few years later?

In fact, we can almost hear Ibaruri and the others in party leadership squawking wildly at all this "ultra-left" dreaming about the weakness of the imperialists during an historic conjuncture such as at the time of the civil war. To the PCE and Comintern, the world seemed to be just as the social-chauvinists of at the time of WW1 had described it: "Hopes for a revolution have proved illusory [as Lenin characterized this view] and it is not the business of a Marxist to fight for illusions."¹

However, the PCE was in a different position from most of the World War 1 opportunists, because in fact the objective component of a revolutionary situation had broken out in Spain. To the PCE and Comintern this was not a grand opportunity but a dangerous thing, conflicting with the "international obligations" of the proletariat—meaning, of course, the narrowly conceived needs of Soviet foreign policy. As far as Stalin's line is concerned, the main problem was not that, like the revisionists of the Second International, he had capitulated to the bourgeoisie and become a social-chauvinist, but that he had a wrong line and estimate of the world situation and the possibilities and path for revolution. That line had inevitable consequences.

As it was, instead of being a gigantic impetus to the world revolutionary struggle, the line carried out in Spain and the political and ideological effects which flowed from that were a major impetus to the rise of revisionism within the international communist movement and had a damaging effect on the morale

of millions upon millions of revolutionary-minded people. It has already been described how the International Brigades became an international school of bourgeois democracy and imperialist nationalism. The same is true on an even broader scale in the subsequent flourishing of these trends and the most open capitulation to imperialism in the Communist parties of the U.S., France, Italy and so on and so on, during the war and during the unprecedented opportunities for advancing the revolution that came at the war's conclusion. The immediate effect of the Spanish Civil War, of not only the loss but of the manner in which the war was fought and lost, was so intense that one bourgeois historian speaks of the French working class being politically almost paralyzed for several years after.² To this day the Spanish Civil War figures in countless songs, novels and movies as *the* symbol of the romantic futility of revolution and the inevitable corruption of those who allow themselves to be caught up in it.

To this day, the effects and popular summation of the Spanish Civil War—which is to say the line propagated at that time and even more shamelessly since then by today's revisionists—has been a negative factor in the development of the revolutionary struggle in many, many parts of the world, to say nothing of Spain itself. For better or for worse, the political line carried out by the revolutionary forces during a period of historical conjuncture and the effects of the events which flow from that have been felt "for years and decades to come"—and what might have made itself felt in this sense as a positive factor on a grand scale instead has been nothing but negative.

It would be wrong to try to sum up the entire experience of the Comintern from the Spanish Civil War alone. But the air needs a little clearing. Unlike the Second International at the time of World War 1, there was no collapse of the Third International. The revisionist "boil" did not burst, as Lenin said of the earlier International; instead revolution and the festering forces of revisionism continued to remain grouped together. In speaking of the line of the USSR in this period, we are speaking of the line of a socialist country and not of the social-imperialism later brought to power under Khrushchev. But certainly the wrong line promoted under the leadership of Stalin had more than a little to do with the eventual triumph of counter-

revolution. And just as certainly, the Spanish Civil War is a clear mile marker on a revisionist course embarked on by many Comintern parties and leaders.

Palmiro Togliatti, who under the name of Ercoli headed up the Comintern's work in Spain, was later, as head of the Italian CP and Khrushchev's right-hand man in Europe, a man whose very name is synonymous with revisionism. Dolores Ibarruri, who was perhaps one of the PCE's most famous figures, is today one of the main pro-Soviet revisionist figures in Europe; Santiago Carrillo, a former Socialist who rose in PCE leadership during the civil war, is today one of Europe's most shamelessly pro-U.S. "Eurocommunists," contending with Ibarruri for leadership of the contemporary PCE of which he is the head.

The milestone draft position paper prepared by the RCP of Chile and the RCP, USA, *Basic Principles for the Unity of the Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement*, puts the "bitter setbacks" of the proletariat, such as the betrayal of the PCE and Comintern, in this light:

"History advances not in a straight line but through twists and turns, it advances in a spiral—but it does advance. And this is most certainly true for the historic process of the world proletarian revolution and the replacement of the bourgeois epoch by the world-historic epoch of communism. . . . The temporary defeats and reversals as well as the historic victories and leaps forward that have been achieved in socialist revolution and construction in many parts of the world must be seriously studied and the profound lessons, positive and negative, must be drawn. More than that, however, they must be acted upon."³

We hope this article can spark a struggle for this kind of summation, for this kind of aim, of the Spanish Civil War, and even more of the whole historic conjuncture of which it was a part and the line of the communists in whose hands the responsibility for revolution was entrusted. This historic struggle must no longer be allowed to give rise to clouds of demoralization and revisionism—its lessons should finally become weapons in the international struggle for revolution and communism. □

FOOTNOTES

1. Based on Fraser, Ronald, *Blood of Spain* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1979), pp. 260-63.

2. Based on Bolloten, Burnett, *The Spanish Revolution* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1979), pp. 225-26.
3. "The Prospects for Revolution and the Urgent Tasks in the Decade Ahead," *Revolution*, Vol. 4, No. 10-11, p. 16.
4. Schram, Stuart, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1974), p. 218. (Mao's remarks on how the Chinese Party went against the advice of the Comintern is part of the context for these remarks on Spain.)
5. Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 502, 329.
6. Thomas, Hugh, *The Spanish Civil War* (Harper & Row, New York, 1961), p. 3.
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8. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 554.
9. Landis, Arthur H., *Spain: The Unfinished Revolution* (International Publishers, New York, 1972), p. 38.
10. Oliveira, A. Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
11. Souchere, Elena, *An Explanation of Spain* (Random House, New York, 1964), p. 203.
12. Cattell, David, *Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1955), p. 22.
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14. Lenin, *Selected Works* (International Publishers, New York, 1971), Vol. 2, p. 307.
15. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 543.
16. Morrow, Felix, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* (New Park Pub., London, 1963), p. 390.
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18. Ercoli, M. (Togliatti), "The Peculiarities of the Spanish Revolution," *Communist International*, No. 16, Oct. 1936, pp. 15-23.
19. Cattell, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
20. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
25. Landis, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
26. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
27. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
28. *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, p. 218.
29. Souchere, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
30. Malefakis, Edward E., *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain* (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1970), p. 216.
31. *Mundo Obrero*, August 8, 1936.
32. Cited in Bolloten, p. 160. This letter first appeared in its entirety in the *New York Times*, June 14, 1939, with a facsimile of the first and last pages for verification. It appears partially in the chief U.S. apologist for the PCE, Landis, where it is quite dishonestly edited and prettified.
33. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
34. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (Harper & Row, New York, 1971), pp. 822-823n.
35. Broue, Pierre, and Temime, Emile, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1970), p. 540.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Ercoli, M. (Togliatti), "The Peculiarities of the Spanish Revolution," *Communist International*, No. 16, Oct. 1936, pp. 15-23.
38. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
39. Landis, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
40. Cattell, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
41. del Vayo, J. Alvarez, *Freedom's Battle* (Knopf, New York, 1940), p. 124.
42. Bolloten, p. 447.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Mao Tsetung, *Selected Military Writings* (FLP, Peking), p. 157.
46. Thomas, Hugh, 1971 edition, p. 767.
47. Mao, *Selected Military Writings*, p. 159.
48. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 332.
49. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
50. Oliveira, *op. cit.*, p. 599.
51. Bolloten, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
52. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 287.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
54. Broue & Temime, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
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56. *Ibid.*, p. 247-248.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
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61. Bowers, Claude, *My Mission to Spain* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1954), p. 23.
62. Browder, Earl, *Lenin and Spain* (Workers Library Publishers, New York, 1937), p. 4.
63. *New York Post*, June 15, 1938.
64. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 460.
65. Thomas, 1961 edition, p. 603.
66. Marx, Karl, "Revolutionary Spain," *Collected Works* (International Publishers, New York, 1979), Vol. 13, p. 396.
67. Avakian, Bob, "On the Philosophical Basis of Internationalism," *Revolutionary Worker* No. 96, March 13, 1981, p. 3.
68. Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," *Collected Works* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974), Vol. 21, p. 215.
69. Churchill, Winston, *Gathering Storm* (Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 19), p. 48.
70. *Mundo Obrero*, August 7, 1936.
71. Lenin, "Collapse of the Second International," pp. 212-13.
72. Bernard Knox, "Remembering Madrid," *New York Review of Books*, Nov. 6, 1980, p. 41.
73. *Basic Principles for the Unity of Marxist-Leninists and for the Line of the International Communist Movement*, January 1981, p. 1.

TO THE MARXIST-LENINISTS, THE WORKERS AND THE OPPRESSED OF ALL COUNTRIES

Today the world is on the threshold of momentous events. The crisis of the imperialist system is rapidly bringing about the danger of the outbreak of a new, third, world war as well as the real perspective for revolution in countries throughout the world. During the last few years revolutionary struggles have erupted, including in certain areas of strategic importance. All the imperialist powers are preparing to lead the workers and the oppressed people to an unprecedented mutual slaughter to protect and expand their empires of profit and exploitation throughout the world. The imperialist powers and reactionary ruling classes are joined in two rival bands of cutthroats and slavemasters, two blocs which are led one by the U.S. imperialists, the other by the equally imperialist USSR. This war is looming on the horizon and will break out unless the revolutionary struggle of the masses, the seizure of power by the working class and oppressed peoples, is able to prevent it. Still if this does break out, it will represent an extreme concentration of the crisis of the imperialist system and will heighten the objective basis for revolutionary struggle that must be seized by the Marxist-Leninists.

But at the very time when such great dangers, challenges and opportunities are placed before the workers and oppressed of all countries, a great crisis exists within the

ranks of the Marxist-Leninists who have the responsibility of leading the working class and peoples in making revolution. After revisionism had clearly come to power in the USSR with Khrushchev, the international proletariat suffered a further grievous loss after the death of Comrade Mao Tsetung in 1976 with the seizure of power in socialist China by a new, counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie dragging one fourth of humanity back down the

capitalist road. This great loss was further compounded by the attacks on the great contributions Mao Tsetung made to the revolutionary science of the working class, Marxism-Leninism. These attacks were not only launched by the new reactionary rulers of China, but have been joined by deserters from the revolutionary ranks, and clearly the Soviet revisionists themselves are mixed up in these attacks.

In the face of this sharpening situation, and recognizing the critical need to rise to the great challenge that this situa-

tion represents, delegates from a number of Marxist-Leninist Parties and organizations have held a meeting to discuss how to emerge and advance from this crisis on the basis of forging and uniting around a correct ideological and political line for the international communist movement. Through the course of the meeting unity was achieved on the following points, which the undersigned Parties and organizations consider important elements

Joint Communique of
Ceylon Communist Party
Groupe Marxiste-Léniniste du Sénégal
Mao Tsetung-Kredsen (Denmark)
Marxist-Leninist Collective (Britain)
New Zealand Red Flag Group
Nottingham Communist Group (Britain)
Organizzazione Comunista Proletaria Marxista-Leninista (Italy)
Partido Comunista Revolucionario de Chile
Pour l'Internationale Proletarienne (France)
Reorganization Committee, Communist Party of India
(Marxist-Leninist)
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA
Unión Comunista Revolucionaria (Dominican Republic)
Unión de Lucha Marxista-Leninista (Spain)*

* Formerly Grupo para la Defensa del Marxismo-Leninismo

for the development of this line:

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

—Imperialism means war. This basic truth analyzed by Lenin holds particular meaning for today as another world war shapes up on the horizon. This is not a result of the desire of any particular bourgeois leader but stems from the very laws of the imperialist system.

—In the current historical conjuncture it is only the two most powerful imperialist powers, the U.S. and the USSR, who are capable of heading up imperialist blocs to go to world war. These two imperialist powers are also the most powerful bastions of reaction in the world today.

—All the other imperialist powers are also driven by their nature toward war—they are also big exploiters, thoroughly reactionary, aggressive and enemies of the proletariat and the peoples of the world.

—In the face of the growing danger of world war the proletariat and the oppressed people must develop their revolutionary struggle against imperialism and all reaction. If such a war breaks out they must strive to turn inter-imperialist war into a revolutionary war aimed at the overthrow of the reactionary ruling classes.

—In the last few years powerful revolutionary movements have developed in a number of countries, which have greatly battered or even toppled the reactionary regimes and shaken the imperialist system. While none of these revolutionary movements has yet led to the dictatorship of the proletariat, they are another clear indication of the possibility of doing so. The objective conditions for revolution are ripening throughout the world and in some countries these conditions are already mature. But the subjective conditions, especially the development of the Marxist-Leninist movement, are lagging seriously behind the objective conditions.

II. TASKS OF MARXIST-LENINISTS

It is necessary to rescue and build upon basic principles of Marxism-Leninism which revisionists and opportunists have done their best to obscure and bury.

—The dictatorship of the proletariat has been and remains a cardinal point of Marxism-Leninism. This principle too has been trampled on by revisionism. From the time of Karl Marx down to the present, fighting to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and to defend and strengthen it where it is established, have remained touchstone questions for Marxist-Leninists.

However, it is not correct and is especially harmful today, to fail to take into account the important experience, positive and negative, the proletariat has acquired in this respect since the time of the October Revolution. In particular the great teachings of Mao Tsetung on continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the experience of the Cultural Revolution he led are of vital importance. Comrade Mao Tsetung correctly pointed out that during the entire period of socialism, that is in the period of the transition to communism, *classes and class struggle still exist*. He pointed out the continued existence and constant regeneration of the bourgeoisie under socialism, its material and ideological base, and the means for combatting it. Mao clearly indicated, for the first time in the history of the science of Marxism-Leninism, that the ringleaders and most important section of the bourgeoisie during the socialist period (after the socialist transformation of ownership has in the main been completed) are those leading people in the Party and the state apparatus taking the capitalist road. Mao made clear that it would be necessary to wage repeated mass revolutionary struggles, such as the Cultural Revolution, against the new

bourgeoisie during the entire socialist transition.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was an unprecedented mass revolutionary movement which succeeded for ten years in blocking capitalist restoration, training revolutionary successors who are fighting today against the new capitalist rulers in China, and helped to spread Marxism-Leninism throughout the world. The fact that the Cultural Revolution did not succeed in the final analysis in preventing the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat in no way lessens its historic importance nor its important lessons for the world proletariat.

—“The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution.” This is universally true for all countries. The “peaceful road to socialism” is littered with the corpses of countless masses who were pointed down this road by revisionist betrayers.

The principle of armed struggle of the masses has also been abandoned by revisionists who replace it with putschist theses and practices or empty phrases which renounce all types of political and organizational preparations. No matter what stages the revolution may go through, the need to seize political power by the force of arms must be propagated broadly among the masses of people, the Marxist-Leninists must carry out the necessary ideological, political and organizational preparations with this goal in mind and must strive to launch the armed struggle for power as soon as the conditions are ripe. In short, communists are advocates of revolutionary warfare.

The armed struggle must be carried out as a war of the masses and through it the masses must be prepared ideologically, politically and organizationally to exercise political power.

Whatever the necessary forms and stages of the revolutionary process the principal reliance must be based on building up the armed forces of the masses led by the party, while it is also necessary to carry out political work among the armed forces of the enemy to help disintegrate these armed forces and win over as many of their soldiers as possible in the course of the revolutionary struggle.

—The existence and the leading role of the party of the proletariat is another cardinal principle. This is expressed in an organization of the vanguard of the proletariat which must be based on a Marxist-Leninist ideological, political and organizational line on the principal problems of the revolution; which at every moment, inside and outside its ranks, combats all bourgeois and revisionist influences; which permanently practises criticism and self-criticism and centralism based on democracy; which has a conscious iron discipline, all in order to link closely with the masses, to raise, generalise and coordinate their struggles, particularly political struggles, leading them to seize power from the ruling classes. With this aim, the party must attach great importance to formulating and spreading, according to principles, a concrete strategy, line and policy in accordance with the concrete conditions of the country and the interests of the masses and their wish to liberate themselves. The party must give great attention to the illegal forms of struggle and organization, in order to preserve its independence and to educate the masses in the struggle against their enemies. From a strategic point of view, illegal forms of work are fundamental. At the same time the party must make use of legal opportunities in order to broaden its influence without falling into or promoting bourgeois democratic illusions and while preparing for the inevitable repression by the reactionaries.

The party must gain the leadership of the struggle of the masses and the revolution in practice, by correctly applying the mass line. The party must continually strengthen its leading role

by ensuring that the masses and the working class continually raise their ideological, political and organizational level and that they take over an increasingly important part of the tasks of the revolution. In this way, the party will create the conditions for an authentic dictatorship of the proletariat and likewise the final withering away of the party with the withering away of social classes, communism.

Capitalism has long ago reached its final stage of imperialism, one of the most important features of which is the pillaging of the dominated countries and the exploitation of the oppressed peoples. In doing so, imperialism also greatly expands and strengthens the gravediggers destined to overthrow it.

As Lenin analysed, the world proletarian revolution, in the era of imperialism, consists of two great currents allied against the imperialist system—the proletarian socialist revolution in the capitalist countries and the new democratic revolution in the semi-feudal, colonial, semi-(or neo-) colonial countries subjected to imperialist enslavement. There are many features in common between the revolution in these two types of countries: above all that in both instances the revolution must be led by the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party, through whatever stages, and to the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism. But there are also some important distinctions in the path of the revolution in the two types of countries.

COLONIAL AND DEPENDENT COUNTRIES

In the semi-feudal, colonial, semi-(or neo-) colonial countries the revolution must in general pass through two stages—first that of the new democratic revolution led by the proletariat which leads to the socialist stage. Those who insist on making a principle of skipping this stage or eclectically combining the democratic and the socialist revolution do great harm to the revolution.

While the exact course of the revolution in any given country is dependent on the concrete conditions found there, the teachings of Mao Tsetung concerning protracted people's war are of great relevance in these types of countries. Those revisionists who attack Mao's theory of surrounding the city by the countryside as having failed to insure the hegemony of the proletariat or dogmatically insist that insurrection in the city is the sole form of seizing power in these types of countries are in fact attacking the revolutionary struggle there.

Experience has shown that without the leadership of the proletariat and a genuine Marxist-Leninist line it is impossible to free these types of countries from imperialist enslavement, still less to advance on the socialist road. While in general it is possible and necessary to build a very broad united front in such countries, even at times involving sections of the exploiting classes, experience has underscored the importance of the Marxist-Leninists maintaining leadership and political and organizational independence, of conducting widespread education on the need to advance to socialism and ultimately communism, to combat narrow nationalist tendencies even while waging a struggle for national liberation, and exposing and combatting in the appropriate ways the bourgeoisie, even the sections with which it may be allied in this struggle against foreign imperialism and the reactionary ruling classes in power.

There is an undeniable tendency for imperialism to introduce significant elements of capitalist relations in the countries it dominates. In certain dependent countries capitalist development has gone so far that it is not correct to characterize them as semi-feudal. It is better to call them predominantly capitalist even while important elements or remnants of feudal or semi-feudal production relations and their reflection in the superstructure may still exist.

In such countries a concrete analysis must be made of these con-

ditions and appropriate conclusions concerning the path, tasks, character and alignment of class forces must be drawn. In all events, foreign imperialism remains a target of the revolution.

IMPERIALIST COUNTRIES

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels pointed out that the "workers have no fatherland". Lenin stressed that this is particularly applicable in the imperialist countries. This, too, is not only a cardinal principle of Marxism-Leninism that must be rescued from decades of revisionist distortion but takes on special importance in the current conjuncture with the approach of a third world war. Communists combat every form of national chauvinism within the working class and other sections of the oppressed people. This means fighting against every tendency which identifies the interests of the proletariat with the interests of its "own" imperialist ruling class either in plundering people of the colonial and dependent countries or, especially in today's situation, in going to war to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. If a third world war breaks out the proletariat must work actively for the defeat of its own bourgeoisie in the war, attempting to transform the war into revolutionary civil war and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While the road of the October Revolution is universally applicable in the sense of the need for the armed revolution, the leadership of a proletarian vanguard party, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the establishment of socialism, etc., in all countries; in addition in the capitalist and imperialist countries the October Revolution remains the basic point of reference for Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics. The Marxist-Leninists recognize that in each country the revolution will take specific forms and must analyse the concrete conditions and sum up the experience of the masses in struggle while upholding the basic Leninist line concerning the political and organizational measures necessary for the preparation for and the seizure of power by the proletariat. Again, the distortion and negation by the revisionists of basic Leninist principles in this regard is not only an historical fact but continues to be a current problem. While paying attention to concrete analysis of concrete conditions in each country, it is necessary to study and apply correctly Lenin's theses on the importance of raising the political consciousness of the working class to its historic mission and developing its political and revolutionary struggle, on the importance of the communist press, and of combatting the influence of economism while paying attention to the needs and conditions of the life of the masses. It's also necessary to study and apply Mao's teachings of the need to base oneself on the profound sentiments of the masses to liberate themselves.

III. ON THE UNITY OF THE MARXIST-LENINISTS

The proletariat is a single class worldwide with a single historic class interest in liberating humanity from all exploitation and oppression and in ushering in the era of communism throughout the globe. For this reason proletarian internationalism is something inseparable from Marxism-Leninism and a constant need of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist vanguard in all countries. In addition to this obvious, but often forgotten, truth, the current conjuncture also demands vigorous efforts to establish the unity of Marxist-Leninists and the revolutionaries in all countries if we are to meet the tests and opportunities facing us. In fact, the need for the unity of the Marxist-Leninists is not only objectively necessary but is increasingly demanded by revolutionaries and the masses throughout the world. In this process, as in all things, ideological and political line is decisive.

As Lenin emphasized, "Unity is a great thing and a great

slogan. But what the workers' cause needs is the *unity of Marxists*, not unity between Marxists and opponents and distorters of Marxism".

In our view unity can only be achieved on the basis of drawing firm and clear lines of demarcation with revisionism and opportunism of all forms. These lines of demarcation are not something which have dropped from the sky or been concocted by sectarians nor can they be treated as mere topics for sterile, academic debates—they reflect the main and decisive forms in which revisionism confronts the revolutionary proletariat and the Marxist-Leninist movement in the world today.

Upholding the contribution of Mao Tsetung to the science of Marxism-Leninism represents a particularly important and pressing question in the international communist movement and among the class conscious workers today. The principle involved is nothing less than whether or not to uphold and build on decisive contributions to the proletarian revolution and the science of Marxism-Leninism made by Mao. Mao Tsetung made important developments of Marxism-Leninism in the area of the anti-imperialist democratic revolution leading to socialism, people's war and military strategy generally, philosophy (where he made important contributions on the analysis of contradictions, which is the essence of dialectics, and on the theory of knowledge and its links with practise and the mass line), revolutionizing the superstructure and continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, as well as in the struggle against revisionism on the practical and theoretical fronts. It is therefore nothing less than the question of whether to uphold Marxism-Leninism itself. Mao's theoretical and practical leadership represent a quantitative and qualitative development of Marxism-Leninism on many fronts and the theoretical concentration of the historical experience of the proletarian revolution over the last several decades.

We are still living in the era of Leninism, of imperialism and the proletarian revolution; at the same time we affirm that Mao Tsetung Thought is a new stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism. Without upholding and building on Mao's contributions it is not possible to defeat revisionism, imperialism and reaction in general.

Closely linked to the above is the need to vigorously oppose the new revisionist rulers in China who have overthrown the dictatorship of the proletariat and are restoring capitalism. They have utterly capitulated to imperialism, and have demanded that others follow suit, at the present time under the signboard of their reactionary "strategic theory of the three worlds" which they have fraudulently tried to pass off to the ignorant as the work of Mao himself.

The Soviet revisionists and those revisionist parties historically linked to them remain bitter enemies of the international proletariat. In recent years the Soviet revisionists have adopted a more militant posture vis à vis the Western imperialist powers. This is consistent with their own requirements as a great imperialist power heading up a rival imperialist bloc. They have on several occasions intervened directly by military means or made use of the Vietnamese and Cuban revisionists who are part of their bloc, to seek to expand their imperialist domination. This is often masked as "internationalism". In some cases revisionist parties historically tied to the USSR have prompted such counter-revolutionary lines as "peaceful roads" and "historic compromise" with the bourgeoisie; in other cases these revisionist parties prepare military coups and armed actions divorced from the masses. The role and nature of the revisionist parties today must be further analyzed and studied, both in particular cases and

in general, but in any event it is completely clear that they stand as bitter enemies of the proletarian revolution and must be unmasked and defeated as a crucial part of developing the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and mobilizing the masses in revolutionary struggle.

The Albanian Party of Labor and its leadership have fallen completely into the revisionist swamp. Shortly after the counter-revolutionary coup in China the PLA attracted a number of genuine revolutionaries because they opposed some of the more hideous features of the Hua-Teng clique in China, especially regarding international line. Very quickly, however, they outdid even Hua and Teng in the virulence of their attack on Mao and Mao Tsetung Thought. The PLA leaders have adopted classic Trotskyite positions on a number of questions, including the nature of the revolution in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries, e.g. excluding people's war as a form of revolutionary struggle. More significantly their position grows daily closer to the made-in-Moscow revisionist line on a number of cardinal questions and world events, as already shown by their stand on Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, the workers' upheaval in Poland, and their attacks on Mao, which are similar to the Soviets' attacks.

The influence of Trotskyism has been strengthened by revisionism in general and has been especially strengthened recently by the coming to power of the revisionists in China and by the revisionist stands of the PLA. The organizations and Parties which endorse this communique are calling for the struggle against revisionism to be linked to the struggle against the positions of the Trotskyites, which are left in form but deeply rightist in essence, and are especially calling for opposition to the following points: their "purist", "workerist" line of negating the alliance with the peasantry or other non-proletarian forces, negating in particular the policy of a united front against the reactionary classes in power; the negation of the possibility of seizing power and embarking on the socialist transition period in a single country; and their economist conception of the mass struggles and with regard to the way in which they see the transition to communism as consisting basically of a development of the productive forces.

The signatory organizations and Parties underline the increased danger posed by social democracy which holds power in a number of countries and which continues to serve as a Trojan horse for the interests of the Western imperialists. In addition to its usual conciliatory tactics, in some countries social democracy is attempting to form or influence armed groups in order to play a role in a situation of changing conditions. Marxist-Leninists must steadfastly combat their influence among the masses and must denounce all their tactics.

While it is not only possible but vitally necessary to take important steps now to unify genuine Marxist-Leninists on the basis of clear lines of demarcation that have emerged and in the face of the urgent tasks of the international movement, it is also necessary to carry out collective study, discussion and struggle over many important questions. This is particularly evident in relation to the necessity of developing a much fuller and deeper understanding of the history of the international communist movement. As the Chinese Communist Party pointed out in 1963 when it was a genuine communist party, in its polemics with the Soviet revisionists, with regard to the history of the international communist (and national liberation) movement there are "many experiences and many lessons. There are experiences which people should praise and there are experiences which make people grieve. Communists and revolutionaries in all countries should ponder and seriously study these experiences of success and failure, so as to draw correct conclusions and useful lessons from them". Today, in light of further

momentous experiences, positive and negative, since that time, and with the present situation and the looming possibilities in mind, this orientation assumes all the more profound significance. The need to dare to ponder and analyze more deeply and penetratingly in order to act more boldly is all the more decisive.

Before modern revisionism revealed itself openly in the USSR and various other countries, there already existed within the international communist movement different erroneous conceptions which facilitated its development.

While recognizing the undeniable contributions made by the Third International to the unity of the international proletariat, to the founding of communist parties and to their struggles; and while recognizing the tremendous role played by the October Revolution, which initiated the epoch of proletarian revolutions and opened the way for the construction of socialism in the USSR, communists must endeavor to critically sum up these experiences, making it possible to explain in the light of Marxism-Leninism the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie in that country and in other socialist nations, and also making it possible to learn from the errors and deviations which were committed and to evaluate to what extent they had bearing on the degeneration into opportunism of the majority of the international communist movement. In the face of the demoralization caused by these facts among broad sectors of the masses, and given that the bourgeois sectors are taking advantage of these facts, claiming that they prove the "failure" of Marxism, it falls on us communists to show that it is not scientific socialism which has failed, and that, on the contrary, scientific socialism makes it possible for us to grasp what objective and subjective factors gave rise to these events. Among other things, we must investigate and struggle over the experiences of the Third International and the reasons which led to its self-dissolution; the way in which the relationship between the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism and the policy of forming an anti-fascist united front was handled during the last world war, and also the very reasoning behind this policy; the origin of the revisionist tendencies, such as Browderism, which spread faith in the idea that it would be possible to establish a lasting peace and improve the living conditions of the masses on the basis of agreements between the USSR and the imperialist powers who were fighting against the fascist states, and of the tendencies to conciliation which these gave rise to; the deep roots that led to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and other socialist countries, paying particular attention to the way in which the development of the class struggle was handled and the question of how the need to consistently apply the dictatorship of the proletariat was treated in those countries, to the handling of the relationship between politics and ideology, between politics and economic and technical questions, the question of the mass line, the question of the correct handling of contradictions among the people and with

the enemy on the basis of mobilizing the masses, the relationship of centralism and democracy within the party and the relationship of the party to the masses. By throwing light on these questions, while staying clear of the slander of the Trotskyites and other enemies of the revolution, we will be able to draw important lessons for the development of the revolution.

In sum, in order to achieve the unity of the Marxist-Leninists, it is essential to deepen the study so as to make an evaluation of the theoretical and practical activity of the communists during the period of the Third International, the Second World War and especially the causes of the coming to power of the revisionists in the countries in which the proletariat held power, particularly in the USSR and in China.

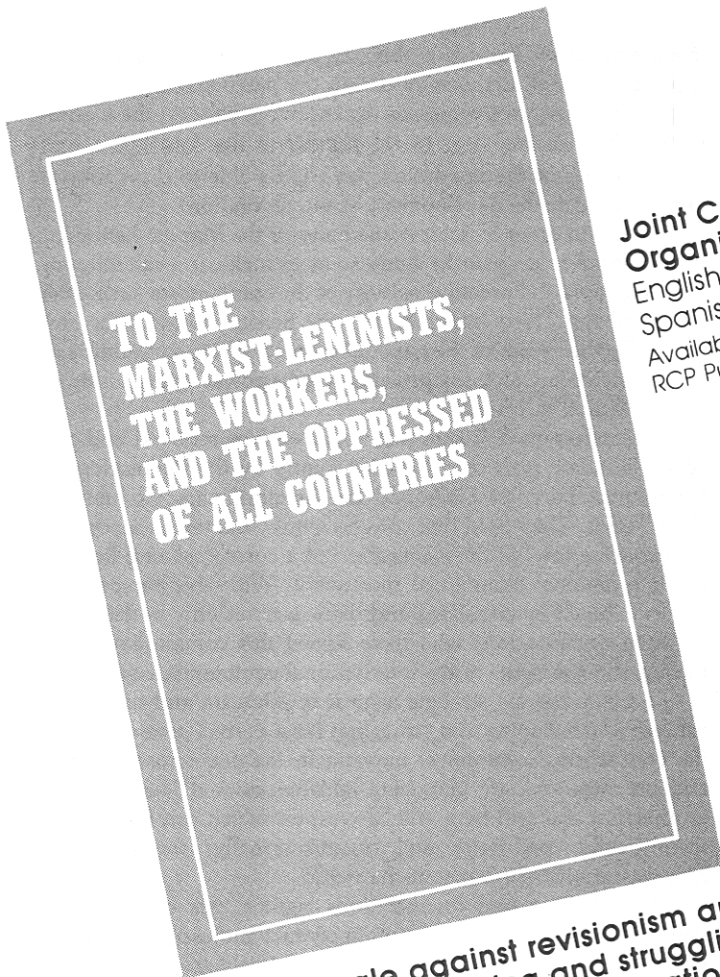
The undersigned Parties and organizations received and discussed a major draft text prepared jointly by the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile and the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. They hold that, on the whole, the text is a positive contribution toward the elaboration of a correct general line for the international communist movement. With this perspective, the text should be circulated and discussed not only in the ranks of those organizations who have signed this communique, but throughout the ranks of the international communist movement.

To carry out the struggle against revisionism and to aid the process of developing and struggling for a correct general line in the international communist movement, the undersigned Parties and organizations are launching an international journal. This journal can and will be a crucial weapon which can help unite, ideologically, politically and organizationally, the genuine Marxist-Leninists throughout the world.

These Parties and organizations signing this communique stress the need not only to maintain contact and carry out discussion and struggle with each other but actively to seek out and develop relations with other genuine Marxist-Leninists around the globe and carry out an ideological struggle and political work to win still broader forces of the international movement and the masses to consolidate the revolutionary position and reinforce the revolutionary struggles.

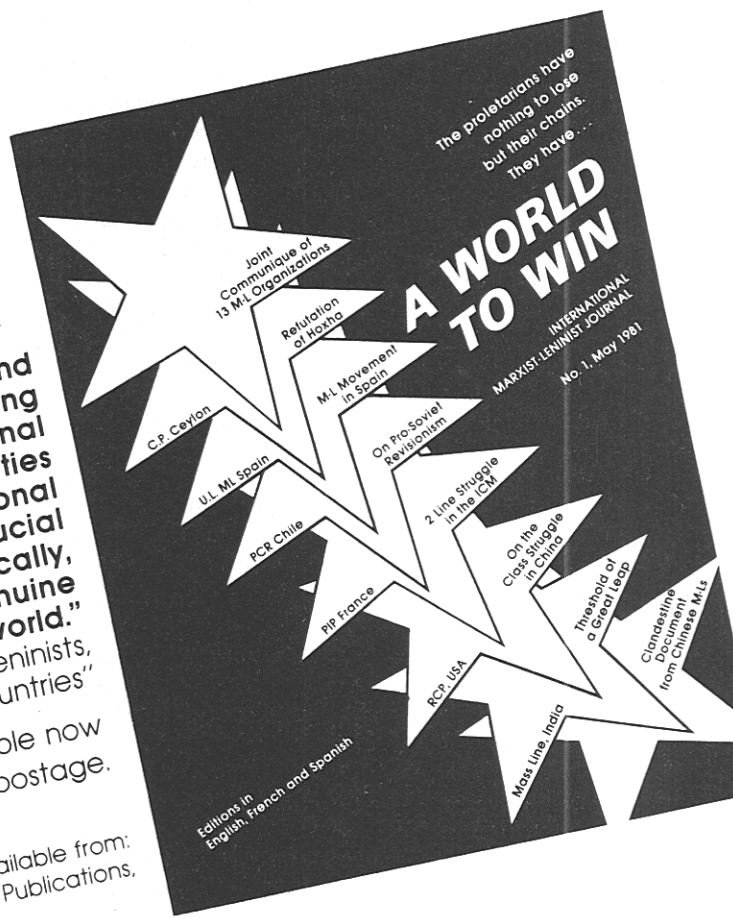
The current conjuncture in the world and in the international movement presents the revolutionary proletariat, the oppressed peoples and the Marxist-Leninists with great tasks, trials and, above all, great opportunities. Marxism-Leninism, the science of the revolutionary proletariat, has always been forged and tempered in the furnace of class struggle. Today we must rise to meet the challenges before us, race to catch up with the rapid developments of the objective conditions, reconstruct the unity of Marxist-Leninists on the basis of a correct line and summing up the experience of the past, fight for proletarian internationalism—and in so doing push ahead the advance toward communism throughout the world.

Autumn, 1980



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"To carry out the struggle against revisionism and to aid the process of developing and struggling for a correct general line in the international communist movement, the undersigned Parties and organizations are launching an international journal. This journal can and will be a crucial weapon which can help unite, ideologically, politically and organizationally, the genuine Marxist-Leninists throughout the world."
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