

‘(B)uilding up a defence in depth on the approaches to Moscow, continuously harrying the enemy and checking his advance on one of the lines of defence, then organizing a counter-offensive, by bringing up for this purpose troops from the Far East together with new formations.’<sup>66</sup>

On June 29, a series of measures were taken. Stalin would announce them to the people in his famous radio speech of July 3, 1941. Its content reached the Soviets by its simplicity and by its tenacious will to win. Stalin said:

‘The enemy is cruel and implacable. He is out to seize our lands, watered with our sweat, to seize our grain and oil secured by our labor. He is out to restore the rule of landlords, to restore tsarism, to destroy national culture and the national state existence of the Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Letts, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tatars, moldavians, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaidjanians, and the other free peoples of the Soviet Union, to Germanize them, to convert them into the slaves of German princes and barons.

‘Thus the issue is one of life or death for the Soviet State, for the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall remain free or fall into slavery . . . .

‘Our people must know no fear in fight and must selflessly join our patriotic war of liberation, our war against the fascist enslavers.

‘Lenin, the great founder of our state, used to say that the chief virtue of the Bolshevik must be courage, valor, fearlessness in struggle, readiness to fight, together with the people, against the enemies of the country . . . .

‘The Red Army, Red Navy, and all citizens of the Soviet Union must defend every inch of Soviet soil, must fight to the last drop of blood for our towns and villages . . . .

‘We must strengthen the Red Army’s rear, subordinating all our work to this cause. All our industries must be got to work with greater intensity to produce more rifles, machine-guns, artillery, bullets, shells, airplanes . . . .

‘We must wage a ruthless fight against all disorganizers of the rear, deserters, panic-mongers, rumor-mongers, we must exterminate spies, diversionists, and enemy parachutists . . . .

‘In case of forced retreat of Red Army units, all rolling stock must be evacuated, the enemy must not be left a single engine, a single railway car, not a single pound of grain, or a gallon of fuel . . . .

‘In areas occupied by the enemy, guerilla units, mounted and on foot, must be formed, diversionist groups must be organized to combat the enemy troops, to foment guerilla warfare everywhere . . . .

*‘Forward, to our victory!’<sup>67</sup>*

On July 10 began the Battle of Smolensk. After the seizure of that city, the Hitlerites thought that they could charge towards Moscow, 300 kilometres further on. The Battle of Smolensk raged for two months.

‘The battle of Smolensk played a crucial role in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War . . . . According to German generals their forces lost 250,000 officers and men . . . .

‘As a result we gained time and were able to raise strategic reserves and carry out defensive measures at the Moscow sector.’<sup>68</sup>

Vasilevsky made the following remark:

‘The Smolensk battle . . . laid the basis for disrupting the *blitzkrieg* . . .

‘(It was) a most valuable school for testing the fighting efficiency of Soviet soldiers and commanders, including top commanders and the Supreme Command’.<sup>69</sup>

On September 30, the Nazis began their final offensive to take Moscow.

Some 450,000 inhabitants of the city, 75 per cent women, were mobilized to build fortifications and anti-tank defences. General Panfilov’s troops led memorable battles in defence of the Volokolamsk Road, immortalized in a novel of the same name by Alexander Beck.<sup>70</sup>

Moscow was bombed by German aviation. Panic began to seize the city’s population. The Nazis were only 80 kilometres away. Part of the administration was evacuated. But Stalin decided to remain in Moscow. The battles became more and more fierce and, in early November, the Nazi offensive was stopped. After consulting with Zhukov, Stalin took the decision to organize the traditional November 7 military parade on Red Square. It was a formidable challenge to the Nazi troops camped at the gates of Moscow. Stalin made a speech, which was broadcast to the entire country.

‘(T)he enemy is before the gates of Leningrad and Moscow.

‘The enemy calculated that our army would be dispersed at the very first blow and our country forced to its knees. But the enemy wholly miscalculated . . . our country — our whole country — has organized itself into a single fighting camp in order, jointly with our army and navy, to rout the German invaders . . .

‘Is it possible, then, to doubt that we can and must gain victory over the German invaders? The enemy is not as strong as some terror-stricken would-be intellectuals picture him. The devil is not as terrible as he is painted . . .

‘Comrades, Red Army and Red Navy men, commanders and political instructors, men and women guerillas:

‘The whole world is looking to you as a force capable of destroying the brigand hordes of German invaders. The enslaved peoples of Europe under the yoke of the German invaders are looking to you as their liberators. A great mission of liberation has fallen to your lot.

‘Be worthy of this mission! . . .

‘*Under the banner of Lenin — onward to victory!*’<sup>71</sup>

On November 15, the Nazis began their second offensive against Moscow. On November 25, some units advanced into the southern suburbs of Moscow. But on December 5, the attack was contained. Throughout this period, new troops coming from all over the country were able to reach Moscow. Even at the most dramatic moments, Stalin kept his strategic forces in reserve. Rokossovsky wrote:

‘The Army’s defences were spread so thin that they threatened to burst. It took feats of troop juggling to prevent this from happening.’<sup>72</sup>

After having consulted all of his commanders, Stalin decided on a large counter-attack, which began on December 5. Some 720,000 Red soldiers pushed back

800,000 Hitlerites 100 to 300 kilometres.

For the first time, the 'invincible' German troops were defeated, and well. In front of Moscow, the fascists lost more than 500,000 men, 1,300 tanks, 2,500 canons, more than 15,000 motorized vehicles and much more matériel. Hitler's army had not yet suffered such losses.<sup>73</sup>

Many consider the Battle of Moscow to be the real turning point of the anti-fascist war. It took place less than six months after the beginning of the lightning war. The unflinching will, the immense organizational capacities and the mastery of large strategic problems by Stalin contributed significantly.

## Stalin and the Nazi war of annihilation

When referring to the Second World War, it is important to remember that there were several wars, not one. The war led by the Anglo-American and French imperialists against their German counterpart had little in common with the national anti-fascist war led by the Soviet Union. During its struggle against the Hitlerian invasion, the French ruling class did not and could not mobilize and arm the working masses in a fight to the death against Nazism. After the defeat of his troops, Pétain, French World War I hero, signed the act of capitulation and became a major collaborator. Almost en masse, the French big bourgeoisie followed Hitler, trying to make the most of the German New Order. The war in the West was more or less a 'civilized' war between 'civilized' bourgeois.

Nothing of the kind took place in the Soviet Union. The Soviet people faced a completely different war; one of Stalin's merits is to have understood this in time and to have prepared appropriately.

Before Operation Barbarossa began, Hitler had already announced what was to occur. In his *Journal*, General Halder took notes of a speech given by Hitler to his generals on March 30, 1941. The *führer* spoke of the upcoming war with the Soviet Union:

*'Battle between two ideologies.* Damning judgment of Bolshevism: it is an asocial crime. Communism is a frightening danger for the future . . . . It is a battle of annihilation. If we do not see things in this manner, we will still beat the enemy, but in thirty years, the Communist enemy will oppose us once more. We are not waging war to maintain our enemy . . . .

*'Battle against Russia:* destruction of Bolshevik commissars and of the Communist intelligentsia.'<sup>74</sup>

Note that discussion refers to a 'final solution', but not against the Jews. The first promises of a 'war of annihilation' and of 'physical destruction' were addressed to the Communists. And, sure enough, the Bolsheviks, the Soviets, were the first victims of mass extermination.

General Nagel wrote in September 1941:

'Unlike the diet for other prisoners (i.e. British and U.S.) we are under no obligation to feed the Bolshevik prisoners'.<sup>75</sup>

In the Auschwitz and Chelmno extermination camps, ‘Soviet prisoners of war were the first, or among the first, to be deliberately killed by lethal injections and gassing.’<sup>76</sup>

There were 3,289,000 Soviet prisoners of war, dead in the concentration camps, ‘while travelling’ or under ‘various circumstances’ ! When epidemics took place in the barracks of Soviet prisoners, Nazi guards only entered ‘with flame-throwing teams when, “for hygiene reasons”, the dying and dead were burned along with their lice-ridden beds’. There can easily have been 5,000,000 assassinated prisoners, if we take into account the Soviet soldiers who were ‘simply killed on the spot’ when they surrendered.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore the first extermination campaigns, in fact the biggest, were against the Soviet peoples, including Soviet Jews. The peoples of the USSR suffered the most and endured the greatest number of dead (23 million), but they also showed utter determination and amazing heroism.

Until the invasion of the Soviet Union, there were no large massacres of Jewish populations. At the time, the Nazis had not encountered any serious resistance. But with their very first steps on Soviet soil, these noble Germans had to face adversaries who were fighting to the last man. Right in the first weeks, the Germans suffered important losses, against an inferior race, the Slavs, worse even, against Bolsheviks! The exterminating rage of the Nazis was born in their first massive losses. When the fascist beast started to bleed under the Red Army’s blows, it dreamed up the ‘final solution’ for the Soviet people.

On November 26, 1941, the German 30th Army Corps, occupying a large Soviet territory, ordered that be taken as hostages ‘ “all individuals related to partisans”; “all individuals suspected of being in contact with partisans”; “all members of the party and the Komsomol, as well as party caretakers”; “all former party members”; and “all individuals who occupied official positions before the arrival of German and Rumanian troops.” These hostages were to be held “in concentration camps.” For every German or Rumanian soldier killed by a partisan, ten of these hostages were to be executed’.<sup>78</sup> For each German soldier killed, the Nazis decided to execute at least ten hostages.

On December 1, 1942, during a discussion with Hitler on the war against the Soviet partisans, General Jodl summed up the German position as follows:

‘In battle, our troops can do as they please: hang partisans, even hang them head down or quarter them.’<sup>79</sup>

The bestiality with which the Hitlerian troops tracked down and liquidated all the Party members, all the partisans, all the Soviet State leaders, along with their families, allows us to better understand the importance of the Great Purge of 1937–1938. In the occupied territories, unreconcilable counter-revolutionaries who had not been liquidated in 1937–1938 went to work for the Hitlerites, informing on all the Bolsheviks, their families and their friends in struggle.

As the war in the East became fiercer and fiercer, the Nazis’ murderous folly against an entire people intensified. Himmler, talking to SS leaders, spoke in June 1942:

‘In what was a “war of annihilation [*Vernichtungskampf*],” two “races and peoples” were locked in “unconditional” combat; on the one side “this brute matter, this mass, these primeval men, or better these subhumans [*Untermenschen*], led by commissars”; on the other, “we Germans”.’<sup>80</sup>

An unprecedented, sanguinary terror: that was the weapon that the Nazis tried to use to force the Soviets into moral and political submission. Himmler said:

‘During the battles to seize Kharkov, our reputation of striking fear and sowing terror preceded us. It is an extraordinary weapon that should always be reinforced.’<sup>81</sup>

And the Nazis intensified that terror.

On August 23, 1942, precisely at 18:00, one thousand airplanes began to drop incendiary bombs on Stalingrad. In that city of 600,000 people, there were many wooden buildings, gas tanks and fuel tanks for industries. Yeryomenko, who commanded the Stalingrad front, wrote:

‘Stalingrad was drowned by the misty flames, surrounded by smoke and soot. The entire city was burning. Huge clouds of smoke and fire rose up above the factories. The oil reservoirs appeared to be volcanoes throwing up their lava. Hundreds of thousands of peaceable inhabitants perished. One’s heart got caught in one’s throat in compassion for the innocent victims of the fascist victim.’<sup>82</sup>

One must have a clear view of these unbearable truths to understand certain aspects of what the bourgeoisie calls ‘Stalinism’. During the purge, unrepentant bureaucrats, defeatists and capitulationists were affected; many were sent to Siberia. A defeatist or capitulationist Party could never have mobilized and disciplined the population to face the Nazi terror. And the Soviet people did face it in the besieged cities, in Leningrad and Moscow. And even in the Stalingrad inferno, men and women survived, never surrendered and, finally, participated in the counter-offensive!

During the German aggression, in June 1941, General Pavlov, commander of the Western Front, displayed grave incompetence and negligence. The result was the loss of Minsk, the Byelorussian capital, on June 28. Stalin recalled Pavlov and his staff to Moscow. Zhukov noted that ‘on a proposal of the Military Council of the Western Front’, they were tried and shot.’<sup>83</sup>

Elleinstein of course writes that ‘Stalin continued to terrorize his subordinates’.<sup>84</sup> But, faced with Nazi barbarism, the Soviet leadership had to show an unflinching attitude and phenomenal endurance; any irresponsible act had to be punished with the utmost severity.

Once the fascist beast began to receive mortal wounds, it tried to take up courage by bathing in blood, by practicing genocide against the Soviet people who were under its talons.

Himmler declared on December 16, 1943, in Weimar:

‘When I was forced to give in a village the order to march against the Jewish partisans and commissars, I systematically gave the order to also kill the women and children of these partisans and these commissars. I would be a coward and a criminal with respect to our descendants if I allowed these hate-filled children of

subhumans in the battle between human and subhuman. We always keep in mind that we are engaged in a primitive, natural and original racial battle.’<sup>85</sup>

In another speech on April 24, 1943, in Kharkov, the head of the SS said:

‘By what means will we succeed in removing from Russia the greatest number of men, dead or alive? We will succeed by killing them, by making them prisoner, by making them really work and by giving back (certain territories) to the enemy only after having completely emptied them of inhabitants. Giving men back to Russia would be a great error.’<sup>86</sup>

This reality, of the unbelievable terror that the Nazis practiced in the Soviet Union, against the first socialist country, against the Communists, is almost systematically covered up or minimized in bourgeois literature. This silence has a clear goal. Those who do not know of the monstrous crimes committed against the Soviets are more likely to believe that Stalin was a ‘dictator’ comparable to Hitler. The bourgeoisie covers up the real anti-Communist genocide to better publicize what it has in common with Nazism: the irrational hatred of Communism, the class hatred of socialism. And to better cover up the great genocide of the war, the bourgeoisie shines the light on another genocide, that of the Jews.

In a remarkable book, Arno J. Mayer, whose father was left-Zionist, shows that the extermination of the Jews only began once the Nazis had, for the first time, suffered heavy losses. It was in June–July 1941, against the Red Army. The bestiality against the Communists, followed by the unexpected defeats that demolished the sentiment of invincibility of the *Übermenschen* (Supermen), created the atmosphere that led to the Holocaust.

‘The Judeocide was forged in the fires of a stupendous war to conquer unlimited *Lebensraum* from Russia, to crush the Soviet regime, and to liquidate international bolshevism . . . . Without Operation Barbarossa there would and could have been no Jewish catastrophe, no “Final Solution”.’<sup>87</sup> Once the Nazis had to face the defeats on the Russian front, they decided on a ‘global and final solution’ of the ‘Jewish problem’ during the Wannsee conference of January 20, 1942.

For years, the Nazis had put forward their hatred of ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’, Bolshevism having been the worst invention of the Jews. The determined resistance of the Bolsheviks prevented the Hitlerians from finishing off their principal enemy. So the latter turned their frustrations on the Jews, whom they exterminated with blind fury.

Since the Jewish big bourgeoisie had been conciliatory to the Hitlerian state, sometimes even collaborationist, most Jews handed themselves over to their executors. But the Communist Jews, who acted in an internationalist spirit, fought the Nazis and led some of the Jewish Left into resistance. The great majority of the poor Jews were gassed. But many rich Jews succeeded in escaping to the United States. After the war, they went to work for U.S. imperialism and its Middle East beachhead, Israel. They speak at length about the Jewish Holocaust, but in a pro-Israel light; at the same time, they freely voice their anti-Communism, thereby insulting the memory of those Communist Jews who really did fight the Nazis.

We conclude with a word on how Hitler prepared the Nazis to indifferently massacre 23 million Soviet citizens. To transform his men into killing machines, he had to make them believe that a Bolshevik was subhuman, an animal.

‘Hitler warned his troops that the enemy forces were “largely composed of beasts, not soldiers,” conditioned to fight with animal-like ferocity.’<sup>88</sup>

In order to push the German troops to exterminate Communists, Hitler told them that Stalin and the other Soviet leaders were ‘bloodstained criminals . . . [who had] killed and rooted out millions of [Russia’s] leading intelligentsia in a wild thirst for blood . . . [and] exercised the most cruel tyranny of all times.’<sup>89</sup>

‘(T)he bloody Jew and tyrant over the people . . . killed (sometimes with inhuman tortures) or starved to death with truly fanatical savagery close to thirty million people.’<sup>90</sup>

So, for Hitler, the lie of ‘thirty million victims of Stalinism’ served to psychologically prepare for Nazi barbarism and the genocide of Soviet Communists and partisans.

Note that Hitler first blamed *Lenin* for ‘thirty million victims’. This disgusting lie already appeared in 1926 in *Mein Kampf*, long before the collectivization and purge! Attacking Judeo-Bolshevism, Hitler wrote:

‘(The Jew) killed or starved about thirty million people with a truly diabolic ferocity, under inhuman tortures’.<sup>91</sup>

Half a century later, Brzezinski, U.S. imperialism’s official ideologue, took up these Nazi lies, word for word:

‘(I)t is absolutely safe to estimate the number (of Stalin’s victims) at no less than twenty million and perhaps as high as forty million’.<sup>92</sup>

## Stalin, his personality and his military capacities

The Hitlerian aggression drenched the Soviet Union in a bath of blood and steel that surpassed all the horrors that the world had ever previously seen. Never in humanity’s history has such a terrifying test, of such unfeeling violence, been imposed on a people, its cadres and its leadership. Under such conditions, it was impossible to pretend, to rationalize or to try to save oneself with empty words and acts.

The moment of truth had come for Stalin, the supreme leader of the Party and the country. The war was to measure his moral and political strength, his will and endurance and his intellectual and organizational capacities.

At the same time, all the ‘truths’ about Stalin, revealed in a self-interested manner, by the Hitlerians and by the more ‘respectable’ Right, were to be tested: the war would show up without doubt Stalin the ‘dictator’, whose ‘personal power’ was not affected by the ‘slightest contradiction’, the ‘despot’ who did not listen to reason, the man of ‘mediocre intelligence’, etc.

Half a century after the war, these slanders, put forward at the time by socialism’s worst enemies, have become primary ‘truths’ once again. With time, the

international bourgeoisie succeeded in imposing on intellectual circles the monopoly of its class 'truth'.

Yet the Second World War itself provided ample material to denounce this lie, which is so important to save capitalism, the system of exploitation and pillage.

### Stalin, the 'dictator'

We begin with the first 'uncontestable truth': Stalin, alone, the dictator, imposing his personal will, requiring total submission to himself. Here is Khrushchev:

'The power accumulated in the hands of one person, Stalin, led to serious consequences during the Great Patriotic War.'<sup>93</sup>

'Stalin acts for everybody; he does not reckon with anyone; he asks no one for advice.'<sup>94</sup>

'Stalin acted not through persuasion, explanation and patient cooperation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Whoever opposed this concept or tried to prove his viewpoint and the correctness of his position was doomed to removal from the leading collective and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation.'<sup>95</sup>

'The sickly suspicion created in him a general distrust . . . . A situation was created where one could not express one's own will.'<sup>96</sup>

Elleinstein followed in Khrushchev's footsteps. He is quite happy to denounce the 'Soviet dictatorship', in which Stalin 'was suspicious of all his subordinates'. 'The errors of Stalin's leadership had tragic consequences in the first months of the war, but these took place primarily as a result of the Soviet dictatorship.'<sup>97</sup>

Vasilevsky was originally assistant to Zhukov, the Chief of Staff. In May 1942, he became Chief of Staff. He worked at Stalin's side throughout the war.

'In elaborating a particular operational-strategic decision or in examining other important issues affecting the conduct of the war, the Commander-in-Chief called in responsible people directly in charge of the problem under review . . . . periodically he would summon certain members of front military councils so as to work out, review or confirm a particular decision concerning control of battle operations . . . .

'(T)he preliminary draft of a strategic decision of plan for its implementation was drawn up by the Commander-in-Chief in a narrow circle of people. These were usually a few members of the Politburo and the State Defence Committee . . . . This work would often take several days. In the course of it the Commander-in-Chief would normally confer with commanders and members of military councils of the respective fronts'.

Note that the State Committee for Defence, headed by Stalin, was responsible for the leadership of the country and all authority was concentrated in its hands. Vasilevsky continued:

'(T)he Central Committee Politburo and army leadership always relied on collective decision-making. That is why the strategic decisions taken collectively and drawn up by the Supreme Command as a rule corresponded to the situation at the fronts, while the requirements made upon people were realistic'.<sup>98</sup>



Vasilevsky also thought that Stalin's style of work improved during the battle of Stalingrad, then during the great offensives against the Hitlerians.

'The big turning point for Stalin as Supreme High Commander came in September 1942 when the situation became very grave and there was a special need for flexible and skilled leadership in regard to military operations. (He was) ... obliged constantly to rely on the collective experience of his generals. Thenceforth one would often hear him say: "Why the devil didn't you say so!"

'From then on, before he took a decision on any important war issue, Stalin would take advice and discuss it together with his deputy, the top General Staff personnel, heads of chief departments of the People's Defence Commissariat and front commanders, as well as people's commissars in charge of the defence industry.'<sup>99</sup>

During the entire war, General Shtemenko worked for the Chief of Staff, first as Chief of Operations, then as under-Chief of Staff.

'I must say that Stalin did not decide and did not like to decide for himself important questions about the war. He understood perfectly well the necessity of collective work in this complex area, he recognized those who were experts on such and such a military problem, took into account their opinion and gave each their due.'<sup>100</sup>

Zhukov described many vivid conversations and underscored the manner in which they were resolved:

'Often sharp arguments arose at the Committee sittings. Views were expressed in definite and sharp terms ...

'If no agreement was reached at the sitting, a commission would be immediately formed of representatives of the two extreme sides which had to reach an agreement and report on the proposals it would work out ...

'In all, the State Committee for Defence adopted some ten thousand resolutions on military and economic matters during the war.'<sup>101</sup>

Khrushchev's image of Stalin, the 'lone man who leans on no-one', is falsified by an event during the war, in the beginning of August 1941, which implicated Khrushchev himself and Commander Kirponos. Vasilevsky recalled the anecdote, probably thinking of the passage in Khrushchev's Secret Report that reads 'At the beginning of the war we did not even have sufficient numbers of rifles'.<sup>102</sup>

Stalin had given his approval to Khrushchev for an offensive that would start August 5, 1941. But at the same time, Stalin told him to prepare the defence line that he (Stalin) had proposed. Stalin explained that in warfare, 'you have to prepare for the bad and even the very bad as well as the good. That is the only way of avoiding blunders'.

But Khrushchev made all sorts of unreasonable demands that the headquarters could not meet. Stalin said:

' "It would be silly to think ... that you are going to get everything ready-made from somewhere else. Learn to supply and reinforce yourself. Set up reserve units attached to the armies, turn some factories over to making rifles, machine-guns, get cracking ... Leningrad has been able to start manufacturing *Katiusha*

rockets . . . .”

‘ “Comrade Stalin, all your instructions will be put into effect. Unfortunately, we are unfamiliar with the *Katiusha* rocket . . . .”

‘ “Your people have the blueprints, and they’ve had the models for ages. It’s your own fault for being so ignorant of this crucial weapon.” ’<sup>103</sup>

That was how Stalin taught his subordinates, here Khrushchev, to show initiative, creativity and a sense of responsibility.

In July 1942, Rokossovsky, who had led with much success an army up to then, was named commander of the Briansk Front by Stalin. He was unsure of whether he was competent. He was warmly received by Stalin, who explained the position. Rokossovsky described the end of the interview.

‘When I had finished and was about to leave, Stalin said, “Don’t go yet.”

‘He phoned Poskryobyshev and asked him to call in a general just removed from the command at the Front. The following dialogue took place:

‘ “You say that we have punished you wrongly?”

‘ “Yes, because the GHQ representative kept getting in my way.”

‘ “How?”

‘ “He interfered with my orders, held conferences when it was necessary to act, gave contradictory instructions. . . . In general he tried to override the commander.”

‘ “So he got in your way. But you were in command of the Front?”

‘ “Yes.”

‘ “The Party and the Government entrusted the Front to *you*. . . . Did you have a telephone?”

‘ “Yes.”

‘ “Then why didn’t you report that he was getting in your way?”

‘ “I didn’t dare complain about your representative.”

‘ “Well, that is what we have punished you for: not daring to pick up the receiver and phone up, as a result of which you failed to carry out the operation.”

‘I walked out of the Supreme Commander’s office with the thought that, as a new-fledged Front Commander, I had just been taught an object lesson. Believe me, I made the most of it.’<sup>104</sup>

That was how Stalin sanctioned those generals who did not dare defend their opinion by addressing him directly.

## Stalin, the ‘hysteric’

Let us consider another ‘uncontestable truth’: Stalin ran a personal dictatorship, often behaved hysterically, was a charlatan and led the war irresponsibly without knowing the real situation on the ground.

Once again, the man who wanted to ‘return to the Great Lenin’, Khrushchev, had something to offer on the subject:

‘Even after the war began, the nervousness and hysteria which Stalin demonstrated . . . . caused our Army serious damage.’<sup>105</sup>

‘Stalin began to tell all kinds of nonsense about Zhukov, among others the following, “. . . It is said that before each operation at the front Zhukov used to behave as follows: He used to take a handful of earth, smell it and say, ‘We can begin the attack’ or the opposite, ‘The planned operation cannot be carried out.’ ” <sup>106</sup>

‘Stalin planned operations on a globe. (Animation in the hall.) Yes, comrades, he used to take the globe and trace the front line on it.’ <sup>107</sup>

‘Stalin was very far from an understanding of the real situation which was developing at the front. This was natural because, during the whole Patriotic War, he never visited any section of the front’ <sup>108</sup>

Elleinstein, who avoids making a fool of himself with Khrushchev’s stupid remarks about a globe, still attacks Stalin’s detestable ‘leadership methods’:

‘An important fact must be pointed out about Stalin’s actions during the war: it is his almost total absence, for the combatants and for the civilian population. He never went to the front.’ <sup>109</sup>

Here is how Zhukov presented Stalin, the ‘nervous hysteric’ who could not stand for the slightest contradiction.

‘As a rule, the General Headquarters worked in an orderly, business-like manner. Everyone had a chance to state his opinion.

‘Stalin was equally stern to everybody and rather formal. He listened attentively to anybody speaking to the point.

‘Incidentally, I know from my war experience that one could safely bring up matters unlikely to please Stalin, argue them out and firmly carry the point. Those who assert it was not so are wrong.’ <sup>110</sup>

Now let us examine the unforgettable scene where Zhukov went to visit the dictator, globe in hand, to approximately (of course) indicate the front line. Upon returning, Zhukov wrote:

‘It was impossible to go to Stalin without being perfectly familiar with the situation plotted on the map and to report tentative or (which was worse) exaggerated information. Stalin would not tolerate hit-or-miss answers, he demanded utmost accuracy and clarity.

‘Stalin seemed to have a knack of detecting weak spots in reports and documents. He immediately laid them open and severely reprimanded those responsible for inaccuracies. He had a tenacious memory, perfectly remembered whatever was said and would not miss a chance to give a severe dressing-down. That is why we drafted staff documents as best we possibly could under the circumstances.’ <sup>111</sup>

As for General Shtemenko, he directly addressed Khrushchev’s accusation that Stalin, not visiting the front, could not know the realities of war.

‘The Supreme Commander could not, in our opinion, visit the fronts more frequently. It would have been an unforgivably lightheaded act to abandon, even for a short period, the General Headquarters, to decide a partial question on a single front.’ <sup>112</sup>

Such travel was useless, claimed Vasilevsky. Stalin received at Headquarters very detailed and very complete information, so ‘he could, while in Moscow, take

decisions properly and with despatch'.<sup>113</sup> Stalin made his decisions 'not only from data known provided by Headquarters, but also taking into account particularities of the given situation'.<sup>114</sup>

How did he do so? Stalin received all the important information that came from the offices of the Chief of Staff, the Minister of Defence and the Political Leadership of the Red Army. His knowledge of the particular situation on the different fronts came from two sources. First, the front commanders regularly sent him reports. Then, according to Zhukov:

'Stalin based his judgments of crucial issues on the reports furnished by General Headquarters representatives, whom he would send to the Fronts for on-the-spot assessment of the situation and consultations with respective commanders, on conclusions made at the General Headquarters and suggestions by Front commanders and on special reports.'<sup>115</sup>

The General Headquarters representatives were to send a report to Stalin every day. On August 16, 1943, the first day of an important operation near Kharkov, Vasilevsky did not send his report. Stalin immediately sent him the message:

'I warn you for the last time that if you ever fail to do your duty to the GHQ again you will be removed from your post as Chief of General Staff and recalled from the front . . .'.<sup>116</sup> Vasilevsky was thunderstruck, but was not offended by this 'brutality'. On the contrary, he wrote:

'Stalin was just as categorical with other people. He required similar discipline from every representative of the GHQ . . . . My feeling is that the lack of any indulgence to an GHQ representative was justified in the interests of efficient control of hostilities. Stalin very attentively followed the course of events at the front, quickly reacted to all changes in them and firmly held troop control in his own hands.'<sup>117</sup>

As opposed to Khrushchev, who claimed to have seen an irresponsible and charlatanesque Stalin, Vasilevsky, who worked for thirty-four months at Stalin's side, analyzed the latter's style of work as follows:

'Stalin paid a great deal of attention to creating an efficient style of work in the GHQ. If we look at the style from autumn 1942, we see it as distinguished by reliance on collective experience in drawing up operational and strategic plans, a high degree of exactingness, resourcefulness, constant contact with the troops and a precise knowledge of the situation at the Fronts.

'Stalin as Supreme High Commander was extremely exacting to all and sundry; a quality that was justified, especially in wartime. He never forgave carelessness in work or failure to finish a job properly'.<sup>118</sup>

A detailed example convincingly shows how Stalin's 'irresponsible leadership methods' really worked. In April 1942, a Red Army offensive to liberate the Crimea failed. The High Command was given orders to stop it and to organize a staggered defence. Twenty-one Soviet divisions faced ten Nazi divisions. But on May 8, the Nazis attacked and broke through the Soviet defence. The High Command representative, Mekhlis, a close companion of Stalin, sent his report, to which the Supreme Commander responded:

'You are taking a strange position as an outside observer who has no responsibil-

ity for the Crimean Front affairs. This position may be convenient but it is utterly disgraceful. You are not some outside observer at the Crimean Front, but the responsible representative of the GHQ, responsible for all the Front's successes and failures and obliged to correct the command's mistakes on the spot. You together with the command are responsible for the Front's left flank being utterly weak. If "the entire situation showed that the enemy was going to attack that morning" and you did not take all measures to repel the enemy, just confining yourself to passive criticism, the worse for you.'<sup>119</sup> Stalin fully criticized bureaucratic and formalist leadership methods.

'Comrades Kozlov and Mekhlis believed that their main job was to issue orders and that issuing orders was all they had to do in controlling the troops. They did not appreciate that the issuing of an order is only the start of work and that the command's chief job is to ensure that an order is implemented, to convey the order to the troops, and to arrange assistance for the troops in carrying out the command's order. As an analysis of the course of operations has shown, the Front command issued their orders without account for the situation at the front, unaware of the real position of the troops. The Front command did not even ensure the delivery of their orders to the armies . . . . During the critical days of the operation, the Crimean Front command and Comrade Mekhlis spent their time on longwinded fruitless meetings of the military council instead of personal contact with the Army commanders and personal involvement in the course of operations.

'The task is that our commanders should put an end once and for all to harmful methods of bureaucratic leadership and troop control; they must not confine themselves to issuing orders, but visit the troops, the armies and divisions more often and help their subordinates to carry out the orders. The task is that our commanding staff, commissars and political officers should thoroughly root out elements of indiscipline among commanders of all ranks.'<sup>120</sup>

During the entire war, Stalin firmly fought against any irresponsible or bureaucratic attitude. He insisted on real presence on the ground.

### Stalin, of 'mediocre intelligence'

We finish with the third 'truth' about Stalin's personality: the brutal and cold man, of mediocre intelligence, with no consideration for his fellow humans and who had nothing but contempt for his aids.

In fact, the men who had to 'endure' this monster day after day for those four terrible war years offer a radically different picture of Stalin.

Here is how Zhukov described his 'master':

'Though slight in stature and undistinguished in outward appearance, Stalin was nevertheless an imposing figure. Free of affectation and mannerisms, he won the heart of everyone he spoke to. His visitors were invariably struck by his candour and his uninhibited manner of speaking, and impressed by his ability to express his thoughts clearly, his inborn analytical turn of mind, his erudition and retentive memory, all of which made even old hands and big shots brace themselves and be

“on the alert.”<sup>121</sup>

‘Stalin possessed not only an immense natural intelligence, but also amazingly wide knowledge. I was able to observe his ability to think analytically during sessions of the Party Politburo, the State Defence Committee and during my permanent work in the GHQ. He would attentively listen to speakers, . . . sometimes asking questions and making comments. And when the discussion was over he would formulate his conclusions precisely and sum things up.’<sup>122</sup>

‘His tremendous capacity for work, his ability quickly to grasp the meaning of a book, his tenacious memory — all these enabled him to master, during one day, a tremendous amount of factual data, which could be coped with only by a very gifted man.’<sup>123</sup>

Vasilevsky added to this portrait with a few comments about how Stalin related to other men:

‘Stalin . . . had a great capacity for organization. He worked very hard himself, but he also could make others work to the full extent of their ability, squeezing from them all that they could offer.’<sup>124</sup>

‘Stalin had an amazingly good memory . . . . Stalin knew not only all the commanders of the fronts and armies, and there were over a hundred of them, but also several commanders of corps and divisions, as well as the top officials of the People’s Defence Commissariat, not to speak of the top personnel of the central and regional Party and state apparatus.’<sup>125</sup>

In addition, Stalin knew personally a number of builders of aircraft, artillery and tanks; he often convened them and asked of them detailed questions.<sup>126</sup>

## Stalin’s military merits

How should one evaluate the military merits of the man who led the army and the peoples of the Soviet Union during the greatest and most terrible war that history has ever seen?

Here is Khrushchev’s summary:

‘Stalin very energetically popularized himself as a great leader . . . . let us take, for instance, our historical and military films . . . ; they make us feel sick. Their true objective is the propagation of the theme of praising Stalin as a military genius . . . .

‘Not Stalin, but the party as a whole, the Soviet Government, our heroic Army, its talented leaders and brave soldiers, the whole Soviet nation — these are the ones who assured the victory in the Great Patriotic War. (Tempestuous and prolonged applause.)’<sup>127</sup>

It was not Stalin! Not Stalin, but the entire Party. And the entire Party probably took orders and instructions from the Holy Spirit.

Khrushchev pretended to glorify the Party, that collective entity of struggle, to diminish the rôle played by Stalin. Organizing the cult of the personality, Stalin usurped the victory that was won by the ‘entire’ Party. As if Stalin was not the most important leader of the Party, the one who, throughout the war, displayed great working capacity, great stamina and foresightedness. As if the strategic

decisions had not been confirmed by Stalin, but, in opposition, by his subordinates.

If Stalin was not a military genius, one can only conclude that the greatest war in history, the war that humanity led against fascism, was won with no military geniuses. Because in this terrifying war, no one played a comparable rôle to Stalin. Even Averell Harriman, U.S. imperialism's representative, after repeating the necessary clichés about 'the tyrant in Stalin', clearly stated 'his high intelligence, that fantastic grasp of detail, his shrewdness and the surprising human sensitivity that he was capable of showing, at least in the war years. I found him better informed than Roosevelt, more realistic than Churchill, in some ways the most effective of the war leaders.'<sup>128</sup>

'When Stalin was present, there was no room for anyone else. Where were our military chiefs?', cried out Khrushchev the demagogue. He flattered the marshals: wasn't it you who were the real military geniuses of the Second World War? Finally, Zhukov and Vasilevsky, the two most important military leaders, gave their opinion fifteen and twenty years, respectively, after Khrushchev's infamous report. We present Vasilevsky's opinion first.

'The process of Stalin's growth as a general came to maturity . . . . After the Stalingrad and especially the Kursk battles he rose to the heights of strategic leadership. From then on Stalin would think in terms of modern warfare, had a good grasp of all questions relating to the preparation for and execution of operations. He would now demand that military action be carried out in a creative way, with full account of military science, so that all actions were decisive and flexible, designed to split up and encircle the enemy. In his military thinking he markedly displayed a tendency to concentrate men and materiel, to diversified employment of all possible ways of commencing operations and their conduct. Stalin began to show an excellent grasp of military strategy, which came fairly easily to him since he was a past master at the art of political strategy, and of operational art as well.'<sup>129</sup>

'Joseph Stalin has certainly gone down in military history. His undoubted service is that it was under his direct guidance as Supreme High Commander that the Soviet Armed Forces withstood the defensive campaigns and carried out all the offensive operations so splendidly. Yet he, to the best of my judgment, never spoke of his own contribution. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union and rank of Generalissimus were awarded to him by written representation to the Party Central Committee Politburo from front commanders . . . . He told people plainly and honestly about the miscalculations made during the war.'<sup>130</sup>

'It is my profound conviction that Stalin, especially in the latter part of the war, was the strongest and most remarkable figure of the strategic command. He successfully supervised the fronts and all the war efforts of the country on the basis of the Party line . . . . He has remained in my memory as a stern and resolute war leader, but not without a certain personal charm.'<sup>131</sup>

Zhukov begins by giving us a perfect example of leadership methods, as presented by Mao Zedong: concentrate the correct ideas of the masses and transform them into directives for the masses.

‘To Stalin is usually ascribed a number of fundamental innovations such as elaborating the methods of artillery offensive action, the winning of air supremacy, methods of encircling the enemy, the splitting of surrounded groups and their demolition by parts, etc.

‘All these paramount problems of the art of war are the fruits of battles with the enemy, the fruits of profound thinking, the fruits of the experience of a big team of leading military leaders and the troops themselves.

‘Here Stalin’s merit lies in the fact that he correctly appraised the advice offered by the military experts and then in summarized form — in instructions, directives and regulations — immediately circulated them among the troops for practical guidance.’<sup>132</sup>

‘Before and especially after the war an outstanding role was attributed to Stalin in creating the Armed Forces, elaborating the fundamentals of Soviet military science and major doctrines of strategy, and even operational art . . . .

‘Stalin mastered the technique of the organization of front operations and operations by groups of fronts and guided them with skill, thoroughly understanding complicated strategic questions. He displayed his ability as Commander-in-Chief beginning with Stalingrad.

‘In guiding the armed struggle as a whole, Stalin was assisted by his natural intelligence and profound intuition. He had a knack of grasping the main link in the strategic situation so as to organize opposition to the enemy and conduct a major offensive operation. He was certainly a worthy Supreme Commander.’<sup>133</sup>



## From Stalin to Khrushchev

On February 9, 1946, Stalin presented to his electors a summary of the anti-fascist war:

‘The war was a great school in which all of the people’s forces were successfully put to the test.’

Stalin indirectly attacked the militarist conceptions that pretended that the Red Army was the main factor in the victory. The idea that the Army was above the Party, popular during Tukhachevsky’s time, had resurfaced in Zhukov’s circle at the end of the war. Stalin, of course, recognized the enormous achievements of the Army but, ‘above all, it was our Soviet social system that triumphed . . . . The war showed that our Soviet social system is a truly popular system.’ Second, victory is due to ‘our Soviet political system . . . . Our multinational state resisted all the war’s tests and proved its vitality.’<sup>1</sup>

It would be a mistake, Stalin continued, to think ‘that we owe our triumph uniquely to the courage of our troops’. The army’s heroism would have been in vain without the huge numbers of tanks, canons and munitions that the people made for the soldiers. And this incredible production could not have taken place without industrialization, ‘accomplished in the excessively short period of thirteen years’, and without collectivization, which ended, ‘in a short period, the permanent state of backwardness of our agriculture’. Stalin also recalled the struggle led by the Trotskyists and the Bukharinists against industrialization and collectivization:

‘Many important members of our Party systematically pulled the Party backwards and tried in every way to push it on to the “ordinary” road of capitalist development.’<sup>2</sup> Stalin therefore focused, correctly, on the key rôle played by the Party and by the working masses in the preparation for defence and for war.

In February 1946, the new Five Year Plan was approved.

During its retreat, the German Army had deliberately destroyed and burned anything that could be of use to the Soviets: 2,000 cities, 70,000 villages and factories employing four million workers were totally or partially destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

In the invaded regions, the destruction incurred meant 40 to 60 per cent of the

potential coal, electricity, steel, metals and machinery production. Some estimated that the Soviet Union would need several decades before it could recover from the wounds the Nazis had inflicted on its industrial apparatus. Yet, after three incredible years, the 1948 industrial production surpassed that of 1940.<sup>4</sup> With respect to the base year 1940, coal production reached an index of 123, electricity 130, laminates 102, cars and trucks 161, machine tools 154 and cement 114.<sup>5</sup>

In 1950, at the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan, industrial production was 73 per cent above that of 1940. Capital goods production had doubled, while consumer goods production had increased by 23 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

The Fifth Plan, for the period 1951–1955, sought yearly industrial growth of 12 per cent. A new twist was that consumer goods production was to see a remarkable increase, of 65 per cent; capital goods were to increase by 80 per cent in five years.<sup>7</sup> This change in economic policy had already been announced in Stalin's 1946 summary speech:

'We will pay particular attention to increasing production of consumer goods, to raising the standard of living of workers, by progressively reducing the cost of goods and by creating all sorts of scientific research institutes.'<sup>8</sup>

## The U.S. takes up where Nazi Germany left off

Even before the anti-fascist war was finished, a number of U.S. generals dreamed of a shift in alliances so that they could attack the Soviet Union. For this adventure, they intended to use the Nazi army, purged of Hitler and his close entourage. The former secret servant Cookridge recalled some of the discussions in the summer of 1945:

'General Patton was dreaming of rearming a couple of Waffen SS divisions to incorporate them into his US Third Army "and lead them against the Reds" .

'Patton had put this plan quite seriously to General Joseph T. McNarney, deputy US military governor in Germany . . . . "What do you care what those goddam bolshies think?" said Patton. "We're going to have to fight them sooner or later. Why not now while our army is intact and we can kick the Red Army back into Russia? We can do it with my Germans . . . they hate those red bastards."

' "He inquired . . .", Murphy later wrote, "whether there was any chance of going on to Moscow, which he said he could reach in thirty days, instead of waiting for the Russians to attack the United States." '<sup>9</sup>

## Gehlen, the Nazi, and the CIA

General Gehlen had been the Nazi head of intelligence in the Soviet Union. In May 1945, he surrendered, along with his archives, to the U.S. He was presented to Major-General Luther Sibert, head of intelligence for General Bradley's armies. At Sibert's request, Gehlen the Nazi wrote a 129-page report. Thereafter, Gehlen 'developed his great scheme of a secret organisation engaged on intelligence work

against the Soviet Union under American aegis.<sup>10</sup> Gehlen was introduced to the highest U.S. military authorities and, when Soviet representatives asked about the whereabouts of Gehlen and Schellenberg, two war criminals who should have been returned to them, the U.S. replied that they had no news of them. On August 22, 1945, they clandestinely brought Gehlen to the U.S.<sup>11</sup> Gehlen the Nazi ‘negotiated’ with the leaders of U.S. intelligence, including Allen Dulles, and they came up with an ‘agreement’: Gehlen’s spy organization would continue to serve in the Soviet Union, autonomously, and ‘Liaison with American Intelligence would be maintained by US officers’. Furthermore, the ‘Gehlen Organisation would be used solely to procure intelligence on the Soviet Union and satellite countries of the communist bloc.’<sup>12</sup>

On July 9, 1946, Gehlen was back in Germany to reactivate his Nazi spy service, under U.S. leadership. He hired dozens of upper Gestapo and SS officers, to whom he furnished false identities.<sup>13</sup>

John Loftus, former U.S. intelligence officer responsible for the tracking down of former Nazis at the end of the war, noted that thousands of Ukrainian, Croatian and Hungarian fascists were snuck into the U.S. by a ‘rival’ intelligence service. Loftus writes:

‘According to one estimate, some 10,000 Nazi war criminals entered the United States after World War II.’<sup>14</sup>

Right from 1947, when the U.S. started up the Cold War, these ‘former’ Nazis played an important rôle in the anti-Communist propaganda. So we can correctly claim that U.S. imperialism was the direct continuation of Nazi expansionism.

## The nuclear bomb against the Soviet Union

On July 21, 1945, during the Potsdam conference, Truman received a report on the first U.S. nuclear test.

Margaret Truman wrote:

‘This freed my father to negotiate (with Stalin) with far more boldness and bluntness.’<sup>15</sup> She continued:

‘(M)y father now tackled the sticky question of how and what to tell Stalin about the atomic bomb . . . . Dad strolled over to the Russian leader and told him that the United States had created a new weapon “of unusual destructive force.” Prime Minister Churchill and Secretary of State Byrnes stood only a few yards away, studying Stalin’s reaction. He was remarkably cool.’<sup>16</sup>

Zhukov recalled the conversation held between Stalin and Molotov upon their return to their residence:

‘Molotov reacted immediately. “They are trying to bid up.”

‘Stalin laughed:

‘ “Let them. I’ll have to talk it over with Kurchatov today and get him to speed things up.”

‘I understood they were talking about the development of the atomic bomb.’<sup>17</sup>

Stalin was a determined and cool man who never allowed himself to be intimi-

dated, not even by nuclear blackmail.

Truman, right from the production of the first atomic weapon, perceived it as a weapon of mass terror that would ensure U.S. world hegemony. He wrote in his memoirs:

'I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used . . . . when I talked to Churchill he unhesitatingly told me he favored the use of the atomic bomb.'<sup>18</sup>

In the end of July, the Soviet Union decided to attack Japan, which was headed for inevitable military defeat. However, without the slightest military necessity, the U.S. decided to 'experiment' their nuclear weapons on human beings. They wanted to terrorize their adversaries to an extent that even the Nazis had not done. The main purpose of imperialism, when it massively killed Japanese, was to create terror among the Soviets: the main message was for Stalin. As soon as Churchill learned of the atomic bomb's existence, he wanted to use it against the Soviet Union! Professor Gabriel Kolko writes:

'Field Marshal Alan Brooke thought the Prime Minister's infantile enthusiasm bordered on the dangerous: "He was already seeing himself capable of eliminating all the Russian centres of industry".'<sup>19</sup>

At Potsdam, Churchill 'urged that they consider it as a diplomatic lever on the Russians'.<sup>20</sup>

On August 6, 1945, having learned that Hiroshima was destroyed by the bomb, Truman declared to the people around him that it was the 'greatest achievement of organized science in history'. Truman dared to write that in his memoirs! The decision of U.S. imperialism to indiscriminately exterminate hundreds of millions of Japanese civilians shows its inhuman and barbaric nature; it had taken up the torch from the fascist powers. In his official declaration, the same day, Truman said:

'If they do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth.'<sup>21</sup>

On August 9, a second city, Nagasaki, was destroyed by Truman's promised atomic rain. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 443,000 civilians were massacred.<sup>22</sup>

The only potential world hegemonic power, the U.S. virulently opposed any anti-imperialist movement, fighting for independence, popular democracy or socialism. This is the meaning of the 'Truman Doctrine', a doctrine of unlimited interventionism with the slogan of defending 'freedom' (of the market, of exploitation) from 'Communist tyranny'. Here is how Truman phrased it on March 12, 1947: 'it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.'<sup>23</sup>

This policy of interventionism was principally 'justified' by the 'threat of Russian totalitarianism'. Truman declared that 'the new menace facing us seemed every bit as grave as Nazy Germany.'<sup>24</sup> Having eliminated Hitler, his rival for world hegemony, Truman took up all the Nazi anti-Communist slanders. Here is how Truman spoke of the Soviet Union:

'(A) group of cruel but skillful fanatics who set up a dictatorship with all the

trappings of a state religion . . . . The individual became the subject of the state in perpetual enslavement'.<sup>25</sup>

So, as soon as the Nazis had been defeated, Truman took up their main direction, anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism. In fact, it was Hitler himself who proposed this opening to the U.S. on August 31, 1944.

'A victory of our adversaries will inevitably Bolshevize Europe.' 'The coalition of our adversaries is composed of heterogeneous elements . . . : ultra-capitalist states on one side, ultra-communist states on the other'. 'One day the coalition will fall apart.' 'The important thing is to wait for the moment, no matter how grave the situation.'<sup>26</sup>

To save themselves from their inevitable defeat, the Nazis accentuated, towards the end of the War, their disgusting anti-Communist slanders. Truman took them up, eighteen months later.

### Anti-imperialist struggle and the struggle for peace

Given this background, one can better understand the international policy that Stalin followed from 1945 to 1953. Stalin was firm in his opposition to U.S. imperialism and to its war plans. To the extent that it was possible, he helped the revolutionary movements of different peoples, while remaining cautious.

Stalin led a four-front struggle against the world capitalist system: he reinforced the defence of the Soviet Union, the basis for the international Communist movement; he helped peoples who were on the road to popular democracy and socialism; he supported the colonized peoples who sought independence; and he encouraged the vast international movement for peace, against the new military adventures of imperialism.

Stalin fully understood that the purpose of Anglo-American imperialism was to 'save' the reactionary classes of countries neighboring the Soviet Union, the same ones that had collaborated with the Nazis, in order to integrate them into their world hegemony strategy. This direction was already clear during the war itself.

On August 1, 1944, the Polish government in London set off an insurrection in Warsaw. These reactionaries began their criminal adventure solely to prevent the Red Army from liberating the Polish capital. The Red Army, which had just advanced 600 kilometres, had lost many men and much matériel. It was impossible for it to go forward to Warsaw and help the insurrection. In fact, the Polish reactionaries had deliberately hidden from the Soviets their intention to start the insurrection. But the Nazis, having concentrated several divisions in Warsaw, massacred the population and destroyed the capital.<sup>27</sup>

Stalin saw this as a war within a war. He wrote to Churchill and Roosevelt:

'Sooner or later, the truth will be known about the handful of criminals who, in order to seize power, set off the Warsaw adventure.'<sup>28</sup>

On August 23, 1944, the Red army liberated the first Hungarian village. Two days later, Horthy's fascist government, in power since 1919, addressed the new situation. In the records, we find 'The Anglo-Saxons would like the Hungarians to

contain the Russians until they themselves occupy Hungary'.<sup>29</sup>

Horthy and his gang began the struggle against 'Red imperialism' just as 35 fascist divisions prepared to 'defend' Budapest against the Soviet army. From that day, Hungarian reaction hoped to be saved by the U.S., which would guarantee 'Hungarian independence' from 'Soviet expansionism'. In all the Central and Eastern European countries, 'national independence' was the rallying cry of the reactionary classes in order to fight not only socialism, but also basic national interests, in order to better integrate into the U.S. strategy of world domination.

In Greece, the national resistance, led by the Communist Party, had inflicted major losses on the Nazis. When the Germans evacuated Athens on October 12, 1944, the 70,000 armed resistants controlled almost the entire territory. The British Army intervened to prevent the Greek people from forming a revolutionary government. On December 5, Churchill wrote to General Scobie:

*'Do not however hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress.'*<sup>30</sup>

And so began the long Anglo-American war against the Greek anti-fascists.

By crushing the fascist armed forces in the Central and Eastern European countries, the Red Army created optimal conditions for the development of the struggles of the workers, peasant and anti-fascists.

Thanks to this aid, the masses, led by the Communist Parties, succeeded in installing socialist régimes, thereby creating a real national independence. They successfully outplayed the intrigues of fascist and bourgeois forces that tried to maintain power by transforming those countries into U.S. neo-colonies.

The theory of 'Red imperialism', which the Nazis invented at the beginning of the war in 1941 to justify their aggression, was taken up by the U.S. in 1946. The Anglo-American interpretation of 'independence' was well illustrated in Greece, where they massacred the forces that had led the anti-Hitlerian battles.

Stalin's analysis of the international situation after the defeat of the fascist powers was presented by one of his close collaborators, Zhdanov, political leader in Leningrad during the 900-day fascist blockade.

Here is the text that Zhdanov presented to the information conference of nine Communist Parties in September 1947 in Poland. These positions are important, not only because they were relevant, but because they were, one by one, rejected nine years later after Khrushchev's coup d'état.

'The aim of the expansionist course of the United States is simply the establishment of world domination. This new course aims to consolidate the United States monopoly situation, which was established with the disappearance of their two most important competitors — Germany and Japan — and by the weakening of its capitalist partners, Britain and France. This new course depends on a large military, economic and political program, whose application would establish in every targeted country the political and economic domination of the United States, thereby reducing those countries to satellite countries, and would establish internal regimes that would eliminate any obstacles to exploitation of these countries by U.S. capital.'

‘The most enraged and unsteady imperialist politicians have, following Churchill, begun preparing plans for launching, as quickly as possible, a preventive war against the Soviet Union, openly calling for the use against the Soviet peoples of the temporary U.S. monopoly of atomic weapons.’

‘The U.S. military strategic plan calls for the creation, in peace time, of numerous military bases and stockpiles, far removed from the American continent and designed to be used aggressively against the Soviet Union and the New Democratic countries.’

‘The U.S. monopolies place all their hopes in the restoration of a capitalist Germany, considering that it would constitute the most important guarantee for success in the struggles against democratic forces in Europe.’

‘But on the road to their world domination ambitions, the U.S. must face the USSR with its rising international influence, as the bastion of anti-imperialist and anti-fascist politics, the New Democratic countries, which succeeded in escaping Anglo-American control, and the workers of all countries.’

‘Concessions to this new direction of the United States and of the imperialist camp would allow its creators to become more rude and aggressive. This is why the Communist Parties must lead the resistance, in all areas, to imperialist plans of expansion and aggression.’<sup>31</sup>

Stalin always had confidence in the strength of the Soviet people and in the revolutionary and anti-capitalist forces throughout the world. This attitude was clearly expressed in an official declaration by Molotov in 1950.

‘Let no one believe that the piles of arms of the warmongers scares us. It is not for us, but for the imperialists and the aggressors to be scared . . . . Can there be any doubt that if the imperialists trigger a third world war, that this war will not mean the demise of isolated capitalist states but, rather, of the entire world capitalist system?’<sup>32</sup>

In 1947, the Soviet Union built its own nuclear weapons. Stalin had succeeded in breaking U.S. nuclear nightmare diplomacy. At the same time, the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the entire world began a major international campaign to counter U.S. war plans and to ban nuclear weapons. The World Peace Council began, against imperialist aggression, the largest peace movement ever. Its *Manifesto*, published at the end of the Second World Congress, reads:

‘More and more, the peoples of the world are placing their hopes in themselves, in their firmness and in their will. The struggle for peace is your struggle. Know that hundreds of millions of Peace Partisans are uniting and holding out their hands to you. One does not wait for peace, it is won. With the 500 million conscious souls who signed the Stockholm Appeal, we insist upon the banning of atomic weapons, general disarmament and control of these measures.’<sup>33</sup>

## Tito’s revisionism and the United States

The Central and Eastern European countries, which led bitter struggles during the years 1945–1948 to build socialism, had much less experience than did the Soviet

Party. Ideologically, they were not solid: the fact that hundreds of thousands of new members joined, often coming from social-democratic circles, made them easily subject to opportunism and bourgeois nationalism.

As early as 1948, the anti-Soviet social-democratic model was adopted by the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

By provoking the struggle against Tito's revisionism in 1948, Stalin showed himself to be clear-sighted and firm in his principles. Forty-five years later, history has completely confirmed his predictions.

At the time of the German invasion in 1941, the clandestine Yugoslav Party had 12,000 members; 8,000 of these were killed during the war. But it gained 140,000 members during the resistance and 360,000 more before mid-1948. Tens of thousands of kulaks, bourgeois and petit-bourgeois had joined the Party.<sup>34</sup> Tito relied more and more on these elements in his struggle against real Communists. The Party had no normal internal life, there was no political discussion, so no Marxist-Leninist criticism and self-criticism; the leaders were not elected but chosen.<sup>35</sup>

In June 1948, the Information Bureau of the Communist Parties, including eight parties, published a resolution criticizing the Yugoslav Party. It underscored that Tito paid no attention to the increase in class differences in the countryside nor to the rise of capitalist elements in the country.<sup>36</sup> The resolution affirmed that, starting from a bourgeois nationalist position, the Yugoslav Party had broken the socialist united front against imperialism. It concluded:

'(S)uch a nationalist line can only lead to Yugoslavia's degeneration into an ordinary bourgeois republic'.<sup>37</sup>

Once this criticism was published, Tito set off a massive purge. All the Marxist-Leninist elements of the Party were wiped out. Two members of the Central Committee, Zhujovic and Hebrang, had already been arrested in April 1948. General Arso Jovanovic, Chief of Staff of the Partisan Army, was arrested and assassinated, as was General Slavko Rodic.<sup>38</sup>

The London newspaper, *The Times*, referred to numerous arrests of Communists upholding the Komintern resolution; it estimated the number of imprisoned persons at between 100,000 and 200,000.<sup>39</sup>

In his report to the Party's Eighth Congress, held in 1948, Karelj quoted Stalin on numerous occasions to insist that Yugoslavia was 'pushing back kulak elements' and would never take 'anti-Soviet positions'.<sup>40</sup>

But, a few months later, the Titoists publicly took up the old social-democratic theory of passing from capitalism to socialism without class struggle! Bebler, Vice-Minister of External Affairs, declared in May 1949:

'We have no kulaks such as there were in the U.S.S.R. Our rich peasants took part en masse in the people's liberation war . . . . Would it be a mistake if we succeeded in getting the kulaks to pass over to socialism without class struggle?'<sup>41</sup> In 1951, Tito's team declared that the Soviet 'kolkhozy reflected state capitalism which, mixed together with feudal remnants, forms the social basis of the USSR'. Developing Bukharin's ideas, the Titoists replaced planning by the free market:

'No one outside the co-operative sets production goals or categories'. The



Titoists organized ‘the passage to a system with more freedom for objective economic laws to come into play. The socialist sector of our economy will triumph over capitalist tendencies through purely economic means.’<sup>42</sup>

In 1953, Tito reintroduced the freedom to buy and sell land and to hire agricultural workers.

In 1951, Tito compared the Yugoslav Communists who remained loyal Marxist-Leninists to the Hitlerian Fifth Column, thereby justifying the arrest of more than 200,000 Communists, according to Colonel Vladimir Dapcevic’s testimony. Tito wrote:

‘The attacks of the fascist aggressors have proved that much importance can be attributed to a new element: the Fifth Column. It is a political and military element that gets into gear in preparation for aggression. Today, something similar is being attempted in our country, under different forms, particularly by the Comintern countries.’<sup>43</sup>

In the beginning of the 1950s, Yugoslavia was still essentially a feudal country. But the Titoists attacked the principle according to which a Socialist State must maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat. In 1950, the Yugoslav revisionists began a forum on ‘the problem of the withering away of the State, in particular of the rôle of the State in the economy’. To justify the return to a bourgeois state, Djilas called the Soviet state a ‘monstrous edifice of state capitalism’ that ‘oppressed and exploited the proletariat’. Still according to Djilas, Stalin fought ‘to increase his state capitalist empire and, internally, to reinforce the bureaucracy’. ‘The Iron Curtain, hegemony over the countries of Eastern Europe and an aggressive political line have become indispensable to him.’ Djilas spoke of ‘the misery of the working class that works for the “superior” imperialist interests and the bureaucracy’s privileges.’ ‘Today, the USSR is objectively the most reactionary power.’ Stalin ‘practices state capitalism and is the head and spiritual and political leader of the bureaucratic dictatorship.’ Acting as agent for U.S. imperialism, Djilas continued:

‘Some of the Hitlerian theories are identical to Stalin’s theories, both from the standpoint of their contents and of the resulting social practice.’<sup>44</sup>

Let us add that Djilas, who later moved to the U.S., referred in this text to Trotsky’s ‘critique of the Stalinist system’!<sup>45</sup>

In 1948, Kardelj was still claiming to be faithful to the anti-imperialist struggle. Two years later, Yugoslavia upheld the U.S. war against Korea! The London *Times* reported:

‘Mr. Dedijer sees events in Korea as a manifestation of the Soviet will to dominate the world . . . if this is to be resisted successfully . . . the workers of the world must ‘realise that yet another pretender to world domination has appeared, and get rid of illusions about the Soviet Union representing some alleged force of democracy and peace’.<sup>46</sup>

So Tito had become a simple pawn in U.S. anti-Communist strategy. Tito declared to the *New York Herald Tribune* that ‘in the event of a Soviet attack anywhere in Europe, even if the thrust should be miles away from Yugoslavia’s own borders’, he would ‘instantly do battle on the side of the West . . . Yugoslavia considers

itself part of the collective security wall being built against Soviet imperialism.<sup>147</sup>

In the economic field, the socialist measures that Yugoslavia had taken before 1948 were liquidated. Alexander Clifford, the *Daily Mail* correspondent, wrote about the economic reforms adopted in 1951:

‘If it comes off, Yugoslavia looks like ending up a good deal less socialised than Britain’: ‘price of goods . . . determined by the market — that is, by supply and demand’; ‘wages and salaries . . . fixed on the basis of the income or profits of the enterprise’; economic enterprises that ‘decide independently what to produce and in what quantities’; ‘there isn’t much classical Marxism in all of that’.<sup>48</sup>

The Anglo-American bourgeoisie soon recognized that Tito was to be a very effective weapon in its anti-Communist struggles. The April 12, 1950 issue of *Business Week* reads:

‘For the United States in particular and the West in general this encouragement of Tito has proved to be *one of the cheapest ways yet of containing Russian Communism*.

‘To date the West’s aid to Tito has come to \$51.7 million. This is far less than the billion dollars or so that the United States has spent in Greece for the same purpose.’<sup>49</sup>

This bourgeoisie intended to use Tito to encourage revisionism and to organize subversion in the socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. On December 12, 1949, Eden spoke to the *Daily Telegraph*:

‘Tito’s example and influence can decisively change the course of events in Central and Eastern Europe.’<sup>50</sup>

Understanding the Communist demagoguery of Tito for what it really was, the London *Times* wrote:

‘Titoism remains a force, however, only so long as Marshal Tito can claim to be a Communist.’<sup>51</sup>

Titoism took power in 1948 as a bourgeois nationalist current. It is with nationalism that Yugoslavia abandoned all principles of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nationalism was the soil in which Trotskyist and Bukharinist theories flourished.

After the Second World War, this nationalist orientation had great influence in other Communist Parties in Central and Eastern Europe.

After Stalin’s death, Great-Russian nationalism developed in Moscow and, in backlash, nationalist chauvinism spread throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

Let us examine the principles that are at the heart of this controversy. In 1923, Stalin had already formulated an essential aspect of proletarian internationalism in these terms:

‘It should be borne in mind that besides the right of nations to self-determination there is also the right of the working class to consolidate its power . . . . There are occasions when the right of self-determination conflicts with the other, the higher right — the right of a working class that has assumed power to consolidate its power. In such cases — this must be said bluntly — the right to self-determination cannot and must not serve as an obstacle to the exercise by the working class of

its right to dictatorship. The former must give way to the former.'<sup>52</sup>

Starting from the principle of proletarian internationalism, Stalin was a resolute adversary of all nationalism, starting with Great-Russian nationalism. Still in 1923, he declared:

'The principal force hindering the amalgamation of the republics into a single union is . . . Great-Russian chauvinism. It is not fortuitous, comrades, that the Smenovekhists have recruited a large number of supporters from among the Soviet officials.'<sup>53</sup>

'Smenovekhism is the ideology of the new bourgeoisie, which is steadily growing and gradually joining forces with the kulaks and the bureaucratic intellectuals. The new bourgeoisie has created its own ideology . . . which declares that the Communist Party is bound to degenerate and the new bourgeoisie to consolidate itself. We Bolsheviks, it appears, will imperceptibly to ourselves move towards this threshold of a democratic republic and cross this threshold, and then, with the help of a Caesar, who is to rise either from the military or from the civil ranks, we are to find ourselves in the position of an ordinary bourgeois republic.'<sup>54</sup>

But in the world struggle between socialism and imperialism, Stalin also understood that bourgeois nationalism could be used as a powerful anti-socialist weapon:

'When a life-and-death struggle is being waged, and is spreading, between proletarian Russia and the imperialist Entente, only two alternatives confront the border regions:

'*Either* they join forces with Russia, and then the toiling masses of the border regions will be emancipated from imperialist oppression;

'*Or* they join forces with the Entente, and then the yoke of imperialism is inevitable.

'There is no third solution. So-called independence of a so-called independent Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Finland, etc., is only an illusion, and conceals the utter dependence of these apologies for states on one group of imperialists or another . . .

'And the interests of the masses of the people render the demand for the secession of the border regions at the present stage of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one.'<sup>55</sup>

In the semi-feudal republics of the Soviet periphery, bourgeois nationalism constituted the main form of bourgeois ideology rotting inside the Bolshevik Party:

'It should be borne in mind that our Communist organisations in the border districts, in the republics and regions, can develop and firmly establish themselves, can become genuine internationalist, Marxist cadres, only if they get rid of their nationalism. Nationalism is the chief ideological obstacle to the training of Marxist cadres, of a Marxist vanguard in the border regions and republics . . . In relation to these organisations nationalism is playing the same part as Menshevism played in the past in relation to the Party of the Bolsheviks. Only under cover of nationalism can various kinds of bourgeois, including Menshevik, influences penetrate into our organisations in the border regions. Our organisations in the republics can become Marxist cadres only if they are able to withstand the nationalist ideas which are pushing their way into our Party in the border regions . . . because the bourgeoisie

is reviving, the New Economic Policy is spreading, nationalism is growing; because there are still survivals of Great-Russian chauvinism, which also tend to develop local nationalism, and because there is the influence of foreign states, which are fostering nationalism in every way.<sup>56</sup>

‘The essence of the deviation towards local nationalism consists in the attempt to isolate oneself and shut oneself up within one’s own national shell, in the attempt to hush up class differences within one’s own nation, in the attempt to resist Great-Russian chauvinism by turning aside from the general current of socialist construction, in the attempt to shut one’s eyes to that which brings together and unites the toiling masses of the nationalities of the U.S.S.R. and to see only that which tends to estrange them.

‘The deviation towards local nationalism reflects the dissatisfaction of the moribund classes of the formerly oppressed nations with the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, their endeavour to separate themselves off into their national state and there to establish their own class supremacy.<sup>57</sup>

Stalin came back to the question of internationalism in 1930. He formulated a principle that became crystal clear during the Brezhnev era:

‘What does a deviation towards nationalism mean — irrespective of whether it is a deviation towards Great-Russian nationalism or towards local nationalism? The deviation towards nationalism is the adaptation of the internationalist policy of the working class to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie. The deviation towards nationalism reflects the attempts of “one’s own” “national” bourgeoisie to undermine the Soviet system and to restore capitalism. The source of these deviations . . . is a common one. It is a *departure* from Leninist internationalism . . . .

‘The major danger is the deviation against which one has ceased to fight and has thus enabled to grow into a danger to the state.’<sup>58</sup>

## Stalin against opportunism

We can now address the question: how was the revisionist Khrushchev able to immediately seize power after Stalin’s death?

Several aspects show that as early as 1951, Stalin was seriously worried about the Party’s state. Before then, from 1945 to 1950, he was forced to concentrate on reconstruction and on international problems.

### Bourgeois tendencies in the thirties

The most important bourgeois tendencies that Stalin had to fight during the twenties and thirties were Trotskyism (Menshevism covered up in ultra-leftist rhetoric), Bukharinism (social-democratic deviations), Bonapartism (militarist tendencies within the army) and bourgeois nationalism. These four tendencies all continued to have influence in the years 1945–1953.

Let us give two revealing examples.

After the war, Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, a young civil servant of Chechen origin working in the propaganda department of the Central Committee, fled the Soviet Union for the U.S. His ideological past shows the links between the various opportunistic tendencies of the thirties and those that surfaced after 1945: 'politically I was a follower of Bukharin'<sup>59</sup>

However, his book *The Reign of Stalin* is full of praise for Trotsky, 'the lion of the October Revolution', who should have, according to Lenin's '*Political Testament*', run the Party with Bukharin's help.<sup>60</sup> 'Trotsky (was) the friend of the Georgian 'nationalists''.<sup>61</sup> Avtorkhanov continued by implying that Trotsky considered that an attempt 'in imposing proletarian 'socialism' on the most backward agricultural country in Europe' 'would likely degenerate into a despotic dictatorship by a handful of anarchic socialists.'<sup>62</sup>

Avtorkhanov was mostly a partisan of social-democratic ideas. For him, 'the Bukharin school' defended free competition between the socialist and capitalist sectors: 'socialised heavy industry (would) gradually eliminate the capitalist section ... through the free play of competition.' 'One should be able to say to the co-operative peasants, 'Enrich yourselves!' .... The rural *petite bourgeoisie* (the kulaks), being unable to withstand the competition of the co-operatives, would gradually disappear'.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, Avtorkhanov also defended bourgeois nationalist positions:

'Of all the federated republics, those of the Caucasus had always shown the greatest tendency towards separatism ....

'When in 1921 the Soviet occupied these countries by force, the democrats and the partisans of independence went underground .... There were repeated nationalist revolts in the Caucasus'.<sup>64</sup>

So we see Avtorkhanov expressing sympathy for the four main opportunist tendencies that menaced socialism during the twenties and thirties: Trotskyism, Bukharinism, bourgeois nationalism and militarism. His positions in favor of this last tendency were presented in chapter 7 (page 151).

Avtorkhanov's positions during the war and during the period 1945–1950 are significant. Referring to the Nazi aggression, he wrote that what '90 per cent of the population secretly thought and desired ... (was) the end of Stalin, even at the price of Hitler's victory .... The war against the U.S.S.R., which the German soldiers had won in 1941, was lost for them by the S.S.'<sup>65</sup> 'Hitler, the tyrant, was nothing but the shadow of Stalin'.<sup>66</sup>

After having flirted for some time with Hitler, Avtorkhanov, resolute anti-Communist, finally fell into the hands of the Anglo-American imperialists.

'(D)uring the first two years of the war the peoples of the U.S.S.R. went so far as to prefer Hitler to Stalin ....

'They had a unique chance, rarely encountered in history, of playing the two opponents, German and Russian, against one another, and of winning the war without intervening with their own forces .... The thing became possible on the day when Hitler turned his armies against the East ....

'(W)hen Hitler and Stalin were at grips it would have been possible for the

Allies ... to contrive matters that when the crowd got back from burying Hitler they would have to follow Stalin's funeral procession.'<sup>67</sup>

Well received in the U.S., Avtorkhanov became an ardent partisan of U.S. hegemony, which he encouraged to fight against 'Communist expansion':

'Faithful to Lenin's teaching, Stalin ... (has) staked everything on world revolution .... The purpose of Stalinism is ... to set up a terrorist world-dictatorship by a single party.'<sup>68</sup>

'Everyone must today realise that the world is faced by a single alternative — Stalinism or democracy. In order to settle the question during his lifetime, Stalin has mobilised his fifth columns throughout the world.'

However, for Avtorkhanov, U.S. countermeasures would render these plans obsolete.

'In the end there can be only one solution of the problem for Stalinism — war.'<sup>69</sup>

Our second example concerns Tokaev's clandestine organization, linked during the thirties to the Bonapartists, the Bukharinists and the bourgeois nationalists. It continued its activity after the war.

In 1947, Tokaev was in Germany, at Karlshorst. A 'comrade standing very high' brought along microfilms with the last pieces of Tokaev's personal dossier:

'Far too much was known .... The hunt was uncomfortably close. And when the indictment was ready, there would figure in it deeds of as long ago as 1934'.<sup>70</sup> '(A)t the end of 1947 the revolutionary democrats of the U.S.S.R. came to the conclusion that they must act: better to die honourably than to drag on as slaves .... we liked to think that parties of a Liberal complexion and those belonging to the Second International abroad would try to help us .... We knew that there were national communists not only in Yugoslavia, but also in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Baltic States, and we believed that they too would support us where they could *though we were not communists at all* ....

'But the MVD (state security) won in the race. We were too slow to mobilise. Once again we suffered a catastrophe .... Arrests had begun, and the charges ran all the way back to the assassination of Kirov in 1934 .... Others were charged with Buonapartist (sic) conspiracies in 1937 and 1940, with bourgeois nationalism, with the proposed attempt to overthrow the régime in 1941. As the net closed in round us all, I was given the task ... of saving at least a part of our records.'<sup>71</sup>

After his flight to England, Tokaev published a series of articles in the Western press. He admitted having sabotaged the development of Soviet aviation, and explained it as follows:

'To not try to refrain my compatriots in their insatiable ambition to dominate the world would mean to push them to the fate that Hitler reserved for the Germans.' 'It is crucial for the West to understand that Stalin has only one goal: world domination by any means.'<sup>72</sup>

It is important to remember that after their flight to the West, Avtorkhanov and Tokaev, two representatives of bourgeois tendencies in the Soviet Union, supported the most extreme positions of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie during the Cold War.

## Weaknesses in the struggle against opportunism

There is no doubt that Stalin continued, during the latter years of his life, to struggle against social-democratic and bourgeois nationalist tendencies and against Anglo-American subversion.

Nevertheless, it is clear that this struggle was not done to the extent that was necessary to redress and reinvigorate the Party ideologically and politically.

After the war, which had required extraordinary professional effort on the part of military, technical and scientific cadres, the old tendencies of military professionalism and technocratism were substantially reinforced. Bureaucratization and the search for privileges and the easy life were also reinforced. This negative development was encouraged with the 'dizziness of success': the tremendous pride that the cadres had developed from the anti-fascist victory often became presumptuousness and arrogance. All these phenomena undermined the ideological and political vigilance that was necessary to fight the opportunist tendencies.

Stalin struggled against particular forms of opportunism and revisionism. He thought that the class struggle in the ideological sphere would continue for a long time. But he was not capable of formulating a comprehensive theory of its basis and its social base. In other words, he was not able to formulate a consistent theory explaining how classes and the class struggle persist in a socialist society.

Stalin had not completely understood that after the disappearance of the economic basis of capitalist and feudal exploitation, that there would still exist in the Soviet Union fertile ground for bourgeois currents. Bureaucracy, technocratism, social inequalities and privileges allowed the development within certain sectors of Soviet society a bourgeois lifestyle and aspirations for the reintroduction of certain aspects of capitalism. The persistence of bourgeois ideology among both the masses and the cadres was an additional factor that encouraged entire sectors to veer towards anti-socialist positions. The adversaries of socialism always had important resources and ideological and material resources from imperialism, which never stopped infiltrating its spies and buying off renegades; the latter never stopped in their efforts to exploit and amplify all forms of opportunism within the Soviet Union. Stalin's thesis, according to which 'There is no class basis, there can be no class basis, for the domination of the bourgeois ideology in our Soviet society', was one-sided and undialectic. It introduced weaknesses and errors in the political line.<sup>73</sup>

Stalin was not able to define the adequate forms of mass mobilization of workers and kolkhozians to combat the dangers of restauration. Popular democracy should have been developed, with the deliberate intention to eliminate bureaucracy, technocratism, ambitiousness, and privileges. But the popular participation in such a defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat was not ensured as it should have been done. Stalin always underscored that the influence of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism was reflected in the Party through opportunist tendencies. But he was not able to formulate a theory about the struggle between the two lines in the Party. In 1939, summarizing the Great Purge, Stalin focused exclusively on 'the

espionage and conspiratorial activities of the Trotskyite and Bukharinite leaders' and on the manner in which 'the bourgeois states . . . take advantage of people's weaknesses, their vanity, their slackness of will'.<sup>74</sup>

Stalin clearly underestimated the internal causes that gave birth to opportunist tendencies, which, once infiltrated by secret services, became linked one way or the other to imperialism. Consequently, Stalin did not think that it was necessary to mobilize all of the Party members to combat opportunistic lines and to eliminate unhealthy tendencies. During the ideological and political struggles, all the cadres and members should have educated and transformed themselves. After 1945, the struggle against opportunism was restricted to the highest circles of the Party and did not assist in the revolutionary transformation of the entire Party.

It was by analyzing these weaknesses that Mao Zedong formulated his theory about continuing the revolution:

'Socialist society covers a fairly long historical period. In the historical period of socialism, there are still classes, class contradictions and class struggle, there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and there is the danger of capitalist restoration. We must recognize the protracted and complex nature of this struggle. We must heighten our vigilance. We must conduct socialist education . . . . Otherwise a socialist country like ours will turn into its opposite and degenerate, and a capitalist restoration will take place.'<sup>75</sup>

### Beria's and Khrushchev's revisionist groups

This political weakness was further aggravated by revisionist tendencies within the leadership of the Party that emerged at the end of the forties.

To direct the different sectors of the Party and the State, Stalin had always relied on his closest collaborators. Since 1935, Zhdanov had played an essential rôle in the Party consolidation work. His death in 1948 left a vacuum. In the beginning of the fifties, Stalin's health took a dramatic turn for the worse after the overwork incurred during the war. The problem of Stalin's succession posed itself for the near future.

It was around this time that two groups of revisionists within the leadership became visible and started to plot their intrigues, while preaching fidelity to Stalin. Beria's group and Khrushchev's constituted two rival revisionist factions that, while secretly undermining Stalin's work, were waging war with each other.

Since Beria was shot by Khrushchev in 1953, soon after Stalin's death, it might be supposed that he was an adversary of Khrushchevian revisionism. This is the position that Bill Bland took in a well documented study of Stalin's death.<sup>76</sup>

However, testimony from diametrically opposite sources concur in their affirmation that Beria held rightist positions.

For example, the Zionist author Thaddeus Wittlin published a biography of Beria in the nauseating style of McCarthyism. Here is an example: 'the Dictator of Soviet Russia looked down at his peoples as if he were the merciless new god of millions of his people'.<sup>77</sup> Literally. But, presenting the ideas developed by Beria



towards 1951, Wittlin claimed that he wanted to authorize private enterprise in light industry and 'to moderate the collective farm system', as well as 'by returning to the approach of the pre-Stalin era, the NEP'. 'Beria ... was against the Stalin policy of Russification of non-Russian nations and republics'. Beria wanted 'Better international relations with the West' and 'also intended to restore relations with Tito'.<sup>78</sup> This homage to Beria's 'reasonable politics' stands out, coming from such a sickening anti-Communist pen.

Tokaev, clandestine opponent, claimed that he knew Beria and others in the thirties, 'not of servants, but of enemies of the régime'.<sup>79</sup> Gardinashvili, one of Beria's close collaborators, had close relations with Tokaev.<sup>80</sup>

Khrushchev, for whom it would be in his interest to depict Beria as being close to Stalin, wrote:

'In the last years of Stalin's life Beria used to express his disrespect for Stalin more and more baldly.'<sup>81</sup>

'Stalin feared that he would be the first person Beria might choose'.<sup>82</sup>

'It seemed sometimes that Stalin was afraid of Beria and would have been glad to get rid of him but didn't know how to do it.'<sup>83</sup>

We should not forget Molotov's opinion. He and Kaganovich were the only leaders to remain faithful to their revolutionary past.

'I cannot exclude the possibility that Beria provoked Stalin's death. I felt it through what he was saying. May Day 1953, on the Tribune of the Mausoleum, he made such allusions. He was looking for complicity. He said, "I made him disappear". He tried to implicate me. "I saved you all".'<sup>84</sup>

'I consider Khrushchev as rightwing, but Beria was even more rightwing. Both were rightwing. And Mikoyan too. But they had different personalities. Khrushchev was to the right and completely rotten, but Beria was even more to the right and even more rotten.'<sup>85</sup>

'Without question, Khrushchev was reactionary and succeeded in infiltrating into the Party. Of course, he believed in no form of communism. I consider Beria as an enemy. He infiltrated himself into the Party with destructive goals. Beria was a man without principles.'<sup>86</sup>

During Stalin's last years, Khrushchev and Mikoyan clearly hid their political ideas to better place themselves after the succession.

Khrushchev's disdain for Stalin shows up clearly in his memoirs:

'In my opinion it was during the war that Stalin started to be quite right in the head.'<sup>87</sup> At 'the end of 1949', a 'sickness ... began to envelop Stalin's mind'.<sup>88</sup>

Enver Hoxha noted Khrushchev's impatience for Stalin to die. In his memoirs, he noted a discussion that he had had in 1956 with Mikoyan:

'Mikoyan himself told me ... that they, together with Khrushchev and their associates, had decided to carry out a "pokushenie", i.e., to make an attempt on Stalin's life, but later, as Mikoyan told us, they gave up this plan.'<sup>89</sup>

## Stalin against the future Khrushchevism

Did Stalin know of the intrigues that the revisionists around him were preparing?

The main report presented by Malenkov to the Nineteenth Congress in October 1952, along with Stalin's book *Economic Problems of Socialism*, published on the same occasion, showed that Stalin was convinced that a new struggle against opportunism and a new purge of the Party had become necessary.

Malenkov's report had Stalin's brand. It defended the revolutionary ideas that would be dismantled four years later by Khrushchev and Mikoyan. It virulently criticized a number of negative tendencies in the economy and in the life of the Party, tendencies that would be imposed in 1956 by Khrushchevian revisionism.

First, recalling the 1937–1938 Purge, Malenkov noted:

'In the light of the war and its results, we perceive in all its magnitude the importance of that implacable struggle which over a period of many years our Party waged against every brand of enemy of Marxism-Leninism — the Trotskyite and Bukharinite degenerates, the capitulators and traitors who tried to deflect the Party from the right path and to split its ranks . . . . By demolishing the Trotskyite and Bukharinite underground . . . , the Party in good time destroyed all possibility of the appearance of a "fifth column" in the U.S.S.R., and prepared the country politically for active defence. It will be easily understood that if this had not been done in time, we should, during the war, have found ourselves under fire from the front and the rear, and might have lost the war.'<sup>90</sup>

Four years later, Khrushchev would deny that the Trotskyists and the Bukharinists had degenerated to the point of defending a social-democratic and bourgeois platform, as he would deny that some among them had made contacts with hostile foreign forces. Khrushchev then invented the theory according to which socialism had definitely triumphed in 1936 and there was no longer a social basis for treason, nor for capitalist restoration! Here are the main declarations:

'(T)he Soviet state was strengthened, . . . the exploiting classes were already liquidated and socialist relations were rooted solidly in all phases of national economy'.<sup>91</sup>

'(S)ocialism in our country was fundamentally constructed, . . . the exploiting classes were generally liquidated, . . . the Soviet social structure had radically changed, . . . the social basis for political movements and groups hostile to the party had violently contracted'.<sup>92</sup>

Khrushchev concluded that the Purge was an arbitrary act that was in no way justified, thereby rehabilitating the political positions of the opportunists and the enemies of socialism.

In his Report to the XIXth Congress, Malenkov underscored four major weaknesses of the Party. It was precisely those weaknesses that Khrushchev would use four years later to achieve his revisionist coup.

Malenkov underscored that many bureaucratized cadres refused criticism and control from their base, and were formalist and uncaring:

'*Not in all Party organizations, and nowhere by any means in full measure,*

*have self-criticism, and especially criticism from below become the principal method of disclosing and overcoming our errors and shortcomings, our weaknesses and maladies . . . .*

‘There are cases when people are persecuted and victimized for criticism. We still meet with responsible workers who never tire of professing their fidelity to the Party, but who actually cannot tolerate criticism from below, stifle it, and revenge themselves on those who criticize them. We know of plenty of cases where a bureaucratic attitude towards criticism and self-criticism has . . . killed . . . initiative . . . and infected some of the organizations with the anti-Party habits of bureaucrats, sworn enemies of the Party.

‘(W)herever . . . control by the masses over the activities of organizations and institutions is weakened, there . . . bureaucracy and degeneration, and even the corruption of individual sections of the Party apparatus, invariably appear . . . .

‘(A)chievement has bred in the ranks of the Party a tendency to self-satisfaction, to make a pretence of all being well, a spirit of smug complacency, a desire on the part of people to rest on their laurels and to live on the capital of their past services . . . . Leaders . . . not infrequently turn meetings, gatherings of active members, plenary meetings and conferences into vainglorious displays, into occasions of self-laudation, with the result that errors and shortcomings in work, maladies and weaknesses are not brought to light and subjected to criticism . . . . A spirit of negligence has penetrated our Party organizations.’<sup>93</sup>

This was a recurrent theme in Stalin’s work of the thirties: appeals to the base so that it criticizes and controls the bureaucrats who are looking for the quiet life, who repress the active members, are uncaring and behave as enemies of Communism. This text leaves one to wonder about the torrent of criticisms that Stalin wanted once again to raise against the revisionists.

Four years later, when Khrushchev denounced the ‘insecurity, fear and despair’ that supposedly reigned under Stalin, he promised to the bureaucratic and opportunistic elements that he could now doze in tranquility. They would no longer be ‘persecuted’ by the ‘leftist’ criticisms from the base. Self-satisfaction and the tranquil life would be the principal characteristics of the revisionist bureaucracy that definitely took power under Khrushchev.

Second, Malenkov, denounced the Communists who ignored Party discipline and behaved as owners:

‘A formal attitude to decisions of Party and government, and passivity in carrying them out, is a vice that must be eradicated with the utmost ruthlessness. The Party does not need inert and indifferent executives who prize their own comfort higher than the interests of the work; it needs men who will fight indefatigably and devotedly . . . .

‘There are quite a number of executives who forget that the enterprises to their charge are state enterprises, and try to turn them into their own private domain, where . . . they . . . can do anything they fancy . . . . there are quite a number of executives who believe that Party decisions and Soviet laws are not written for them . . . .

‘Anyone who attempts to conceal the truth from the Party and to deceive the Party cannot be allowed to remain in its ranks.’<sup>94</sup>

Those that Malenkov denounced in this passage would soon find Khrushchev to be their representative. Khrushchev became the spokesperson for the bureaucrats when he criticized the ‘excessive replacement of cadres’.<sup>95</sup>

Malenkov’s text allows us to better understand what was really going on in Khrushchev’s diatribes against Stalin. Stalin had, he said, ‘abandoned the method of ideological struggle’; using the expression ‘enemy of the people’, Stalin systematically had recourse to ‘mass repressions and terror’.<sup>96</sup> These phrases were designed to ensure the position of those who had been attacked in Malenkov’s text, those who made State enterprises into their own personal fiefdoms, those who hid the truth from the Party so that they could steal and redirect without punishment, those who blathered on with ‘Marxist-Leninist’ phrases without the slightest intention of adhering to them. With Khrushchev, all those who aspired to become real bourgeois no longer had to fear the ‘mass repressions and terror’ of the socialist power.

Third, Malenkov attacked those cadres who formed clans not subject to any control and that enriched themselves illegally:

‘(S)ome officials themselves engage in filching collective-farm property . . . . these men convert to their own use common land, compel collective-farm boards and chairmen to supply them with grain, meat, milk and other produce at low prices, and even gratis’.<sup>97</sup>

‘(S)ome of our executives do not base their selection of personnel on political and business qualifications, but on considerations of kinship, friendship and hometown ties . . . . Owing to such distortions of the Party line in the matter of selection and promotion of personnel, we get in some organizations close coterie who constitute themselves into a mutual insurance society and set their group interests higher than the interests of Party and state. It is not surprising that such a state of affairs usually results in degeneration and corruption.’<sup>98</sup>

‘An unscrupulous and irresponsible attitude towards the carrying out of the directives of leading bodies is the most dangerous and vicious manifestation of bureaucracy.’<sup>99</sup>

‘(T)he primary purpose of verification of fulfilment is to disclose shortcomings, to expose infringement of law, to help honest executives with advice, to punish the incorrigible’.<sup>100</sup>

Under Khrushchev, cadres would no longer be chosen for having the best political qualities. On the contrary, those would be ‘purged’ for being ‘Stalinist’. Bourgeois circles would form around Beria, Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Brezhnev, circles completely estranged from revolutionary, popular action, exactly as Malenkov described. Stalin would no longer be there to ‘punish the unrepentant’, but the unrepentant would now punish the real Communists.

Finally, Malenkov criticized the cadres that neglected their ideological work, allowing bourgeois tendencies to emerge once again and become the dominant ideologies:

*‘Many Party organizations underrate the importance of ideological work, with the result that it falls short of the Party’s requirements, and in many organizations is in a state of neglect . . . .*

*‘(I)f the influence of socialist ideology is weakened the effect is to strengthen the influence of the bourgeois ideology . . . .*

*‘(W)e still have vestiges of the bourgeois ideology, relics of the private-property mentality and morality. These relics . . . are very tenacious and may strengthen their hold, and a determined struggle must be waged against them. Nor are we guaranteed against the infiltration of alien views, ideas and sentiments from outside, from the capitalist countries, or from inside, from the relics of groups hostile to the Soviet state . . . .’<sup>101</sup>*

*‘Whoever . . . relies upon formulas learned by rote, and has no feeling for the new, is incapable of understanding home and foreign affairs’.<sup>102</sup>*

*‘Some of our Party organizations tend to devote all their attention to economic affairs and to forget ideological matters . . . . Whenever attention to ideological questions is relaxed, a favourable soil is created for the revival of views and ideas hostile to us. If there are sectors of ideological work which for any reason fall out of the purview of Party organizations, if there are sectors in which Party leadership and influence have slackened, alien elements, the remnants of anti-Leninist groups smashed by the Party, will try to get hold of these sectors’.<sup>103</sup>*

Khrushchev would empty Leninism of its content, transforming it into a series of slogans with no revolutionary spirit. The resulting vacuum drew in all the old social-democratic and bourgeois ideologies, that would be taken up by the youth. Furthermore, Khrushchev would falsify or simply eliminate the essential notions of Marxism-Leninism: anti-imperialist struggle, socialist revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, continuing the class struggle, basic concepts of a Leninist Party, etc. When he spoke of ‘Marxist education’, he proposed the opposite to Malenkov:

*‘It must be admitted that for many years our Party cadres were insufficiently indoctrinated in the . . . practical problems of economic construction.’<sup>104</sup>*

By rehabilitating opportunists and enemies who had been purged, Khrushchev allowed the resurrection of social-democratic, bourgeois and Tsarist ideological currents.

During the plenum that followed the Nineteenth Congress, Stalin was even harsher in his criticisms of Mikoyan, Molotov and Voroshilov; he almost openly clashed with Beria. All the leaders understood perfectly well that Stalin insisted upon a radical change of course. Khrushchev clearly understood the message and, like the others, made himself very scarce:

*‘Stalin evidently had plans to finish off the old members of the Political Bureau. He often stated that the Political Bureau members should be replaced by new ones.*

*‘His proposal, after the 19th Congress, concerning the election of 25 persons to the Central Committee Presidium, was aimed at the removal of the old Political Bureau members and the bringing in of less experienced persons . . . .*

*‘We can assume that this was also a design for the future annihilation of the old Political Bureau members and, in this way, a cover for all shameful acts of*

Stalin.<sup>105</sup>

At the time, Stalin was a old man, tired and sick. He acted with caution. Having made the conclusion that the members of the Politburo were no longer trustworthy, he introduced more revolutionary minded youth to the presidium, in order to temper and test them. The revisionists and plotters like Khrushchev, Beria and Mikoyan knew that they would soon lose their positions.

Still according to Khrushchev, Stalin is to have said to the members of the Politburo, after the Doctor's Plot in the end of 1952:

'You are blind like young kittens; what will happen without me? The country will perish because you do not know how to recognize enemies.'<sup>106</sup>

Khrushchev put forward that statement as proof of Stalin's folly and paranoia. But history has shown that the comment was correct.

## Khrushchev's coup d'état

### Beria's intrigues

Zhdanov, Stalin's probable successor, died in August 1948. Even before his death, a woman doctor, Lydia Timashuk, accused Stalin's doctors of having applied an inappropriate treatment to accelerate his death. She would repeat these accusations later on.

During the year 1949, almost all of Zhdanov's entourage was arrested and executed. Kuznetsov, Secretary of the Central Committee and Zhdanov's right hand man; Rodionov, Prime Minister of the Russian Republic; and Voznesensky, President of the Plan, were the main victims. They were among the most influential new cadres. Khrushchev claims that their elimination was due to Beria's intrigues.

Stalin had criticized some of Voznesensky's theories, according to which the law of value should be used to determine the distribution of capital and labor among the different sectors. In that case, replied Stalin, capital and labor forces would migrate to light industry, which is more profitable, and hinder heavy industry:

'(T)he sphere of operation of the law of value is severely restricted and strictly delimited in our economic system (by) ... the law of planned (balanced) development of the national economy'.<sup>107</sup>

However, in his text, Stalin refuted these opportunist points of view without treating their authors as traitors. According to Khrushchev, Stalin intervened several times for Voznesensky's liberation and appointment as head of the State Bank.<sup>108</sup>

As for Timashuk's accusations against Zhdanov's doctors, Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, recalled that her father, at first, 'did not believe the doctors were 'dishonest' '.<sup>109</sup>

Abakumov, Minister of State Security, close to Beria, was then leading the inquiry. But in the end of 1951, Ignatiev, a Party man with no experience in security, replaced Abakumov, who was arrested for lack of vigilance. Had Abakumov pro-

tected his boss, Beria?

The inquiry was then led by Ryumin, the man formerly responsible for Security in Stalin's personal secretariat. Nine doctors were arrested, accused of being 'connected with the international Jewish bourgeois nationalist organisation 'JOINT' (American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), established by American intelligence'.<sup>110</sup>

This affair was understood as Stalin's first attack against Beria. The second attack took place simultaneously. In November 1951, leaders of the Communist Party of Georgia were arrested for redirecting public funds and for theft of State property and were accused of being bourgeois nationalist forces with links to Anglo-American imperialism. In the ensuing purge, more than half of the Central Committee members, known as Beria's men, lost their position.<sup>111</sup> The new First Secretary stated in his report that the purge was undertaken 'upon Comrade Stalin's personal instructions'.<sup>112</sup>

## Stalin's death

A few months before Stalin's death, the entire security system that protected him was dismantled. Alexandr Proskrebychev, his personal secretary, who had assisted him since 1928 with remarkable efficiency, was fired and placed under house arrest. He had allegedly redirected secret documents. Lieutenant-Colonel Nikolay Vlasik, Chief of Stalin's personal security for the previous 25 years, was arrested on December 16, 1952 and died several weeks later in prison.<sup>113</sup> Major-General Petr Kosynkin, Vice-Commander of the Kremlin Guard, responsible for Stalin's security, died of a 'heart attack' on February 17, 1953. Deriabin wrote:

'(This) process of stripping Stalin of all his personal security (was) a studied and very ably handled business'.<sup>114</sup>

Only Beria was capable of preparing such a plot.

On March 1, at 23:00, Stalin's guards found him on the floor in his room, unconscious. They reached the members of the Politburo by telephone. Khrushchev claimed that he also arrived, and that each went back home.<sup>115</sup>

No-one called a doctor. Twelve hours after his attack, Stalin received first aid. He died on March 5. Lewis and Whitehead write:

'Some historians see evidence of premeditated murder. Abdurakhman Avtor-khanov sees the cause in Stalin's visible preparation of a purge to rival those of the thirties'.<sup>116</sup>

Immediately after Stalin's death, a meeting of the presidium was convened. Beria proposed that Malenkov be President of the Council of Ministers and Malenkov proposed that Beria be named Vice-President and Minister of Internal Affairs and State Security.<sup>117</sup> During the following months, Beria dominated the political scene. 'We were going through a very dangerous period', wrote Khrushchev.<sup>118</sup>

Once installed as head of Security, Beria had Proskrebychev, Stalin's secretary, arrested; then Ryumin, who had led the inquiry into Zhdanov's suspicious death. Ignatiev, Ryumin's boss, was denounced for his rôle in the same affair. On April 3,

the doctors accused of having killed Zhdanov were liberated. The Zionist author Wittlin claimed that by rehabilitating the Jewish doctors, Beria wanted to ‘denigrate . . . Stalin’s aggressive foreign policy against the West, the United States and Great Britain primarily’.<sup>119</sup> Still in April, Beria organized a counter-coup in his native region, Georgia. Once again he placed his men at the top of the Party and the State. Dekanozov, later shot along with Beria, became Minister of State Security, replacing Rukhadze, arrested as ‘enemy of the people’.<sup>120</sup>

### Khrushchev’s intrigues against Beria

Meanwhile, Khrushchev was plotting against Beria. He first acquired the support from Beria’s ‘protégé, Malenkov, then talked with the others, individually. The last to be contacted was Mikoyan, Beria’s best friend. On June 24, the presidium was convened so that Beria could be arrested. Mikoyan stated that Beria ‘would take our criticisms to heart and reform himself’.<sup>121</sup> On a prearranged signal, eleven marshals and generals, led by Zhukov, entered the room and arrested Beria, who would be shot along with his collaborators on December 23, 1953.

On July 14, 1953, General Alexei Antonov and Major-General Efimov organized a ‘coup d’état’ in the Georgian Communist Party and pushed out Beria’s men. Mzhavanadze, former Lieutenant-General, became the Party’s Prime Minister.<sup>122</sup>

Ryumin was arrested by Beria on April 5, 1953. Fifteen months later, the Khrushchevites would condemn him for his rôle in the ‘Doctors’ Plot’. On July 23, he was shot. But his boss Ignatiev, protected by Khrushchev, was named First Secretary of the Bashkir Republik.<sup>123</sup>

At the end of December 1954, Abakumov, former Minister of State Security, and his associates, were condemned to death for having fabricated, on Beria’s orders, the ‘Leningrad Affair’ against Voznesensky and his friends.

In September 1955, Nikolay Rukhadze, responsible for Security in Georgia, who had led the purge of Beria’s men in 1951, was condemned and shot as ‘Beria’s accomplice’.<sup>124</sup>

So, from 1950 to 1955, different revisionist groups lashed out with at each other with their fangs, taking advantage of the situation to eliminate Stalin’s supporters.

### The ‘rehabilitated’ enemies

After Stalin’s death, under Khrushchev, opportunists and enemies of Leninism, sent, justifiably, to Siberia under Stalin, were rehabilitated and placed in key positions. Khrushchev’s son, Sergei, gives an example. During the thirties, Khrushchev and Mikoyan had been close to a man named Snegov, condemned in 1938, as an enemy of the people, to twenty-five years of prison. In 1956, Khrushchev brought him out of prison so that he could testify against the ‘Stalinist crimes’. But, Snegov ‘proved’ to Khrushchev’s son that ‘the issue was not Stalin’s mistakes or delusions, but that everything was the fruit of his criminal policy. The monstrous results had not appeared all of a sudden in the thirties. Their roots, Snegov said, went back to the October Revolution and the Civil War.’<sup>125</sup> This individual, an open



opponent of the October Revolution, was chosen by Khrushchev as Commissar of the Ministry of the Interior, where he was responsible for the rehabilitation of the 'victims of Stalinism'!<sup>126</sup>

Khrushchev also fished Solzhenitsyn out from a work camp. So, the revisionist leader who wanted to 'return to Leninism' made an alliance with a Tsarist reactionary to combat 'Stalinism'. The two scum got along perfectly. In a burst of warmth for his 'Marxist' partner, Solzhenitsyn would later write:

'It was impossible to foresee the sudden, thundering and furious attack that Khrushchev had reserved for Stalin during the Twenty-Second Congress! I cannot remember in a long time having read something so interesting.'<sup>127</sup>

### Khrushchev and the pacific counter-revolution

After Beria's execution, Khrushchev became the most important figure in the Presidium. At the Twentieth Congress, in February 1956, he completely reversed the ideological and political line of the Party. He noisily announced that 'Leninist democracy' and 'collective leadership' were re-established, but he more or less imposed his Secret Report about Stalin on the other members of the Presidium. According to Molotov:

'When Khrushchev read his report to the Twentieth Congress, I had already been maneuvered into a dead-end. I have often been asked, why, during the Twentieth Congress, did you not speak out against Khrushchev? The Party was not ready for that. By staying in the Party, I hoped that we could partially redress the situation'.<sup>128</sup>

The struggle between the two lines, between Marxism-Leninism and bourgeois tendencies, never ceased, right from October 25, 1917. With Khrushchev, the power relationship was reversed and opportunism, fought and repressed up to then, took over the leadership of the Party. Revisionism took advantage of this position to liquidate, bit by bit, the Marxist-Leninist forces. Upon Stalin's death, there were ten in the Presidium: Malenkov, Beria, Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Bulganin, Saburov and Pervukhin.<sup>129</sup> After Beria's elimination, Mikoyan stated in 1956 that in 'the Central Committee and its Presidium in the last three years ... *after a long interval collective leadership has been established*'.<sup>130</sup> But the following year, Khrushchev and Mikoyan fired the rest, using the argument that 'the anti-Party factionalist group' 'wanted a return to the days, so painful for our party and country, when the reprehensible methods and actions spawned by the cult of the individual held sway'.<sup>131</sup> Eliminating the Marxist-Leninist majority in the Presidium was possible thanks to the army, particularly Zhukov, and regional secretaries who came to support Khrushchev when he was in the minority. Molotov's, Malenkov's and Kaganovich's hesitations, lack of political acumen and conciliatory attitude caused their defeat.

In international politics, Stalin's line from 1945 to 1953 was completely dismantled. Khrushchev capitulated to the world bourgeoisie. He addressed the Party at the Twentieth Congress: '(T)he Party ... smashed obsolete ideas'. 'We want to

be friends with the United States'. 'There are also substantial achievements in the building of socialism in Yugoslavia.' '(T)he working class . . . has an opportunity to . . . win a firm majority in parliament and to turn the parliament from an agency of bourgeois democracy into an instrument of genuinely popular will'.<sup>132</sup>

Khrushchev began the dismantling of Stalin's work with all sorts of wonderful promises. Hearing them today, we can see that Khrushchev was simply a clown.

According to Khrushchev, 'In the conditions of the cult of the individual . . . People who usurp power . . . escape from under (the Party's) control'.<sup>133</sup> These sycophants and magicians obviously disappeared along with Stalin. And Khrushchev continued:

*'In the current decade (1961–1970) the Soviet Union, creating the material and technical base of communism, will surpass the strongest and richest capitalist country, the U.S.A.'*<sup>134</sup>

Twenty years after the 'beginning of Communism' promised by Khrushchev for 1970, the Soviet Union exploded under the blows of U.S. imperialism; its republics are now controlled by maffiosi and rapacious capitalists; the people live in profound misery, unemployed; crime reigns supreme; nationalism and fascism have provoked horrible civil wars; there are tens of thousands dead and millions of refugees.

As for Stalin, he also looked at the uncertain future. The conclusions of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, whose writing he supervised in 1938, are worth re-examining, given recent events. They contain six fundamental lessons, drawn from the Bolshevik Party's experience. The fourth reads:

'Sceptics, opportunists, capitulators and traitors cannot be tolerated on the directing staff of the working class.

'It cannot be regarded as an accident that the Trotskyites, Bukharinites and nationalist deviators . . . ended . . . by becoming agents of fascist espionage services.

'The easiest way to capture a fortress is from within.'<sup>135</sup>

Stalin predicted correctly what would happen in the Soviet Union if a Gorbachev or a Yeltsin ever entered the Politburo.

At the end of the twentieth century, humanity has sort of returned to the start state, to the years 1900–1914, where the imperialist powers thought that they could run the world among themselves. In the years to come, as the criminal, barbaric and inhuman character of imperialism shows itself more and more clearly, new generations who never knew Stalin will pay homage to him. They will follow the words of Mao Zedong who, on December 21, 1939, in the distant caves of that huge China, toasted Stalin's sixtieth birthday:

'Congratulating Stalin means supporting him and his cause, supporting the victory of socialism, and the way forward for mankind which he points out, it means supporting a dear friend. For the great majority of mankind today are suffering, and mankind can free itself from suffering only by the road pointed out by Stalin and with his help.'<sup>136</sup>

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