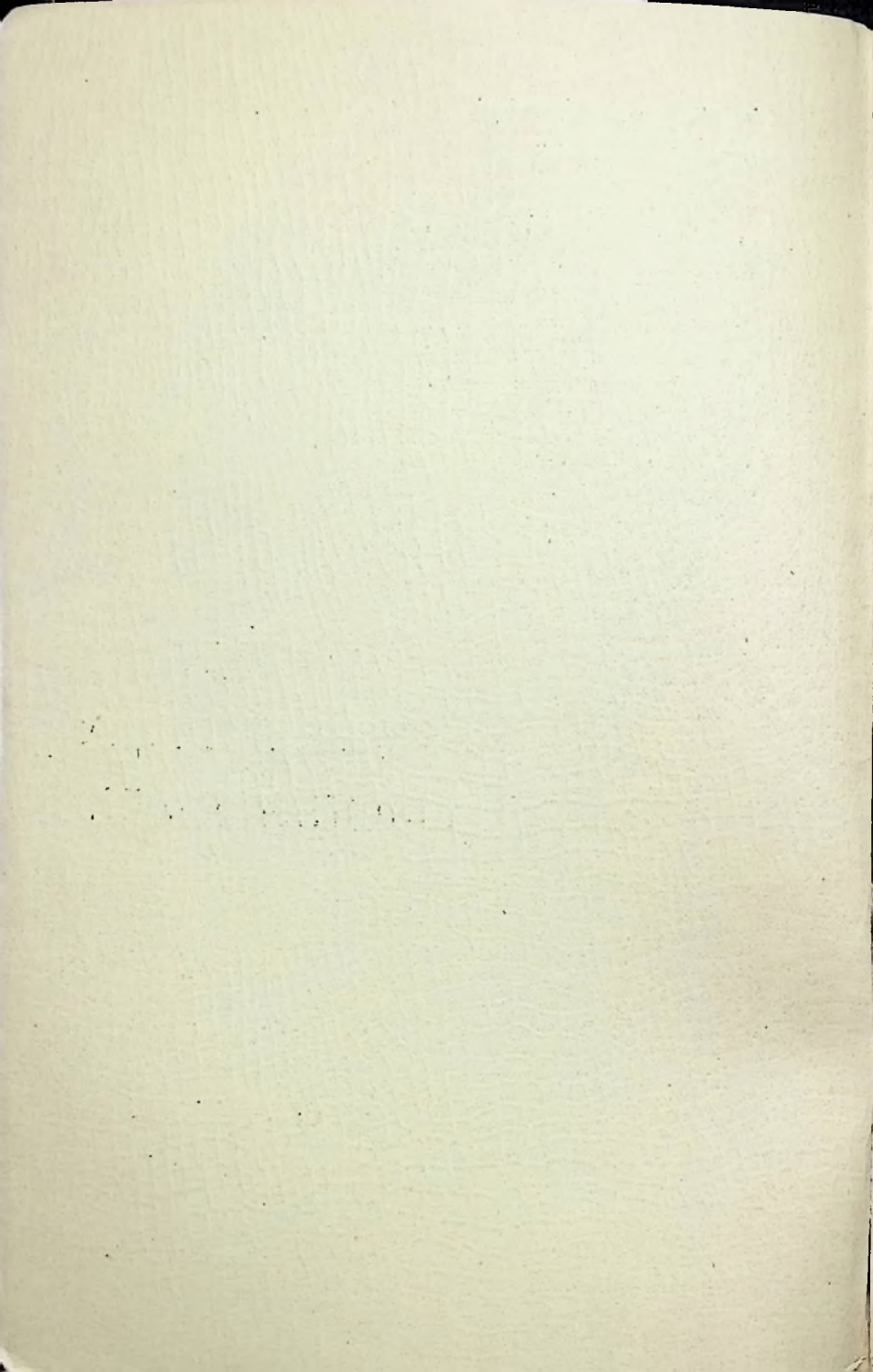


**SOVIET
HISTORY
FALSIFIED:
WHY?**

**THIRTY
QUESTIONS
ANSWERED**

By
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Price: ONE RUPEE



INTRODUCTION

At the 20th Congress of CPSU in 1956, Khrushchev and his colleagues made fun of Stalin for including his own eulogy in the official "History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course" published in 1938. They accused him of falsifying Soviet history. Several attempts made since then by Soviet historiographers to present a "new scientific version" of the party history have proved abortive. Each time a new version was presented by the bureaucratic clique at the Kremlin it soon became necessary for the successor clique to "revise" it further.

If Stalin's notorious "Short Course" painted the entire Bolshevik oldguard who led the October Revolution as "traitors and spies" the history trotted out by hack-writers of the Khrushchev period presented the central figures of the October Revolution - Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and even Stalin — in the Orwellian terminology, as "unfacts". Their names were obliterated from the annals of Soviet history. With his ouster Khrushchev himself has been reduced to an "unfact".

Soviet bureaucracy has consistently endeavoured to falsify history by concealing its misdeeds. The Khrushchevian formula of "the cult of personality" served less to make the truth known than to cast a evil over Stalinism as a phenomenon. The crimes of the bureaucracy as a privileged caste in the Soviet society remained in the shade, save for a few carefully selected "rehabilitations". Stalin's official history, crammed with lies, has been replaced by other official histories, issued one after the other, replete with different lies and half-truths.

The latest version of the history of the Soviet Union presented by the Central Committee of CPSU as its "Theses for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution" is yet another grotesque example of historical falsification still perpetrated by Soviet historiographers. If, before Lenin, according to the authors of the new "theses", there were Marx and Engels, with Lenin and after him there were only nameless figures. We are not

even told who constituted the Central Committee that directed the October Revolution, who formed the first Soviet Government or who led the Red Army during the Civil War. On the other hand, we are surprised with a bold assertion: "The Trotskyites sought to deprive our Party and the people of their faith that socialism could be successfully built in the USSR".

Again, according to the new "history" of the CPSU, no forced collectivisation took place in the Soviet Union but "the 15th Party Congress charted the political line for the gradual transition of the scattered peasant households to largescale socialist production..." It is hard to tell which is more repugnant, Stalin's calumnies against the old Bolsheviks or these shameful lies about his dreadful policies.

Further, we read; "The triumph of socialism was legislatively recorded in the Soviet Constitution in December 1936 by the Extraordinary 8th Congress of the Soviets". The authors completely gloss over the fact that the year 1936 heralded the worst forms of Stalinist repression—mass deportations, executions of opposition leaders etc. under the smoke screen of a "Socialist" Constitution. The 20th Congress of the CPSU had, in fact, found Stalin guilty of "unwarranted reprisals and other violations of socialist legality which inflicted harm on our society". The new historians do not even make a reference to the nightmarish experiences of the thirties.

Again "during the stern years of the war" we are told that the Soviet people fought "under the leadership of the Communist Party" and that "huge organisational, Party and political work was conducted in the Army by political workers who included prominent functionaries of the Party and Government". This anonymity has at least the advantage of saving the successors of Brezhnev and Kosygin trouble of fabricating new books from which certain names will have to be dropped in future. But then Khrushchev's charge at the 20th Congress was that Stalin never called a meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU during an entire year after the war began. In 1965 the Soviet historian, A. M. Nekrich, in his controversial book "June 22, 1941" has gone to the extent of holding Stalin entirely responsible for the initial reverses of the Red Army after Hitler's forces attacked the Soviet Union.

It is indeed ironic that fifty years after the October Revolution, the revolutionists all over the world have to

rely on the bourgeois press for a more objective picture of the historic event than what is doled out through the Soviet publications. To coincide with the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, Edward W. Pearlstein, a bourgeois historian, has published a book "Revolution in Russia" (Viking, New York — \$10, pp 297, 1967) based on news despatches of the October events from Petrograd carried in the two capitalist newspapers, the "New York Tribune" and the "New York Herald". This is what Pearlstein has to write on the preparations made by Bolsheviks for the "November 7 Uprising":

"The actual task of organising the revolution fell to Trotsky. Lenin, having laid out the strategy now withdrew nervously into the background... Lenin was still a fugitive and could not appear openly, and as far as most of the workers and soldiers were concerned, Trotsky represented Bolshevism. Lenin, to be sure, was the acknowledged leader, the towering, if somewhat remote, originator of ideas. Trotsky, however, they knew personally. He often appeared in the factories and barracks and had aroused them with clarion speeches that seemed to articulate their ill-formed thoughts..... Moreover, the insurrection was to take place in the names of the soviets, as well as the Bolshevik Party, and Trotsky was the President of the Petrograd Soviet... Trotsky proved that in addition to his talents as a formulator of doctrine and an orator, he had the instincts of a true commander. The Military Revolutionary Committee was made into an insurrectionary general staff with Trotsky at its head..."

"It is not so much irritating as pathetic", writes another bourgeois Sovietologist Anatole Shub, in a recent article describing present-day Leningrad "that 50 years after the revolution Soviet authorities still are reluctant to tell the story straight. Thus in the Lenin Room in the Smolny Institute, all scenes of the revolution are portrayed in drawings and paintings — although thousands of photographs exist. Documents signed by anyone else but Lenin are likewise withheld, so that the makeup of his first Cabinet, for example, becomes a kind of state secret".

Why are the Soviet authorities still "reluctant" to tell the truth about the revolutionary actions that "shook the world" fifty years ago? Why do they insist on keeping a curtain drawn on all but one of the leaders of the revolution? Why the secrecy and the shame? The reason is that they owe their present standing to Stalin who established the rule of the bureaucracy and became the executioner of the entire generation that led and carried through the October revolution.

Indeed the younger generation of the Soviet intelligentsia and workers is not satisfied with the conspiracy of the bureaucracy to "suppress truth" and "distort" history. The new generation is demanding that truth should be told to it "straight". The youth and the intellectuals are revolting against the bureaucratic excesses, sham trials and witch-hunts of opponents of the regime. Pavel Litvinov, Larisa Deniel and scores of others have raised their voices of protest.

When Khrushchev initiated the process of "de-Stalinisation", he was only making a concession to the growing spirit of revolt among the youth. But "de-Stalinisation" has not only disclosed more clearly the antagonism between the Soviet society and its present bureaucratic leadership, but has also shown that the bureaucratic power cannot be ended by simple reformist intervention. It is necessary to conduct a revolutionary struggle and accomplish a political revolution as envisaged by Leon Trotsky, in order to end the bureaucratic political superstructure and restore a regime of Soviet democracy — indeed within the property relations established by the October Revolution in the USSR.

Ernest Germain, one of the outstanding leaders of the Fourth International has tried to elaborate the above ideas in his pamphlet **"Thirty Questions and Answers about the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union"**. First published in the quarterly **"Fourth International"** in 1960 (Nos. 9 and 10), the pamphlet seeks to answer questions raised about "revised" history of the CPSU published by the Khrushchevists in 1960. But the subject discussed has equal validity even today. It is an exposure of the Stalinist technique of falsifying history. The author has attempted to explain the History of the CPSU in its correct historical perspective. As affirmed by Comrade Germain, Marxists consider historical truth as an important weapon of class struggle in the hands of the revolutionary proletariat. It is only the reactionary social classes or groups that seek to conceal or deform truth in order to defend their privileges. We recommend this book to all serious students of Soviet history in India at a time when the ranks of both the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxists) are demanding a thorough "re-evaluation" of the history of the Communist movement as a whole.

THIRTY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

about the "History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union"

At the XXth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Anastas Mikoyan stated in passing that the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, published in 1938 by a "commission of the Central Committee" of that party, was neither adequate nor truly Marxist. Other speakers followed in his footsteps, quoting specific examples. The historian Pankratova for her part boldly stated that the *Short Course* contained historical falsifications, and demanded that a scientific new version of the party history be published. In his secret report, Khrushchev made fun of the way in which Stalin had had his own eulogy drafted in this history.

After three years of efforts, the new version of the history of the Soviet CP has just seen the light of day. It is a work of collective authorship, namely: Ponomarov, Volkov, Volin, Zaintsez, Kuckin, Mints, Slepov, Sobolev, Timofeievski, Khovtov, and Chiataghin. Most of these authors are little known, apart from Ponomarov, who is one of the chiefs of the "Agitprop" Section of the Central Committee of the Soviet CP. A first translation of this long work has just appeared in Italy (Editori Riuniti); it comes to no less than 812 pages. It is this translation which we are here subjecting to a critical examination. (It is also in English — publisher)

The new *History* differs from the former Stalinist *Short Course* in three main aspects, of which two are matters of form and one of substance. It lengthens the analysis of certain phenomena, both objective phenomena and the principal works of Lenin, and goes back in greater detail over the prehistory of the Russian workers' movement. It continues the history of the USSR, which in the *Short Course* ended in 1938, up till the XXIst Congress, i.e., till the beginning of 1959. It modifies (and partly upsets) the judgments made in

the Stalinist version about the nature of certain political and economic problems faced by the Soviet state and the CP between 1918 and 1938, suppressing the most monstrous of the Stalinist falsifications. The biggest "turn" concerns the Moscow Trials, to which the 1938 *Short Course* had devoted an entire sub-chapter. The new version does not rehabilitate the Old Bolsheviks, leaders of the party, members of Lenin's Central Committee, creators of the Soviet state, who during these trials were falsely and ignominiously accused of the worst crimes. Nor does it state that these trials were infamous staged productions. It simply passes in silence over this whole significant episode, of what "official" opinion in the USSR today calls "the personality cult." The Moscow Trials thus become — to use George Orwell's terminology — a "un-fact."

This phenomenon reflects a tragic paradox: setting out to erase a historical falsification, the above-mentioned collective authors have finally replaced it by a new falsification. Granted, this new one is less monstrous than the old one. It remains, nonetheless, a falsification. It is typical of this work as a whole, in which abusive interpretations, lies by omission, if not pure and simple falsifications, can still be counted by the hundreds — even though one timid step has been taken in the direction of truth.

But in taking this timid step while still keeping many forgeries or manufacturing new ones, the authors have got entangled in inextricable contradictions.

The Stalinist version of the history of the Bolshevik Party was coherent. History was frankly Manichean. On the one side were the "good" people, essentially Stalin and his "faithful companions" (with, in a back seat, Lenin). On the other side were the "bad" people, traitors and spies, who had sold out to the capitalist powers and wanted to restore capitalism from 1918 on: all those who had been opposed to Stalin at any moment during his rise toward power.

To cram history into this simplistic diagramme, it was of course necessary to carve up facts as if they were some sort of plastic. Dates, persons, and events were all pitilessly

transformed — not to speak of ideas. This “history” resembles real history the way a nightmare resembles reality itself. Its actors borrow from reality the pallid features of the living and the external forms of things; and there evident connections between truth and mythology end. Nevertheless, apart from a few gross contradictions¹ this *Short Course* cannot be denied the virtue of internal consistency.

The new *History* has kept most of its vices. But at the same time it has lost this sole virtue. Manichaeism has disappeared; it was, however, the labyrinthine thread through this demonological interpretation of history, peculiar to Stalin and Stalinism. It has not been replaced by any other thread through the labyrinth. Hence the new version appears as an omnium-gatherum of contradictions.

It is no longer Stalin who is the hero of the history of the USSR; it is the “Leninist Central Committee.” But the authors carefully refrain from naming the members of this Central Committee, either in 1917, in 1920, in 1923, or even in 1927. And with good reason! Most of them died, murdered by the Stalinist terror.

The various oppositionals are no longer spies, paid agents of imperialism. They become “opportunists,” “revisionists,” “implacable adversaries of Leninism”. As a result, they appear as representatives of *ideological currents*. But the authors carefully refrain from specifying what their ideas were, from quoting their works, their platforms, their articles. And with good reason! The correctness of these ideas, in the light of the revelations of Khrushchev’s secret report to the XXth Congress, would be dazzlingly evident to all Soviet citizens.

The worst excesses of the Stalinist period are no longer passed over in silence, concerning either the “violation of Soviet legality,” or the catastrophic errors in economic policy (especially the evident failure of agrarian policy). But these events — which upset the fate of millions of human beings,

¹ The *Short Course* asserts on the one hand that the “Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Bukharinists,” et al were transformed from an ideological current into a “counter-revolutionary band” beginning in 1932; it asserts on the other hand that they were foreign spies as early as 1918.

which cost the Soviet people completely avoidable inhuman sacrifices, and which brought about the disappearance of this whole famous "Leninist Central Committee" which was claimed to be the real creator of the Soviet state — these events were explained by just a reference to "the personality cult," and even partially excused! Here are strange Marxists indeed, who interpret one of the most poignant dramas of the history of our epoch without any reference to the class struggle, to the struggles among social groups, to economic and social problems, but exclusively by an appeal to psychopathology.

And so it is not necessary to be a prophet to predict that, though the former *Short Course* was considered as the "bible" of the Communist Parties for only 15 years (1938-1953), it will certainly not take, as many years for the new *History* to join this *Short Course* on the heap of works improvised for an occasion and now forgotten and condemned, if not just chucked straight into the old-paper baler. Other "histories" will appear, each taking the same path to oblivion, until there appears a history without falsifications or forgeries, whatever may be the political judgment of its authors concerning the various events reported on.

This evolution is all the more ineluctable in that, little by little, the veil of silence is beginning to be lifted in the USSR about the first phases of the history of the Soviet Republic. The minutes of the 1917 meetings of the Central Committee have been republished; those of 1918 are in course of publication. The celebrated work of John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, the memoirs of Antonov-Ovseyenko, and eyewitness reports of the October Revolution have finally been reprinted. Lenin's testament, the letters and notes scandalously suppressed in the first editions of his *Complete Works* by Stalin,²

2 In the introduction to Volume XXXVI of Lenin's *Complete Works*, it is written:

By decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism is publishing five volumes (36 to 40) as an addition to the fourth edition of Lenin's Works. Volume 36 includes works which formed part of the third edition, but which were not included in the fourth, as well as texts of Lenin published subsequent to [!] the fourth edition of his [complete!] works. [Our italics.]

have seen the light of day. Under these conditions, it is enough for young historians, young economists, and just simply young communists, in the USSR and elsewhere, to compare these originals with the current version of the *History*, to catch its authors immediately in flagrante delicto of deformation. And they will not fail to do so, from the moment that the police have lost their power to prevent them or to punish by deportation this crime of lese-bureaucratie.

The reconstitution of historical truth is, in the USSR a necessary and inevitable corollary of the abolition of the bureaucratic regime. Necessary, because the renaissance of Marxist thought cannot take place in a vacuum and must take as its point of departure the best that has been acquired in the past (which does not at all mean that it identifies itself therewith). Inevitable, because, in the struggle for genuine soviet democracy, the young generation of communists will begin by condemning the violations of this democracy committed in regard to all communist, soviet, tendencies during the Stalinist period.

And so the hybrid character of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* — halfway between Stalinist falsifications and historical truth — is after all only the reflection of the Soviet reality of today, where the pressure of the masses and of objective conditions has obliged the bureaucracy to abolish the most monstrous aspects of the Stalinist dictatorship, but where at the same time the fundamental characteristics of bureaucratic degeneration continue to exist.

One of the most typical aspects of Stalinist ideology was to bring into question the nature and utility of objective science — at least concerning the social sciences. *History*, it was claimed, must be an instrument of the class struggle. And it, in order to preserve the Soviet state, ensure the future of mankind, defend the interests of millions of proletarians, it was necessary to falsify a few "minor" historical facts, only "petty-bourgeois objectivists" could get up in arms about it. Even today this theory is not entirely abandoned in Stalinist cadre circles.

In reality, Marxists affirm specifically that *historical truth* is a weapon in the class struggle — at least in the hands of progressive classes or social formations. It is conservative or reactionary historical formations, having privileges to defend or vices to hide, who must conceal or deform truth.

Granted, in the class struggle, the proletariat or its party cannot guarantee under all circumstances to tell the truth *to the enemy*. No commander will reveal the exact state of his forces or his projects to the adversary on the eve of a battle; no serious trade-union leader will, at the beginning of a strike, reveal to the bosses his intentions, his strategy, or the state of his strike relief funds. But here it is a question of neither science nor history. To deform history *toward one's own class* or *one's own party* is to botch a theoretical tool indispensable for present and future combats and victories. To lie to one's own class is to lower its level of consciousness. Lenin expressed himself with all the clarity that could be desired on this point when he stated, in *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*, that it is necessary to know how to apply every tactic "in such a way as to *raise*, not lower, the general level of consciousness of the proletariat. Its revolutionary spirit, its capacity to fight and to win".

Now when anyone falsifies history, when he lies to his own class, when he puts it in a position to discover these lies sooner or later, he can only sow demoralization, skepticism, and cynicism toward the party and Marxism in *general*. If the Marxist method is transformed from an instrument for the critical analysis of objective reality into an instrument for servile apologetics for this or that subjective "tactic" of a "genial chief," victim of the "cult of his own personality," if, instead of analyzing reality, anyone makes a gross travesty of it, he becomes incapable of working up a correct strategy and tactics, which have to take reality as their starting point. He also undermines the confidence of the toilers in their own forces and in those of their party.

Were it only for this reason, the rectification of a few of the most striking historical falsifications contained in the new *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, which

we are undertaking in the following pages, is highly useful and necessary. Some will say that all that is already "old hat" and "outlived". But whoever is ignorant of the history of his own movement and his own class is not armed to correct old or new errors. He will be incapable of solving the tasks posed to him by the coming battles.

The rectification of the forgeries and lies by omission contained in the new *History* not only helps a cause which is particularly close to our hearts: the full and complete rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky, of the Left Opposition of the USSR, of all the Old Bolsheviks. It also provides extremely important political teachings for revolutionaries in the backward countries, the militants of the colonial revolution, who find themselves faced with strategic and tactical problems comparable to those which confronted the Bolsheviks before and after 1917. Study of the *real* history of the CP of the Soviet Union would help them immensely in solving these problems. Whereas, just like the *Short Course* of 1938, the new *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* is an obstacle to to be cleared on the road to such a study.³

1. DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHINGS OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Question 1: All through this *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, the "Leninist Central Committee" is presented as the genuine inspirer, organizer, and guarantor of the victory of the great October Revolution. But the composition of this Leninist Central Committee is carefully concea-

³ At the XXth Congress of the C P of the Soviet Union, Pankratova declared:

If historical reality is presented in a way that is not in conformance with truth, the efforts of our cadres and our friends abroad to apply correctly the valuable experiences of the struggle of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union may be hindered. Unfortunately, we are not carrying on a resolute struggle against deviation from the way in which Lenin judged historical events, against all anti-historical and oversimplifying elements, against a subjectivist attitude toward history, against the modernization [!] of history and a conception of history adapted [!] to each given and purely conjunctural [!] situation.

led from the reader. Who were the members of this Central Committee before, during, and after the victory of October, and what was their later fate?

Answer: In August 1917, 21 Bolsheviks were elected members of the Central Committee. Out of these 21, seven died natural deaths: Sverdlov, Lenin, Djerjinsky, Nogin, Artem, Kolontai, and Stalin. Two were murdered by the counter-revolution: Uritzki and Chaumian. Eleven fell victims to the Stalinist terror — one was assassinated abroad by an agent of the GPU: Trotsky; and ten died in Stalinist jails: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin, Miliutin, Krestinsky, Sokolnikov, Bubnov, Smilga, Berzin; the twenty-first, Muranov, disappeared without trace, and was probably also liquidated in 1938.

Between 1918 and 1921, 31 Bolsheviks were members of the Central Committee. Out of these 31, nine died natural deaths: Lenin, Djerjinsky, Uritzky, Sverdlov, Artem, Nogin, Stutchka, Stalin, Kalinin. One was driven to suicide: Tomsy. Eighteen were assassinated under the Stalinist terror: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yevdokimov, Smirnov, Trotsky, Radek, Serebriakov, Sokolnikov, Rykov, Rukharin, Rakovsky, Bielogorodov, Smilga, Krestinsky, Rudzutak, Bubnov, Miliutin, and Preobrazhensky. One was victimized by the Stalinist terror, but survived: Stassova. One disappeared without trace: Muranov. One is still alive and still a member of the Central Committee: Andreyev.

In October 1917, for the first time, a Political Bureau of the Central Committee was elected. It was composed of seven members: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov, Bubnov, and Stalin. Two of these seven members died natural deaths; the other five were killed by the Stalinist terror. Up till 1923, the following served on the Political Bureau: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Stalin, Preobrazhensky, Serebriakov, Tomsy, and Rykov. Out of these ten persons, eight were victims of the Stalinist terror.

The conclusion is clear: the great majority of the members of the "Leninist Central Committee" were killed under the reign of Stalin. In the old version of the history

of the party history (the *Short Course* of 1938), it is explained that these revolutionaries were, underneath, really counter-revolutionaries, agents of imperialism, spies, and even fascists and "Hitlerites." Inevitably Lenin's merits were diminished thereby: what indeed is one to think of a revolutionary leader who surrounds himself with a majority of counter-revolutionaries as his most faithful collaborators?

Today, Lenin has been "rehabilitated": "his" Central Committee is praised to the skies. But how is one not to conclude that the extermination of the majority of the members of this Central Committee could not be either a "regrettable accident" or a simple caprice by a psychopath ("the personality cult"), but provides the most tangible proof of a colossal political transformation that took place in the USSR between the period of Lenin and the triumph of Stalin? How is one not to conclude that there was a counter-revolution, and, more exactly, a *political* counter-revolution, as we shall specify further on?

Question 2: Does The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union speak of the role played by the members of this "Leninist Central Committee" in the history of the Russian workers' movement prior to 1917?

Answer: It does, but exclusively to speak ill of them! When the "eminent collaborators of Lenin," the "organizers of the party", are being quoted, they are scarcely mentioned. Their names are quoted only when it is a matter of uttering spiteful criticisms of them. There is something quite illogical here. We lack the space to examine all these criticisms. But even if they were true, there would still be a lie by omission. How is it to be supposed indeed that Lenin would have proposed all through the revolution and the first years of Soviet power a Central Committee whose members had to their credit nothing but errors?

Sometimes these lies by omission reach the extreme of the grotesque. Thus the book "forgets" to mention (vol I, p 193) that Kamenev was sent to Russia by the Central Committee in 1914 to lead the Duma fraction and *Pravda*. It "forgets" to

mention that Zinoviev was elected president of the Communist International at its Founding Congress, and was to occupy that post until 1926. It "forgets" to mention even the composition of the Bolshevik delegation to that congress, and with good reasons: it was composed of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Stalin, Bukharin, and Chicherin. It "forgets" to point out that the Soviet members of the Communist International were: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Radek. It "forgets" to indicate that it was Trotsky who spoke in the name of the Bolshevik fraction at the Preparliament, in order to announce that this fraction was going to leave that assembly (vol I, pp 253-4). It "forgets" to mention that Trotsky was the first Bolshevik president of the Petrograd soviet and that as such he also presided over that soviet's Revolutionary Military Committee, entrusted with preparing the insurrection. It "forgets" to give the composition of the first revolutionary government the Council of People's Commissars, presided over by Lenin, elected at the Second Pan-Russian Soviet Congress (vol I, p 2600).

This can, however, be found in John Reed's book, currently on sale in the USSR: Lenin, Miliutin, Shliapnikov, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Krylenko, Dybenko, Nogin, Lunacharsky, Stepanov, Trotsky, Lomov, Teodorovich, Avilov, Stalin.

Question 3: What were the tasks of the Russian Revolution of 1917?

Answer: The Russian Revolution overthrew the power of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, established the dictatorship of the proletariat, and opened the road to the expropriation of the capitalists and the nationalization of the means of production. At the same time, it solved the principal tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, which the bourgeoisie had turned out to be incapable of solving: the question of radical agrarian reform, the question of the nationalities, the question of the unification of the country, etc.

On this subject, however, the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, sows extreme confusion. This con-

fusion arises from the fact that the authors of the work do not always want to admit the evidence, namely *that Lenin (and after him the majority of the Bolshevik Party) modified Bolshevik strategy in April 1917, and that he adopted, in its essentials, the theory of the permanent revolution.*

At the time of the Russian revolution of 1905, three positions faced one another in the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party:

a) the position of the Mensheviks, which taking as its starting point the observation of the fact that Russia had not yet gone through a victorious bourgeois revolution, claimed that the revolution had essentially for its goal the overthrow of Czarism and the elimination of semi-feudal vestiges from the Russian economy and society. The proletariat was to give critical support to the liberal bourgeoisie, in order to force it to carry out this revolution in the most radical way, while at the same time fighting for its own immediate demands (right to strike, universal suffrage, eight-hour day, etc).

b) The position of the Bolsheviks, who took as their starting point the observation that the bourgeoisie in the contemporary period, faced by a highly concentrated and conscious industrial proletariat, organized in Marxist parties, was unable to carry out the classic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, for fear of the revolutionary action of the masses. At the same time, Lenin observed that, in view of the limited number of the proletariat in society, and of the weakness of the capitalist substructure in the country, the party of the proletariat could not hope alone to conquer power. If the revolution were pushed to the end, it would end up in a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," within which the workers' party could participate in a coalition government together with a peasant party. This victorious revolution would be only a radical bourgeois-democratic revolution, and would not immediately take the form of a socialist revolution.

c) The position of Trotsky: like the Mensheviks and Lenin, Trotsky understood that the key question was the agra-

rian question. But whereas the Mensheviks believed that the liberal bourgeoisie could carry out a radical agrarian reform, and Lenin believed that this reform could be the labour of a coalition government between a workers' party and a peasant party, *Trotsky stated that only the proletariat is capable of giving the land to the peasants in a radical way.* He specified, in effect, that history had shown that the peasantry was unable to form great national "really peasant" parties, and that it always followed the lead of either a bourgeois or workers' party.

The History of the October Revolution proved Trotsky right, since *it was only at the moment when the Bolshevik government was formed, that the decree on the distribution of land to the peasants was voted.*

In order to make the victory of October possible, Lenin *changed* the orientation of the party at the April 1917 Conference, modified the party programme which called for setting up only a democratic republic, and had written in it the goal of setting up immediately the dictatorship of the proletariat, a soviet state.

All that is very clear today. But *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* tries to wriggle out of it in various ways. It tries to *deny* that there was a change in the Bolshevik Party's strategy in April 1917. To do so, it indicates that the aim of the April Theses drafted by Lenin and the decision of the Bolshevik Party's April Conference was "the struggle for the passage from the bourgeois-democratic revolution over to the socialist revolution [vol I, p 225]." We shall return later to what is erroneous in this formula. But we may already observe that it is *in opposition* to the "strategic goal" of the Bolsheviks in 1905, as the *History* itself defines it, since it correctly states (vol I, p 92) that the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" foreseen by Lenin in 1905 was not a socialist dictatorship but only a "democratic" dictatorship. Do the authors of the *History* want to contest the fact that the October Revolution set up a proletarian, socialist, dictatorship in Russia?

This desperate attempt to deny Lenin's 1917 change in strategic orientation — an attempt which obscures the whole problem of the strategy of the revolutionary party in a backward country, especially in colonial countries — is indicated as false by innumerable witnesses of the period. Let us quote two, which the authors of the *History* will find hard to challenge.

In 1924, Molotov published an article titled "Lenin and the Party at the Period of the February Revolution," from which we extract the following passage:

But it is necessary to say openly that the party did not have that clarity of vision and that spirit of decision which were required by the revolutionary movement. It did not have them *because it did not have a clear attitude of orientation toward the socialist revolution*. In general the agitation and the entire practice of the revolutionary party lacked a solid foundation, for its thought had not gone forward right up to the bold conclusion of the need for an immediate struggle for socialism and for the socialist revolution.

Trotsky's thought had drawn this "bold conclusion" already in 1905. Lenin reached it beginning with the February revolution. That is the historical truth.

Volume XX of Lenin's *Complete Works* appeared in 1928. It was edited by the Lenin Institute under the control of the Central Committee. The first part of this volume is concerned especially with the Bolshevik Party's April 1917 Conference. Here is what is stated in a note on page 557-8 (German edition) on the subject of this conference:

At this conference there was a small group, composed essentially of part of the delegates of the Moscow Committee and the Moscow Region (Nogin, Rykov, Smidovich, Ovsianikov, Angarski, and others); its *conception of the revolution corresponds roughly to the position of the Bolsheviks in 1905* (the formula, dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"). [...] Kamenev, who had a position close to that of

this group, was entrusted by them with the presentation of a counter-report. [Our italics.]

It was to this "Moscow" position that Lenin refers in *sitting up in opposition to it* the thesis of the conquest of power by the soviets (pp 334-6). It is true that he considers that this power will be "not yet" socialist, while still being more than bourgeois-democratic." But on this point history has corrected Comrade Lenin. Nobody today will deny the *socialist* character of the October Revolution. To be unwilling to understand this problem is to block any possibility of helping the Communist Parties of colonial countries to work up a correct strategy. It is to lose sight of the teachings, not only of the October Revolution, but also of the Yugoslav revolution and the Chinese revolution — not to mention, alas, the dozens of *negative* lessons wherever the Communist parties clung to the outlived theses of 1905 and refused to head toward the dictatorship of the proletariat backed up by the poor peasantry.

Question 4: What is the general teaching of the October Revolution in this matter?

Answer: The teaching of the October Revolution in the matter of the main motive forces of the revolution in countries that have not yet experienced a completed bourgeois-democratic revolution is that the alliance between the workers and peasants, the only one capable of completing the radical agrarian reform, can be brought about only by the dictatorship of the proletariat (the conquest of power by the proletariat). This teaching is confirmed by the history of the Russian Revolution, the history of the Chinese Revolution, and the history of the Yugoslav revolution. There is no example in the history of the last 40 years of any country that succeeded in accomplishing the classic tasks of the bourgeois revolution without passing through the conquest of power by the proletariat.

There are, on the contrary, innumerable examples of revolutions which, because of the fact that they did not end up

in the dictatorship of the proletariat, stopped after the conquest of political independence (India, Indonesia, Burma, Egypt, Morocco, Tunis, etc) or the overthrow of the political agents of imperialism (Iraq, Venezuela), but did not succeed in solving the agrarian problem, not to speak of that of the industrialization of the country. The history of the second Chinese revolution (1925-27) confirms the same teaching.

Question 5: Have the authors of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* formulated this teaching?

Answer: They have not done so, although it is nevertheless to be found recorded in numerous documents of the Communist International, as well as in the following text by Lenin:

We know from our own experience—and we see confirmation of it in the development of all revolutions, if we take the modern epoch, a hundred and fifty years, say, all over the world — that the result has been the same everywhere: every attempt on the part of the petty bourgeoisie in general, and of the peasants in particular, to realize their strength, to direct economics and politics in their own way, has failed. Either under the leadership of the proletariat, or under the leadership of the capitalists—there is no middle course. All who hanker after this middle course are empty dreamers, fantasists. ["Speech Delivered to the All-Russian Congress of Transport Workers," March 27, 1921, in *Selected Works*, Moscow 1947 edition, p 691.]

Now that is exactly the same idea that guided Trotsky in working up his theory of the permanent revolution. Trotsky wrote in 1905:

The Russian Revolution prevents [...] the setting up of any bourgeois-constitutional regime whatever which might be able to solve the most primitive tasks of democracy. [...] For this reason the fate of the most elementary revolutionary interests of the peasantry — even of the peasantry as a whole as a stratum—is tied up with the fate of the revolution as a

whole, i.e. with the fate of the proletariat. The proletariat in power will appear to the peasants as the class that frees them.

But with the peasantry perhaps push out the proletariat and occupy its place itself? That is impossible. All historical experience rises up against such a hypothesis. It shows that the peasantry is absolutely unable to play an independent political role.

The Russian bourgeoisie has bequeathed all revolutionary positions to the proletariat. It will have to abandon to it revolutionary hegemony over the peasantry as well.

Instead of admitting, or at least sketching out, this identity of views, the authors of the *History* about the alleged fact that "Trotsky wanted to jump over the stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution" and that he wanted "to isolate the proletariat from the peasantry [vol. I, p 95]." It suffices to compare this "analysis" of the theory of the permanent revolution with the definition thereof given by its author himself, which we have just quoted, to understand how it is deformed, if not falsified.

Question 6: Did the Stalinists and Khrushchevians at least follow this teaching in practice even if they snapped their fingers at it in theory?

Answer: Nothing of the sort, unfortunately. In all cases where Communist Parties have been faced with powerful revolutionary movements in the colonies, far from struggling for the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution and heading toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, they have idealized the national bourgeoisie, formed lasting alliances with it, subordinated the mass movement to it, and ended up by — being brutally repressed by that selfsame bourgeoisie. That began with the tragic experience with Chiang Kai-shek mala under Arbenz, in Egypt under Nasser, in Argentina under Frondizi, and in Morocco under King Mohammed V. It in 1925-27; it continued in Iran under Mossadegh, in Guatemala under Arbenz, in Egypt under Nasser, in Argentina under

Fronidizi, and in Morocco under King Mohammed V. It is currently continuing in Iraq under Kassem, in India under Nehru, and in Indonesia under Sukarno. The outcome there will be no more brilliant than elsewhere.

True, it is not a question of requiring a Communist Party to fight for power under no matter what conditions or correlation of forces, or of forbidding it to grant critical support to a bourgeois-national movement as long as this movement is effectively leading a mass movement against imperialism. Unfortunately, all the above-mentioned cases show that, under Khrushchev as under Stalin, the Communists have thrown away immense opportunities to become in the immediate or middle future the dominant force among the people, because they subjected themselves in a servile way to the bourgeois-national leadership and contributed to laying its foundations among the masses.

The only striking exceptions are those of the Yugoslav and Chinese CPs, which, going against Stalin's directives, engaged in and won the struggle for power. By establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, they solved "as they went a long" the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, without being able to stop at this stage, but passing rapidly on to "collectivist measures," just as Trotsky had foreseen — way back in 1905.

Question 7: What was the nature of the February revolution?

Answer:...*The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* characterizes the February 1917 revolution as a bourgeois-democratic revolution that it was necessary "to transform" into a proletarian revolution (vol I, p 220). It is true that a few sentences uttered by Lenin in April 1917 — sentences that are not to be found again in any later analysis of the Russian Revolution by Lenin — give weight to this definition. In reality, the data offered by the authors of the *History* themselves permit emphasizing this definition's confused, or at least incomplete, character.

The February 1917 revolution, as a "bourgeois-democratic revolution," was characterized by the fact that *it did not solve*

its task. The authors of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* indeed explain on page 214 of the first volume that the provisional government created by the February revolution was neither able nor willing to give the land to the peasants. They specify at the same time that the October Revolution, "which directly accomplished the socialist tasks, also carried through to its end the bourgeois-democratic revolution [vol I, p 273]." Now the *History* elsewhere states that the most burning task of the Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution was "the destruction of the power of the landowners" (p 78), or, better still, "the liquidation of every vestige of feudalism" (p 205). Obviously, these aims were not achieved in February 1917; if they had been, the peasantry would never have given its support to the October Revolution. By stating on page 212 that

the February bourgeois-democratic revolution reached the first goal of the party, the overthrow of Czarism, and opened up the possibility of liquidating capitalism and installing socialism,

the authors of the *History themselves jump over the main task* of the "bourgeois-democratic stage," namely, the distribution of land, and themselves "ignore" the decisive weight of the peasantry! All these wretched contradictions result from the attempt to ignore the theory of the permanent revolution.

Question 8: Who led the October Revolution? when did it begin? and when did it triumph?

Answer: *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* repeats on this subject — while attenuating them — the gross falsifications of the *Short Course* published in 1938. The latter had the nerve to write that at the historic 10 October 1917 session of the Central Committee, which took the decision in favour of the insurrection.

Trotsky did not vote directly against the resolution but he presented an amendment — which was to fail of acceptance — reducing the insurrection to nothing. He proposed not to begin the insurrection before the

opening of the Second Congress of the Soviets; that would have dragged out the insurrection, announced its date in advance, and warned the Provisional Government.

Since, in the meantime, John Reed's celebrated work, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, has been republished, this outrageous falsification, which presents Trotsky, the main organizer and leader of the insurrection, as having wanted to cause it to fail (!), has had to be abandoned. John Reed's book is not just any old book. Its preface was written by Lenin. Reproduced in volume XXXVI of his *Complete Works*, this preface characterizes John Reed's book as follows:

It is with all my heart that I recommend this work to the workers of all countries. I hope that this book may be distributed in millions of copies and translated into all languages, because it reports in a veracious and extraordinarily vivid way those events that are so important for understanding what the proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, really is.

Now John Reed's book says that at this very meeting Lenin and Trotsky defended the idea of the insurrection; that, *the very next day*, Lenin published in the *Pravda* an article defending the idea of immediate insurrection; that the government, thus learning the "secret," immediately took measures; and— that the insurrection nevertheless took place finally, as Trotsky had proposed, at the moment of the convocation at Petrograd of the Second Pan-Russian Congress of the Soviets (Modern Library edition, pp 38 et seq.). John Reed's book really does not leave a single word of the Stalinist falsification standing.

The new version of events offered by the authors of the *History* is, however, scarcely any more veracious. Seeing that it can be confronted by *all* Soviet readers (and all Communist readers in the entire world) with John Reed's work, it comes very close to the ridiculous.

It begins by picking up the passage mentioned above, correcting it as follows:

At the meeting of the Central Committee Trotsky did not vote against the resolution of the insurrection. But he insisted that the insurrection be put off until the convocation of the Second Congress of the Soviets — which meant in practice to cause the insurrection to fail, since the Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks would have been able to delay the convocation of the congress and the government would have had the possibility, on the day it opened, of concentrating sufficient [1] forces for the defeat of the insurrection.

The author of this "correction" does not show much brilliance in the consistency of his ideas. He forgets to explain to us why the insurrection, which in fact did coincide with the convocation of the Second Pan-Russian Congress of the Soviets, did not fail "for that reason." He forgets to remind us that, if Trotsky proposed making the two things coincide, it was precisely because the military forces at the government's disposal were insufficient to cause the failure of the insurrection, since they came over, regiment after regiment, to put themselves under the command of the Petrograd soviet. And he forgets to explain to us why the government, who were aware of the "date" of the insurrection, did not understand what Stalin, Ponomarev, and Company perceived—20 years later. In the 1938 *Short Course*, it was said:

On October 16th a session of the enlarged Central Committee of the party was held. It elected a Party Centre to direct the insurrection, with Comrade Stalin at its head. It was this centre, the leading nucleus [sic] of the Revolutionary Military Committee connected with Petrograd soviet, which in practice guided the insurrection.

In the new version, this falsification has been slightly corrected:

The organ entrusted with carrying out the insurrection in the capital was the Revolutionary Military Com-

mittee, created, at the proposal of the CC of the party in connection with the Petrograd soviet [vol I, p 255]. It is true that this committee did carry out all the practical work of the insurrection. The one lie by omission committed here by the authors of this *History* is not to recall that its president was Leon Trotsky. On the next page; it is stated that, on October 16th,

At the end of the session there was elected a revolutionary military Centre to lead the insurrection, composed of Bubnov, Djerjinsky, Sverdlov, Stalin, and Uritzky. It was decided that this revolutionary military Centre should *enter the Revolutionary Military Committee* of the Soviet [p 256].

In other words, the organ that was "to lead" simply entered the already existing organism and did not modify either its work or its leading tasks, since Trotsky remained its president, and Antonov-Oveseyenko and Podvoisky his principal "technical" lieutenants. And to top off their clumsy "corrections," the authors add: "The entire work of organizing the insurrection was directed by Lenin [p 256]."

In John Reed, however (pp 60 et seq) it can be read that all the work of organization was carried out by the Revolutionary Military Committee. And to quote finally a witness little to be suspected of Trotskyist sympathies, here is what Stalin stated:

The entire labour of practical organization of the insurrection was placed under the immediate direction of the president of the Petrograd soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It can be stated with certainty, that the party owes the rapid coming over of the garrison into the camp of the soviets and the skilful work of the Revolutionary Military Committee above all and essentially to Comrade Trotsky. [In *Pravda* 6 November 1917.]

Question 9: Who created the Red Army? Who directed its operations during the Civil War?

Answer: Here also *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* gives proof of a mean and petty spirit of

falsification. It does not point out that Leon Trotsky was the first People's Commissar for Defence, without even mentioning the fact that he was the creator of the Red Army and "the father of victory," as is attested by the decree which accorded him the Order of the Red Flag on 7 November 1919.

The *History* cites pell-mell a few of the main military and political leaders of the army: Frunze, Vorochilov, Budyenny, and others; S Kamenev, Karbichev, Chapochnikov, Stankievich and Nicolaiev on page 307 of volume I; Andreyev, Bubnov, Vorochilov, Gussec, Djerjinsky, Zhdanov (sic), Ziemliecka, Kalinin, Kirov, Kossior, Kuibychiev, Mechlis, Mikoyan, Ordjonikidze, Petrovesky, Postychev, Sverdlov, Stalin, Frunze, Khrushchev (sic), Chvernik, Chiadenco, Yaroslavsky. But this list "forgets" the main communist chiefs of the army, such as the future marshals, Tukhachevski and Yegorov. It forgets *all* the Bolshevik leaders placed at the head of military operations.

The *History* informs us only in passing that there was "at one moment" a Revolutionary Council of War. It "forgets" that these military operations were directed by this Military Council of War of the Republic of the Soviets. When it was set up in 1918, this council was composed of Trotsky (president), Sklianski (vice-president), and of Vatzetis, IN Smirnov, Rosengoltz, Raskolnikov, Muralov, and Yureniev. Out of these eight members five were later "liquidated" by Stalin. In 1919 IN Smirnov, Rosengoltz, and Raskolnikov were replaced by Smilga and Gussev. To direct the operations in the Ukraine, the Central Committee detached especially Piatakov, Smilga, and Lachevich, all three of whom were to fall victims to the Stalinist terror.

The determinant role played by Trotsky as the creator of the Red Army can be attested by three witnesses that today's official circles in the USSR will find it difficult to challenge: Jacques Sadoul, Gorki, and Lenin himself.

Taking the floor at the First Congress of the Communist International, Jacques Sadoul declared:

We owe much gratitude to the leaders of this [Red] Army, but first of all to Comrade Trotsky,

whose indomitable energy, united with high intelligence and genuine genius, was able to infuse a new vital force into the Russian army, which was totally falling apart. [Integral minutes in German, p 63.]

In the first edition of Lenin's *Complete Works* in Russian (volume XVI, page 73), Lenin extolled Trotsky because he had been able to create the Red Army "with the bricks left from the destroyed edifice of the former regime."

In his work, *Lenin and the Russian Peasant*, Gorki reports on an interview with Lenin, who said to him on the subject of Trotsky:

"Show me another man capable of organizing an almost model army in a single year, and to win the respect of military experts. We have a man of this calibre [pp 95-6]."

It is true that these two passages were eliminated (or softened down) in the later editions of the *Complete* (sic) *Works* of Lenin and the work of Gorki. But in this matter also it is not going to take long for historical truth to recover its rights.

Let us mention that the new *History* even adds one supplementary petty meanness to the falsifications of the former *Short Course*. The latter, speaking of the mishaps in foreign intervention against the Republic of the Soviets, notes: "It was thus, for example, that the French sailors, guided by Andre Marty, had revolted at Odessa." In the new *History* (vol. I, p. 316), the revolt remains, but the name of Andre Marty has disappeared.

As for the innumerable falsifications concerning the operations of the Red Army, it is impossible to rectify them here: too much space would be needed. The reader interested in this subject can easily consult the chapter relative thereto in Trotsky's own *My Life*, and especially in *The Prophet Armed* of Isaac Deutscher, who has gathered together an impressive bibliography to untangle the Stalinist legends.

II. ORIGINS AND STRUGGLES OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION IN THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

Question 10: Did Trotsky favour the "militarization of labour" in Russia?

Answer: In order to distort the meaning of the systematic struggle carried on by the Left Opposition against the danger of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, following in the spoor of the *Short Courses* present matters as if, on the eve of the formation of the Opposition, Trotsky had

declared himself opposed to the development of trade union democracy, preferring the military and administrative measures, that he applied, furthermore, in the Railway and Internal Waterway Transport Workers' Union when he was the president of the central committee of that organization [vol I, p 354].

Two pages farther on, the History even accuses Trotsky of having urged the use of methods of coercion instead of methods of persuasion in the trade unions (p 356).

This is a matter of a gross deformation of historical truth. First of all, the formulae of "militarization of the economy" and the use of "labour armies" are not at all formulae invented by Trotsky in 1920; they are formulae used by the entire party, as is attested to by a resolution of the IXth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, quoted on page 335 of the *History* itself! It was a question — at the end of the civil war, at a moment when the productive forces had fallen to their lowest level — of preventing the demobilization of the army from scattering this proletarian vanguard, from condemning it to unemployment or dispersing it over the countryside. It was necessary, on the contrary, to employ it on the tasks of economic reconstruction, by having it carry out great public works of urgent importance for the country's recovery. As military discipline itself, at this period, was a *communist* discipline, i.e. very far

from the present customs in the Soviet army, and as there was freedom of discussion within this army, with purely persuasive methods broadly used, even the formula of "labour armies" adopted by the whole party was not exactly synonymous with the "replacement of persuasion by coercion."

The real subject-matter of the 1921 debate on the trade-union question was something else again. It was a question of setting *the place of the trade unions and the working class within socialized industry*. Three theses confronted one another: the anarcho-syndicalist thesis, which wanted immediately to turn the administration of industry over to the trade unions and suppress any centralized administration; the thesis of Lenin and the trade-union leaders who wanted to preserve trade union independence towards the state, the unions being considered as instruments of defence of the consumers' interests of the workers, while not modifying the system of management of industry; and the thesis of Trotsky and Bukharin, which wanted to ensure a decisive participation of the unions and the workers in the management of nationalized industry.

If today we examine this debate in the light of later experience, we immediately observe that Lenin's and Trotsky's theses were, both of them, partly right and partly wrong. Lenin was certainly right when he insisted on the need to preserve trade-union independence towards a "bureaucratically deformed" (the formula is Lenin's) workers' state. But Trotsky was no less right when he specified that the fight against the bureaucracy was utopian as long as that bureaucracy had not been hit in the real solar plexus of its powers: the control of big industry.

The truth is, that the struggle against bureaucratic deformation of the workers' state, in the transition period between capitalism and socialism, requires *both* independence of the trade unions (as the instrument of the workers *as consumers*), and a more and more active participation of the workers in the administration of industry (to defend their interests *as producers*). The most adequate instrument for ensuring this par-

ticipation is, however, not the trade union itself, but the *workers' council* (factory council).

Question 11: What was the thesis advocated by Lenin concerning the administration of Soviet industry?

Answer: Wishing to justify the measures taken later, in 1930, by Stalin, which gathered together all the powers of the enterprise within the sole hands of the director, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (vol I, p 291) summarizes Lenin's position on this subject in the following way:

The interests of socialism, Lenin taught, require the unconditional obedience of the masses to the sole will of the director of the labour process. For this reason, the direction of the economy had to be centralized, and directors named by the Soviet power had to be at the head of enterprises. The centralized direction on the part of the state and the unity of command had to be combined with the active and conscious participation of the masses in economic life and with a control in various forms by the rank and file.

It is useful to emphasize in passing that this last bit concerning the multiple forms of control from below is hardly to be found in the 1938 *Short Course*. And with good reason! Under the Stalinist regime, there was no longer any trace of such a "control" beginning with 1932-3. The administration of the economy and the direction of the factories were completely bureaucratized. And though Khrushchev's reforms have introduced a *semblance of control* from below, there are scarcely any examples of a genuine participation of the workers in the management of Soviet enterprises today. But that is another subject, to which we shall return farther on.

Is the new *History's* description of Lenin's conception in conformance with truth? It greatly sins by omission. Here

is what Lenin wrote on this subject in *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Power*:

The more resolutely that we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for dictatorship of individual persons, for definite processes of work for definite aspects of *purely executive* functions the more varied must be the forms and methods of control from below in order to counteract every shadow of possibility of distorting the Soviet power, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy. [*Selected Works*, Moscow 1947, vol II, p 339.]

First difference between Lenin and the new *History*: Lenin does not claim that the principle of "sole direction" is an absolute principle, but that it was valid only at that moment, i.e. that it flowed from the *special* conditions in which the soviet state and the Russian working class found themselves just after the victory of October. To transform a momentary and painful necessity into a general principle is already to commit an error of some size.

Second difference between Lenin and the new *History*: Lenin *frankly recognizes* that the momentary principle of "sole direction" implies a danger of bureaucratic deformation. *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* is silent on this subject. Now, in the same pamphlet Lenin takes a harsh stand against those who are silent about this sort of danger before the masses:

To conceal from the masses the fact that the enlistment of bourgeois specialists by means of extremely high salaries is a retreat from the principles of the Paris Commune would be tantamount to sinking to the level of bourgeois politicians and to deceiving the masses. Frankly explaining how and why we took this step backward, and then publicly discussing what means are available for making up for lost time, means educating the masses and learning from experience together with the masses how to build up

socialism. [Selected Works, Moscow 1947, vol II, p 320.]

It is therefore to the level of "bourgeois politicians" who "deceive the masses" that the authors of the *History* have fallen in thus mutilating Lenin's thought.

Third difference between Lenin and these authors: Lenin implicitly indicates that if the forms of control from below are not increased and broadened, bureaucratic deformation will be inevitable, or at least extremely probable. He affirms this explicitly, furthermore, on the subject of the temporarily high salaries accorded to "specialists":

The corrupting influence of high salaries upon the Soviet government [. . .] and upon the masses of the workers is indisputable. But every thinking honest worker and poor peasant will agree, will admit, that we cannot immediately rid ourselves of the bad heritage of capitalism, and that we can liberate the Soviet Republic from the duty of paying a "tribute" of fifty million or one hundred million rubles per annum (a tribute for her own backwardness in organizing *nation-wide* accounting and control *from below*), only by organizing ourselves, by tightening up discipline in our own ranks [. . .]. If the class-conscious advanced workers and poor peasants manage with the aid of the Soviet institutions, to organize, become disciplined, pull themselves together, create strong labour discipline in the course of one year [sic] then in a year's time we shall throw off this "tribute" [. . .]. [Ibidem, p 321.]

And Lenin even specifies:

There is a petty-bourgeois tendency to transform the members of the soviets into "Members of Parliament," or into bureaucrats. This must be combated by drawing *all* the members of the soviets into the practical work of administration. In many places the departments of the soviets are gradually becoming merged with the commissariats. Our aim is to draw

the whole of the poor into the practical work of, administration, and every step that is taken in this direction — the more varied they are, the better — should be carefully recorded, studied, systematized, tested by wider experience, and passed into law. Our aim is to ensure that *every* toiler, after having finished his eight hours' "lesson" in productive labour, shall perform state duties *gratis*: the transition to this is a particularly difficult one, but this transition alone can guarantee the final consolidation of socialism. [Ibidem, pp 337-8.]

Now during the entire 1930-1955 period, not only were the methods of control "from below" or of performance of "state duties *gratis*" by "*every toiler*" not multiplied, but completely abolished. The high salaries were not reduced; they were even extended to include members and leaders of the party (the famous demoralization foreseen by Lenin). The state functions were not performed *gratis* by *every* worker, not when they worked eight hours a day, nor when they worked seven hours or even six, as is now the case in certain Soviet industries. Consequently, socialism is not "finally consolidated," "bureaucracy" has not been "weeded out," but has developed in a monstrous way, and bureaucratic deformation has asserted itself until it has become degeneration. Such are the ineluctable conclusions from the very passage of Lenin "quoted" (in mutilated form) by the *History*.

Question 12: Did Lenin express this opinion about the danger of a bureaucratic deformation of the Soviet state only in an occasional way?

Answer: No. Lenin's warnings on this subject formed the genuine Leitmotiv of the last years of his political activity. They became more and more pressing as he had to give up the daily leadership of the party and the state. One gets the impression that, moved by tragic forebodings, Lenin did his possible and impossible to mobilize the party cadres against this danger — in vain, alas, as history was to show. Only the Left Opposition and, later, the Unified Oppositions, followed his counsels.

Thus, during the discussions against the "Workers' Opposition" (Shliapnikov, Sapronov, Kollontai, et al) at the IXth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, and just after the IXth Congress, Lenin constantly returns to the problem of bureaucratism, and admits that the ultra-leftist opposition was partly right. Speaking to the Moscow Province Party Conference, he asserts:

The task of the soviet power consists of completely destroying the old apparatus and giving the power to the soviets. But in our programme we already admit that bureaucratism has reappeared, that the economic foundations of a really socialist society do not yet exist. [. . .] It is understandable that the bureaucratism that has arisen in soviet institutions must exert *a dissolving influence also on the*

1 The first part of this study appeared in our Summer issue. The last question treated there concerned Lenin's warnings about the risks of a graver and graver bureaucratic deformation in case that control from below should not be reinforced in all spheres of the Soviet economy and society.

party organizations, for the party tops are the tops of the soviet apparatus. [Pp 616-7 of volume XXX of the *Complete Works*, German edition, 1930.]

Farther on in the same speech, Lenin emphasizes that in the assertions of the Workers' Opposition, there are "many healthy, necessary, and inevitable things" (ibidem, p 617). He adds that the struggle against the bureaucracy by the aid of the Worker and Peasant Inspection (directed by Stalin) is very difficult, because it is itself a bureaucratized institution, it exists only as a "pious hope."

In 1921, during the trade-union discussion at the Xth Congress of the Russian CP, Lenin corrects Trotsky when the latter speaks of the USSR as a "workers' state"; he specifies that the Soviet Republic is a "bureaucratically deformed workers' state."

In his report to the XIIth Party Congress, on 27 March 1922, Lenin declares:

If we consider Moscow — 4,700 communists in responsible posts — and if we consider this bureaucratic machine, this mountain, then who is leading and who is led? I strongly doubt that it can be said that communists are leading this mountain. To tell the truth, it is not they who are leading. It is they who are led. [P 962 of *Œuvres Choisies*, volume II.]

In the same report, Lenin furthermore asserts that the state apparatus is "frankly bad."

On 23 January 1923, he returns to the same subject in a proposal made to the XIIth Party Congress:

I do not deny that the question of our state apparatus and its improvement is very difficult: it is far from being solved, and it is at the same time an eminently pressing question.

Our state apparatus, except for the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, is to a large degree a survival from the past, which has undergone the minimum of serious modifications. It is only slightly

embellished on the surface, it remains the real type of our old state apparatus [ibidem, p 1026].

In his last article "It Were Better to Do Less But Better," written 2 March 1923, the same idea returns like a genuine obsession:

Things are going so badly with our state apparatus, not to say that they are detestable, that we must first of all seriously reflect how to fight against its defects, which, let us not forget, go back to the past [. . .].

Our new Worker and Peasant Inspection, we hope, will leave far behind it that quality which the French call pruderie, and that we might call ridiculous affectation or ridiculous ostentation, and which plays to the highest degree into the hands of our whole bureaucracy, of both our soviet and party institutions, for, as it said in parentheses, *the bureaucracy exists among us not only in the soviet but also in the party institutions.* [Ibidem, p 1031, 1038. Our emphasis.]

In volume XXXVI of the *Complete Works*, where there have just been collected writings not published in the previous "complete" edition of Lenin's *Works*, dozens of examples of this obsession are to be found:

With us, everything has sunk into the noisome bureaucratic swamp of the "administrations." To fight every day against that, much intelligence, authority, and force are needed. The administrations? Filth! The decrees? Filth! [Letter to Tsiurupa, 21 Feb 1922, vol XXXVI, p 578.]

The State Bank is now just a bureaucratic game of paper-shuffling. That's the truth, if it's the truth you want to know, and not the sugar-and-honey patter of the communist bureaucrats [. . .]. To [the President of the State Bank, 28 Feb 1922, vol XXXVI, p 579.]

Not to fear to reveal errors and incompetence; to give broad popularity and make publicity, with all our strength, around any worker on the spot who distinguishes himself even a little, to set him up as an example

— the more such work is undertaken, and the more we plunge into living practice, turning our attention and that of our readers away from *this infected atmosphere of the Moscow bureaucrats and intellectuals*, then the more improvements we shall see. [Letter to Ossinski, 12 Feb 1922, vol XXXVI, p 590.]

I see things this way: a few dozen workers who would enter the Central Committee would be better able than anyone else to undertake to check, improve, and rearrange our apparatus. [. . .] The workers who will form part of the Central Committee must in my opinion not be recruited particularly from among those who have put in a long period of work in the soviets (among the workers that I am speaking of in this passage of my letter, I am also everywhere including the peasants), because in these workers there have already been created certain traditions and prejudices, which are precisely what it would be necessary to fight against.

Among these worker members of the Central Committee the principal place should be held by *workers located below this stratum which for five years now has been joining the ranks of soviet functionaries, by workers who belong rather to the ranks of simple workers and peasants*. [Letter to the Congress (third codicil to the "Testament"), 26 Dec 1922, vol XXXVI, pp 609-10.]

If these passages are reread (and we could quote still dozens of others!), is it impossible not to conclude: on the eve of his death, Lenin was obsessed by thoughts about the bureaucratic deformation and degeneration of the state and party apparatuses.

Question 13: Did the party leadership follow these counsels of Lenin, did it react to his warnings?

Answer: No. It concealed the text of his Testaments from the party (except the delegates to the XIIIth Congress), and

even publicly denied its existence. On a motion by Trotsky, it voted in 1923 a motion putting the fight against the bureaucracy on the agenda and asserting that workers' democracy could be broadened. But when Trotsky in 1923 published *The New Course*, in which he took up again — sometimes even textually — Lenin's appeal for a "renewal of the apparatus," the party leadership reacted violently, *identifying itself with the bureaucracy*. Instead of joining Trotsky in this struggle against the bureaucracy in the name of Lenin, it joined the bureaucracy "against Trotskyism," thus trampling underfoot Lenin's warnings, destroying the last vestiges of workers' democracy, and ending up in the Bonapartist dictatorship of the bureaucracy which an attempt is being made today to present under the euphemistic label of "the personality cult." This choice of the party leadership was *decisive*. For though the bureaucracy's power in 1923 Russia stemmed without any doubt from objective conditions (the revolution isolated in one backward country; the weight of the capitalist past and surroundings; the lack of culture and technical skills among the labouring masses; the limited number and insufficient specific weight of the proletariat in the population, etc) and was in this sense inevitable, the attitude of the subjective factor — the party leadership and cadres — in this respect was not inevitable. The party could have reacted against this state of affairs by broadening the democratic bases of power, by having a growing number of rank-and-file workers participate in the exercise of power, by deepening the freedom of discussion and criticism in the party and in the soviets, by carrying out an economic policy that speeded up industrialization and increased the weight of the workers in the country. This was the orientation that Lenin was calling for with all his remaining strength. This was the orientation that Trotsky and the Left Opposition were calling for thenafter. It was because it did not understand the danger of bureaucratic degeneration, or understood it too late, that the leadership of the Russian CP was transformed from an obstacle to this degeneration into its principal vehicle. Most of the party leaders, what is more, paid with their lives for this tragic error.

Question 14: Does *The History of the CP of the USSR* reestablish the historical truth on the subject of Lenin's Testament?

Answer: In the 1938 *Short Course*, Lenin's Testament is completely passed over in silence. In the new *History*, it is quoted on pages 387-8, but in a singularly mutilated and falsified way.

Thus the *History* passes over in silence all the praise uttered by Lenin concerning the Bolsheviks he mentions in his Testament (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Piatakov) and keeps only the criticisms. It suppresses Lenin's opinion that Trotsky is "the most gifted" member of the Central Committee. It suppresses Lenin's opinion that Bukharin and Piatakov were "the most markedly competent among the younger members." It suppresses Lenin's opinion that "Bukharin is a most outstanding theoretician and of great value [who] quite rightly enjoys the affection of the entire party."

To these omissions two falsifications are to be added. According to the *History*, Lenin warned the party against Trotsky's "non-Bolshevism"; in reality Lenin wrote that Trotsky's *non-Bolshevik past must not be brought up* any more than the errors committed by Zinoviev and Kamenev on the eve of the October Revolution. According to the *History*, Lenin warned the party against "Trotsky's very dangerous relapses into Menshevism." Of this, there is not one word in the entire Testament.

These omissions and falsifications are all the more grotesque in that the Testament has been published in the USSR and each reader can realize, by comparing the two texts, how much the editor-bureaucrats continue "to fool the people" like vulgar "bourgeois politicians," to revive Lenin's formula.

Question 15: Why was the Left Opposition formed?

Answer: The *History of the CP of the USSR* asserts that the Left Opposition dates from October 1923:

Profiting by the fact that the head of the party, Lenin, was gravely ill and not in a position to fight,

Trotsky renewed the struggle against the Leninist Central Committee and the party. He believed that the difficulties created in the country would be able to aid his project: to take the leadership of the party and adopt a line which, in the last analysis, would have led to the restoration of capitalism.

At the beginning of October 1923, Trotsky sent a letter to the Central Committee in which, in substance, he slandered the activity of this organism. [...] Shortly after Trotsky's letter, the Central Committee received the "Declaration of the 46," signed by the Trotskyists, the Detsists, and elements which, already before this time, had belonged to the groups of the "Left Communists" and the "Workers' Opposition." The declaration was also signed by some members of the CC. The "46" asserted in a slanderous way that the apparatus had taken the place of the party, and they were trying to make the communists rise up against the leading apparatus [vol I, p 392].

If an accusation of the place taken by the apparatus in the party and the state meant "Menshevism" and working "in the last analysis" for the restoration of capitalism, then the person most guilty of such a deviation was Lenin himself, who, in the third codicil of his Testament, also calls for "the renewal of the apparatus." We have seen with what violence Lenin attacked "bureaucratic rottenness." The oppositional platform of the "46" repeated Lenin's formulae less vigorously, but all called for concrete measures to permit a reestablishment of workers' democracy in the party and in the soviets. We find the justification of these demands in the above-mentioned attacks by Lenin.

The *History* goes on to set up a crude amalgam by asserting that the opposition

basically expressed the demands of the Mensheviks, the S-Rs, and the new bourgeoisie, who wanted to

appear openly on the scene in conformity [!] with the NEP [vol I, p 393].

As for the assertion that Trotsky wanted "in the last analysis" to reestablish capitalism, it is curious that his then contemporaries did not notice it, since they left him for years in leading functions of the state and party. What we have here are slanders without any foundation, miserable vestiges of the Stalinist slanders which had to be suppressed as a result of the condemnation of the "personality cult."

The tragicomic aspect of this whole fake thesis is that the majority of the members of that famous October 1923 Central Committee, which allegedly personified the Leninist virtues... was later liquidated by Stalin as counter-revolutionary. The authors of the *History* then find themselves faced by the impossible task of having to condemn both this majority and the opposition; they prefer not to mention the composition of this Central Committee, which would be too embarrassing for them.

Question 16: What was the economic policy proposed by the Left Opposition, beginning with 1923?

Answer: It is enough just to raise this question in order to realize to what extent the slander that the opposition "basically," "objectively," "in the last analysis," expressed the "pressure" of the "class enemy", the kulaks and Nepmen, is untenable and easy to unmask. The fact is that the Left Opposition, right from its formation, called for a policy of speeded-up industrialization, of stepped-up struggle against the kulaks, of a more pronounced class struggle both in the cities (by strengthening the economic and political position, of the workers) and in the rural regions (by relying on the poor peasants and aiding the development of producers' coöperatives).

E H Carr, who is nevertheless hostile on the whole toward Trotsky and approves the "established facts," describes the proposals of the opposition in the following way: an overall economic plan plus credits to heavy industry. (*A History of Soviet Russia*, vol IV, "The Interregnum," pp 91-92.) And it would suffice to take any Communist publication of the period

to realize this. Thus in the *Pravda* of 1, 3, and 4 January 1924 there appears the text of a long debate between Rykov, speaking for the majority of the Central Committee, and the spokesmen for the opposition (Ossinsky, Preobashensky, Piatakov, and I N Smirnov). The draft resolution of the opposition attributes the economic crisis from which the USSR was suffering at that moment "to the lack of a plan unifying the labour of all the sectors of the state economy." And this draft resolution insists on the fact that it is the development of industry that is the key to economic upsurge, and rejects the idea of the supremacy of the market in favour of the idea of an economic plan. It must be added simply that Mikoyan, spokesman for the Stalinist fraction, attacked the "Trotskyist" idea of a single development plan for industry as "the height of utopia." (Carr, *ibidem*, p. 128.)

Quotations could be continued. But what is the use? It would be enough to reproduce any Russian communist periodical whatever of the years 1923 to 1927, to perceive that the opposition did indeed make a systematic campaign in favour of a plan for speeded-up industrialization, in favour of a stepped-up fight against the kulaks. It is true that for this reason the bureaucracy in power keeps all these texts well hidden. But for the same reason Stalin carefully prevented the public from having access to the 1917-18 documents which permit showing the real roles of Trotsky, the Old Bolsheviks, and—of himself, before, during, and after the October Revolution. Now these texts are being published today. It will not require very much time before the Soviet youth learns the truth about the struggles around positions, in the documents of the period, and despite the lies of the *History of the CP of the USSR*.

Question 17: Is it true that the opposition "launched adventurist slogans" in favour of the increase in agricultural taxes and in the prices of consumers' goods in its proposals for the industrialization of the country?

Answer: Here we see how the accumulation of forgeries ends up in dazzling contradictions! On page 393 of volume

I, the *History* asserts that the oppositions' proposals only supported the Nepmen; but on page 390 Trotsky is accused of having extolled "the development of industry by the exploitation of the peasants." "To exploit" the kulak is a strange way of supporting him. The same accusation becomes still clearer on page 16 of volume II:

The Trotskyist proposals to increase the agricultural taxes hitting the peasants, and to increase the sales price of industrial products were particularly dangerous. [. . .] The policy of capitulation [!] of the Trotskyists and Zinovievists would have led in practice to the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet country.

How a policy that increases the taxes that the peasants must pay is simultaneously a policy of "capitulation" to these peasants or to the bourgeois elements among these peasants (whom Trotsky proposed to tax specially; we shall return to this) is a mystery that only bureaucratic logic can explain.

What really happened? As early as 1923, Trotsky had already revealed the phenomenon of the "scissors": the prices of farm products were falling, under the pressure of a more rapid revival of production in agriculture than in industry; the prices of industrial products were rising, under the pressure of a demand for these products that was greater than their supply. It is therefore not true that Trotsky was in favour of an increase in the prices of industrial products; on the contrary, he hoped that, thanks to a more rapid development of industry, industrial prices might rise less rapidly than farm prices, or even come down. This was the surest means of maintaining the alliance between the workers and the peasants.

But the peasantry was not a united class. As early as 1923, Trotsky and the Left Opposition drew the party's attention to the fact that a growing proportion of the wheat sold to the cities was being sold only by the kulaks, who were beginning to concentrate the whole farm surplus in their own hands. And, profiting by the freedom of trade, the Nepmen, the private traders and traffickers of the cities, were also con-

centrating a good part of accumulation funds in their own hands. Preobashensky estimated this private accumulation during the years 1923 to 1925 at some 500 million gold rubles. The opposition proposed that a good part of these two surpluses, *which was in the hands of exploiting strata of society*, be mopped up by an appropriate tax and price policy. The funds thus obtained were to be used to speed up industrialization and especially to improve the situation of the poor peasants.

This policy was not adopted. For five years the party leadership denied the dangers pointed out by Trotsky and the opposition. Bukharin and Stalin asserted that there was no contradiction between private accumulation and the interests of the economic development of the state. They asserted that the opposition "exaggerated" the danger of the kulaks. And in fact they accused the Opposition's proposals of running the risk of precipitating a break of "the alliance between the workers and the peasants."

But events were to give dramatic proof that Trotsky and the opposition were right. As the *History* itself observes on page 33 of volume II, during the winter of 1927-28 "the kulaks, who possessed great reserves of grain, refused to sell [this wheat] to the state at the prices set by the Soviet authorities" — just as the Opposition had been predicting for years.²

2 Bukharin, speaking at the VIth session of the enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International in the name of the C C against the Opposition (according to the minutes, he was "greeted by lively applause. The delegates sang the Internationale"), stated especially:

What was the strongest argument of our opposition against the Central Committee? (I am thinking of 1925.) It was saying then: The contradictions are increasing immeasurably, and the Central Committee is not in a position to understand it. It was saying then: The kulaks, who have cornered almost all the surplus of grains, are organizing against us a "grain strike." [. . .] Now the results say the contrary. [*International Correspondence*, 14 Jan. 1927, 7th year, n° 6, p. 92.]

One year later, "the results" completely confirmed this prognosis of the opposition, and the *History* in volume II describes the same phenomenon in the same terms: strike in grain deliveries by the kulaks.

On page 54 this argument is repeated even more forcefully. The reaction of the Stalinist fraction was no less violent: it (p 33) "confiscated the grain" of the kulaks! In other terms, after having accused Trotsky of having wanted "to destroy the alliance between the workers and the peasants" by taxing the kulaks more, the Stalinist fraction was forced simply to expropriate them — which caused a terrible civil war and a fall in agricultural production that was a catastrophe whose effects still continues to be felt even today.

If the opinion of the opposition had been followed, increasing parts of the kulaks' "surplus" would have been seized as early as 1923. Industrialization would have been speeded up beginning with the same year. The effort concentrated on the years from 1928 to 1934 could have been spread over the period from 1924 to 1934; the sacrifices imposed as a result on the Soviet people would have been infinitely less onerous, the losses and waste much more limited, and the results much more impressive than those obtained by the tardy but feverish industrialization decided on by Stalin.

All this the Soviet youth will observe for itself by studying and comparing the documents of the period. All the falsifications of the *History of the CP of the USSR* will not much longer hide this dazzling truth.

Question 18: The *History* asserts that at the heart of the disagreements about principles between the party and the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc was

the question of the possibility of the victory of socialism in the USSR [. . .] The Trotskyist-Zinovievist anti-party bloc obstinately denied the possibility of the victory of socialism in a single country, the USSR [. . . they were] open capitulators, hostile to the conquests of the October socialist revolution [vol II, pp 15-16].
Is this true?

Answer: It is true that the question of *victoriously completing* the building of socialism in a single country was one of the main theoretical questions debated between the Left Opposition

and the Stalinist fraction in the Central Committee during 1923-27. But, contrary to what is insinuated by the authors of the *History*, this question *did not turn* on the problem of industrializing the USSR, of drawing up Five-Year Plans, of developing the productive forces. It could not turn on these problems, because it was the opposition and not the majority fraction which was the first to draw up projects in this sense, against the resistance and sarcasms uttered by the Stalinist fraction.

The real problem, therefore, was not that of the *launching* of industrialization, of the *beginning* of the building of socialism, but that of completing this construction in a single country. Basically, therefore, it was, at least apparently, a quarrel about definitions.

If socialist society is defined as a society in which the means of production are essentially collective property, then naturally it is possible to complete this process in a big country (although in the USSR, it is not yet so today: the kolkhozes still possess numerous means of production: they have even just obtained the ownership of farm machines; and the private peasants still possess a good part of the livestock and millions of acres of land).

But this definition, "invented" by Stalin, nowise corresponds to the Marxist-Leninist tradition. It can be justified only by the help of some rare quotations from Lenin, torn out of their contexts, *where Lenin uses the term "socialism" as a synonym of "socialist revolution"* (especially the famous 1915 article on the "United States of Europe," invoked thousands of times in this connection by Stalinist authors). There exist on the country very numerous passages where Marx and Lenin define socialist society as a society *where all classes have disappeared*, where the state, for the same reason, has also disappeared, where the level of development of the productive forces and of labour productivity is far superior to that of the most advanced capitalist countries etc. in this classic meaning of the term, the USSR is far from having "completed the construction of socialism" today, not to mention the years 1936, when this "completion" was officially "proclaimed" (thereby

discrediting socialism, which was identified, in the eyes of the working masses of many countries, with living standards lower than those in the most advanced capitalist countries).

Let us quote just a few passages from Lenin in support of this classic definition of the formula "to complete the building of socialism":

For the victory of socialism, it is not enough to overthrow capitalism; the differences between proletariat and peasantry must also be done away with. [Speech to the IIIrd Pan-Russian Congress of the Trade Unions, *Complete Works*, vol XXV, p 175 of 1936 German edition.]

Did anyone among the Bolsheviki ever deny that the revolution can be definitively victorious only when it has included all countries, or at the very least some of the most advanced countries? [*Complete Works*, vol XVI, p 195 of the Russian edition.]

The social revolution in a single country can lead to a definitive victory only on two conditions: on the condition that it be backed up in time by the social revolution in one or several advanced countries. The second condition is an argument of the proletariat, which establishes its dictatorship and takes the state power into its own hands, with the majority of the peasant population [. . .]. [*Complete Works*, vol XVIII, pp 137-38 of the Russian edition.]

Stalin himself was still writing in 1924 in his book *Lenin and Leninism*:

To overthrow the bourgeoisie, the efforts of a single country are enough. But for the definitive victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, and especially of an agrarian country like Russia, are not enough. For that the efforts of the workers of a certain number of very developed countries are needed [pp 40-41].

Even in the first edition of his *Questions of Leninism*, we find the same formula again! Let us add that if today the

problem of the completion of socialism takes on a certain realistic aspect (in a still rather distant future, it is true), this is 1) because the isolation of the Russian Revolution has been broken by the great Chinese Revolution and the creation of numerous deformed (or degenerated) workers' states in Europe and Asia; 2) because the USSR, unlike what it was in 1923-28, has become one of the most advanced industrial powers, ranking second in the world.

The question may be raised as to why the debate on this obscure point of Marxist theory, a debate which is after all a purely academic one, turning on a question of definition, has occupied such a place in the history of the Bolshevik party. Some people have asserted that, by opposing the theory of "socialism in a single country," Trotsky "was setting the international spread of the revolution up in opposition to the industrialization of the USSR." We have already shown that this interpretation of the fraction struggle in the Russian party is false, because the opposition simultaneously *called for* speeded-up industrialization and *fought against* the "theory of the possibility of completing the building of socialism in a single country."

These terms, therefore, have to be reversed. If for a part of the leaders of the Russian CP the problem of this "possibility" took on so much importance, that was because it already objectively reflected the nationalist, petty-bourgeois, deformation of their thought, which wanted to *subordinate the development of the international revolution to the (alleged) interests of the building of socialism in the USSR*. This led the Stalinist fraction, first into catastrophic political errors, especially in the 1925-27 Chinese revolution, and in 1930-33 Germany that ended up in Hitler's coming to power, and later into an openly counter-revolutionary policy in France, Spain, etc. from 1934 to 1938, and in France, Italy, etc. from 1944 to 1948. And that ideology only expressed the special social interest of a given social formation, the Soviet bureaucracy.

For it is clear that objectively, far from "aiding" the economic upsurge of the USSR or of ensuring it a period of

"respite" before an imperialist aggression, this counter-revolutionary policy of the Stalinist fraction brought immense harm to the USSR. It permitted Hitler to reunite the concentrated forces of all Europe against the Soviet Union, just as the *History* recognizes on page 109 of volume II. A policy that ends up in such a disastrous result is *contrary* to the interests of the USSR. It is in conformity only with the interests of the bureaucratic caste.

Question 19: In the matter of foreign policy, the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists denied [!] the need to defend the USSR against imperialist intervention," the *History* writes (vol II, p. 16). Is this true?

Answer: Once again this is a case of just plain slander. Trotsky fought till his life's last breath for the Marxist principle of the defence of the USSR, a workers' state even though degenerated, against imperialism. All his writings bear witness to this. The last political battle that he waged — see his book, in *Defence of Marxism* — was concerned with precisely this question. The Trotskyist Fourth International has right down to this day remained faithful to this same Marxist principle. History will testify in any case that the Trotskyists knew how to remain faithful to principles and rigorously to set aside all "political subjectivism"; for they remained attached to the defence of the USSR in spite (and at the very moment) of the worst excesses the Soviet bureaucracy committed against them (assassinations of old Oppositionists in the USSR; assassinations and kidnappings in Spain and elsewhere; the assassination of Trotsky; assassinations committed during and just after the Second World War).

Question 20: Was the Left Opposition in favour of setting up a second soviet party?

Answer: Up until 1934, the Left Opposition defended the viewpoint that it was useless to create a new party, that it was necessary to struggle to straighten out the Russian CP, the Communist International, and all the Communist Parties, de-

formed by the Stalinist leadership. The opposition struggled first as a tendency; and then as a fraction, because it was obliged to by bureaucratic repression. In a healthy democratic party whose policy is correct, tendency formations are of a short-lived nature; so it was in the Bolshevik Party in Lenin's period. When fractions appeared, it was the indication that something was objectively wrong. Lenin thus interpreted things even in the period of the Shliapnikov fraction ("Workers' Opposition"), which he nevertheless fought against. Stalin did not want to admit it. He replaced the Marxist-Leninist conception of the revolutionary party as an *association of equals* by the bureaucratic and conservative conception according to which any tendency in disagreement with the majority of the Central Committee was automatically and necessarily an "objective agency of the class enemy." The practical application of this conception was in fact to prevent any democratic discussion in the party.

Now both theory and experience teach that it is absurd to suppose that the majorities in leading organisms succeed automatically and on every occasion in adopting a correct position. The problems faced by a revolutionary party — and a fortiori by a revolutionary party holding power in a workers' state — are often *new problems* whose solution is hardly to be ensured by reference to the classics or to situations in the past. Only a frank and democratic discussion, a confrontation of new and successive experiences, permit finally finding this solution. On more than one occasion, Marx and Lenin — to take only these two examples — found themselves put in a minority in the leading organisms of the parties to which they belonged. To choke off discussion and tendency struggle is to render definitively more difficult the process by which the revolutionary party adapts itself to constantly changing reality, in order to react in the way most in conformity with the interests of the proletariat.

Nor is it possible to defend the thesis according to which this discussion ought to be permitted only within central committees and leading organisms. As a matter of fact, any practice of this nature tips the scales in favour of the majority

of the Central Committee and the party apparatus. Now if it be admitted that this majority can be mistaken, to prevent a democratic discussion in the ranks is to make it more difficult to correct any errors that have been committed — which can bring about disastrous consequences for the party, the working class, and the workers' state, as the example of the Stalinist agricultural policy shows us.

A democratic discussion therefore presupposes that the various tendencies in the Central Committee be able, before congresses, freely to make their positions known to the ranks, in platforms and in written and oral debates around these platforms. In other terms, it presupposes the freedom to organize tendencies. But if fractions are forbidden, any tendency struggle can be choked off by accusing a minority tendency of transforming itself into a fraction. And if the right to form various soviet parties is suppressed fraction or tendency struggles can be stifled by asserting that the minority is "objectively" transforming itself into a second party. In practice, furthermore, when political divergencies on which history has not yet said its last word become too acute and show themselves for too long a time, it is preferable, from the viewpoint of the party's interests themselves, to allow a minority to organize itself separately than to paralyze the party's life to a great extent by an endless struggle. It is from the clash between the platforms of different soviet parties that the correct position will finally emerge.

The Stalinists — and the Khrushchevists — justify their opposition to the right to form various soviet parties, the right to form fractions and the right to tendencies, by equally specious objective and subjective arguments.

The objective argument is that, when there are no class oppositions, the existence of various parties is not justified. This argument presupposes first of all that there are no conflicts of class interests in the USSR, and next that each class historically expresses its interests in a single party. Both assertions are false. There are in the USSR two social classes — the working class and the peasantry — whose historical and immediate interests are often different. And next, history

teaches us that various social classes have internally sufficiently different interests of strata, groups, and sections to justify the existence of several parties for long periods of time.

As for the subjective argument, it insists on the difficult situation of the Soviet state, surrounded by enemies, a besieged fortress, with a working class that is in a considerable minority. This argument had a certain value, but only for an acute period of civil war, during which a certain limitation of soviet democracy may be inevitable. But is it not striking that at the height of the Civil War, there were not only constantly tendency struggles in the Bolshevik party, but even various soviet parties (particularly the Left Social-Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, the Anarchists, and the Bund) legalized for considerable periods, whereas in the USSR of today, which is neither disarmed, nor surrounded, nor supported only by a proletariat in the minority, but which is the second-ranking military and industrial power in the world, the masses have neither freedom to form soviet parties, nor fraction rights, nor tendency rights?

The *History of the CP of the USSR* asserts (vol II, p 20) that the Left Opposition "openly violated the Soviet laws" by organizing public demonstrations at the time of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. In fact, nothing in the Soviet Constitution of that period forbade the organization of either soviet parties or public meetings or street demonstrations. These traditional democratic rights of the workers have never been formally revoked. The cynical assertion of the *History* reveals the gulf that separates Soviet legality from the practice of the bureaucracy.

Question 21: Why was the Left Opposition expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union?

Answer: The Left Opposition was expelled because its members refused to repudiate their convictions. This emerges clearly from the resolution of the XVth Congress of the CP of the Soviet Union which asserted particularly:

The Congress calls for the ideological and organic disarming of the Opposition, asks their withdrawal of

the views expressed above as anti-Leninist and Menshevik, and the acceptance of the obligation to defend everywhere the conceptions and decisions of the party, of congresses, of party conferences, and of the party CC.

Rykov, in his speech winding up the XVth Congress, speaking in the name of the CC majority, had furthermore specified:

In regard to each of the active participants in the opposition, *to the degree that he will renounce his ideological errors*, the party, in accepting him back, must work out measures and conditions that will exclude the possibility of a renewal of what has been going on during these last two years. [*International Correspondence*, 1927, n° 12, p. 1991.]

The *History*, furthermore, repeats substantially the same idea (vol II, p 31). In the name of the opposition, Kamenev had replied in advance to this impermissible demand (Trotsky and Zinoviev, the two main spokesmen of the opposition, had been expelled from the party on the eve of the XVth Congress and had not been able to speak there). He had declared:

[We decide] to submit to all the decisions of the party congress, however harsh they may be for us [Interruption: "That's formal!"], and carry them out.

By so acting, we are acting in a Bolshevik way; but if — to this complete and unconditional submission to all the decisions of the party congress, to the complete renunciation and liquidation of any fractional struggle in all its forms and the dissolution of fractional organizations — to all that we further add a renunciation of our points of view, that, in our opinion, would not be Bolshevik. If there occurred on our part a renunciation of the opinions that we were still advocating a week or two ago, that would be hypocrisy, and you would not accord it any credence. [*International Correspondence*, 1927, n° 128 p. 1965.]

Here two different organizational conceptions confront each other: that of *democratic centralism* which makes obli-

gatory the carrying out, the application, and the public defence of the decisions taken by the majority, but which leaves minorities the right to keep their own opinions and defend them inside the party, and to bring the majority decisions into question again after a certain test by events, in periods of discussion decided on by the leading organisms (especially the periods preceding national congresses and conferences); and the conception of *bureaucratic centralism* which obliges minorities "to disarm ideologically," to abandon the defence of their ideas inside the party as well, to give up any attempt at revision of the majority decisions, and which as a result prevents any correction of errors committed by the majority. It is needless to say that the whole Leninist practice is contrary to bureaucratic centralism, and that Lenin never required Bolsheviks who were not in agreement with him on this or that question to give up their ideas in order to remain in the party.

This affair, as is known, had a tragic continuation. Contrary to his own declaration, which we have just reproduced, Kamenev and his tendency friends, at the end of the XVth Congress, made a declaration renouncing their ideas. And as might have been expected — as the opposition had foreseen and Kamenev himself had announced — the party leaders soon began to accuse the capitulating oppositionals of "duplicity," "hypocrisy," etc (*History*, vol II, p 32, et al). *But why then had they required such public self-abasement* except to break these men morally and start them on the road that would lead to their lying "confessions" at the Moscow Trials?

III. MARXIST EXPLANATION OF THE "PERSONALITY CULT," I. E. OF THE PERIOD OF STALINIST DICTATORSHIP

Question 22: How was Soviet agriculture collectivized and what were the results of this particular form of collectivization?

Answer: Soviet agriculture was collectivized *by force* and against the resistance of the great majority of both the rich and middle peasants. Its results were disastrous: a systematic slaughter of livestock and a disastrous drop in agricultural

production. It was followed by a crisis in the provisioning of the Soviet cities (and toilers) which, as even Khrushchev confesses, has not yet been solved 25 years later.

According to the statistical collection, *The National Economy of the USSR*, published by the Soviet government (Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1957), horned cattle in 1928 (within the present borders of the USSR) amounted to 66.8 million units. In 1930 it had fallen to 50.6 million, in 1931 to 42.5 million, in 1932 to 38.2 million, and in 1934 to 33.5 million: *half the cattle had disappeared in the space of five years!* The evolution in grain production was no less catastrophic. It took till 1937 to catch up with the 1927 production level, and the 1937 per capita level has not yet been equalled even in 1960.

In view of these unquestionable facts, certain assertions of the *History* take on a really odious character. Thus it is asserted (vol II, p 40) that the formation of kolkhozes lagged behind (!) "the sweep of the movement of the peasant masses" toward collectivizations, and the masses of poor and middle peasants are explicitly mentioned. Now these poor and middle peasants formed 85% of the Soviet peasantry. If this mass had really rushed with enthusiasm toward the kolkhozes, how is the tragic fact to be explained that, on the way, they killed off half the Soviet livestock so as not to have to turn it over to producers' coöperatives?

On pages 44-45 and 51 of volume II, the authors of the *History* claim that the integral collectivization of Soviet agriculture was "prepared" by the party and the state by a series of economic measures that permitted the creation of an adequate technical and agrotechnical basis for the great kolkhozian enterprises. In reality, we have seen how the leaders of the ruling fraction of the CP *had refused* to listen to the warnings of the Left Opposition, had refused to prepare the *gradual collectivization of agriculture*, and had, beginning with 1928, taken action precisely under the effect of panic, without adequate preparation. Worse still: the traction-power destroyed by the mass slaughter of horses was greater than the traction-power of tractors up until the middle of the '50s! And

despite a broad extension of the tilled areas, production scarcely increased (except for pants destined for industry) — which proves that productivity had not risen but fallen.

Farther on, indeed, the authors of the *History* admit that “errors and excesses” were committed in collectivization, and that “many peasants, yielding to the provocations of the kulaks, had slaughtered cows, hogs, sheep, and poultry [vol II, p 59].” But, let us repeat, if it was *more than the half* of Soviet livestock that was slaughtered, it was not a matter merely of “many peasants,” but of a large part (half, almost half, or over half) of the peasantry which was hostile to collectivization *and which was obliged by force to enter the kolkhozes*. And if this is the way it was, how can any credence still be given to the assertion of the authors of the *History* (vol II, p 51), according to which “the passing over to integral collectivization marks a radical turn of the basic peasant masses toward socialism”?

Question 23: Why were the errors in Stalinist agricultural policy not corrected for 25 years?

Answer: Darwing up the balance-sheet of the First Five-Year Plan, the *History* emphasizes not only the unquestionable and impressive springs forward of industrial production, but also “the radical improvement in the material situation of the toilers” in the country (vol II, p 84). It asserts farther on (p 1006) that, beginning with 1934, the problem of provisioning the cities with wheat was entirely solved.

Now 21 years later, in 1955, Khrushchev abruptly confessed that this problem of provisioning was still not solved, and two years later he took Malenkov to task for having asserted the contrary in 1952. That is to say how slight the *History*.

In reality, the Stalinist agricultural policy brought on a crisis in food supplies to the Soviet people which lasted from 1928 till 1955-56, i e, for 27 years, which imposed terrible sacrifices on the people, sacrifices that could have been avoided. It is obviously impossible to explain a *social* phenomenon of

such scope by a simple psychological fact ("the personality cult"). As Marxists we take as our starting-point the conception that *social phenomena* (i.e. involving millions of individuals) must find a *social explanation*, i.e. can be explained only by special aspects of the relations mutually connecting social classes or strata.

The fact that it was impossible for the CP of the USSR to change this erroneous policy for more than a quarter of a century, despite its disastrous consequences for the country, the working class, and the alliance between the workers and the peasants, peremptorily demonstrates that something was rotten in that party, that there was no longer either democratic centralism or freedom of discussion, either at the top or in the ranks. The thesis according to which this party had undergone a process of *bureaucratic degeneration*, a thesis defended by the Left Opposition from 1927 on, is thus confirmed.

But this bureaucratic degeneration of a workers' party ruling a workers' state cannot remain a purely political phenomenon. It must have precise social roots. These must be exposed. That is what we shall do farther on.

Question 24: How was Hitler able to take power?

Answer: Hitler's arrival at power is the determinant fact of world history of the '30s. It had terrible effects, first on the German working class, then on the European working class, and finally on the Soviet people and state themselves, whom it cost 20 million dead and incalculable devastations.

Now, following the authors of the 1938 *Short Course*, the authors of the *History* (vol II, p 89) are satisfied to observe that, despite the "revolutionary awakening" of the German working class, which "was demonstrated with particular force," the bourgeoisie "decided to give the power to the Hitlerites." Full stop; that's all. But in a country torn by class struggle, the "decision" of one of the sides facing each other is not generally sufficient to seize victory. It is necessary also for the correlation of forces to be favourable to it, or for the policy

followed by the other side to allow it to get its own way. Now in Germany the power of the working class was such that it was possible to impose a fascist dictatorship on the country, to destroy all the workers' organizations, only as a result of division and passivity in the working class.

Unquestionably the Social-Democratic leaders bear a heavy responsibility for this state of affairs. That was emphasized in the 1938 *Short Course* (p 285); it was omitted in the 1959 *History*. But what about the Communist Part? The 1938 *Short Course* mentioned that it had received six million votes. The *History* modestly omits this significant fact, no doubt lest the question be raised: Why was this impressive force unable to bar the road to fascism?

The facts provide us with the sad answer to this question. The Communist leaders of the period, including Stalin, had completely under-estimated the seriousness of the fascist danger. They had believed that the "Hitlerite adventure" would be only a brief interlude before the conquest of power by the German CP. They had not understood at all the disastrous effects of a fascist victory, both on the German working class and on the situation in Europe. Despite the rise of the fascist danger, they had in practice sabotaged the policy of united action by the working class, by asserting that the Social-Democracy was the "main danger," by taking up Stalin's idiotic thesis that "Social-Democracy and fascism are twins," the theory of social-fascism.³ Trotsky and the international Trotskyist movement cautioned the Russian, German, and international Communists against this false policy. They called for setting up a Communist-Socialist united front, from top to bottom, to drive back the fascist offensive, and then, with their forces thus cemented, to set out on the assault of capitalism. And even when Hitler was named chancellor and the workers' organizations still had some months' respite, no attempt was undertaken to organize an anti-fascist uprising.⁴

³ See a recent — and tardy — criticism of this policy by Palmiro Togliatti, examined in our Winter 1959-60 issue.

⁴ See Leon Trotsky's *Œuvres Choisies*, volume III, largely devoted to these problems.

Question 25: What happened in the USSR between the assassination of Kirov and the resignation of Zhejov as head of the GPU?

Answer: According to the History, between 1 December 1934 and 1 December 1936, in the CP of the USSR, only one event occurred that deserves mention: the verification of the party membership cards (vol II, pp 103-4). As the assassin of Kirov, first secretary of the CP at Leningrad, had a party membership card, it was decided to verify these cards in order to expel unworthy elements. The mistake was made, however, of expelling also passive elements. It is incredible but true: that is all that the History [sic] of the CP of the USSR has to say of the somewhat tumultuous events of these years.

The 1938 *Short Course* was already a little more explicit. It asserts (p 308) that the assassination of Kirov had been perpetrated "by that band of Trotskyists and Zinovievists joined together." It goes on to state that this "band" had sold itself "to the fascist espionage services." It then describes with complacency (p 308) the three Moscow Trials where "these scoundrels" (the members of the famous Leninist Central Committee!) had confessed to preparing the assassination "of all [!] the other leaders of the party and the government." Finally it is explained why these "cast-offs of the human race" (p 327) were executed, after having perpetrated "heinous crimes for twenty years."

Of all that, no trace remains in the 1959 *History*. The only thing it keeps is the verification of the party membership cards.

But to learn the full and complete truth about the events that were then occurring in the USSR, we possess today a witness of some weight: IN Khrushchev, First Secretary of the CP of the USSR, declared the following in his famous "secret" report to the XXth Congress:

It has been established that, out of the 139 members or alternates elected to the party CC at the XVIIth Congress, 98 persons, i.e. 70%, were arrested and shot (most of them in 1937-38), [. . .] It was this same fate that was suffered by not only the CC members but also

the majority of the delegates to the XVIIth Congress of the party. Out of the 1956 delegates with voice or vote, 1,108 were arrested under the indictment of counter-revolutionary crimes, i. e. more than half. That fact itself shows how fantastic and contrary to common sense were the accusations of counter-revolutionary crimes, made against, we now see, the majority of the participants in the XVIIth Congress (1934). [. . .] That was the result of abuses of power by Stalin, *who was beginning to resort to mass terror against the party cadres.*

In another "secret" speech, Khrushchev estimated at "several million" the number of Communists and honest workers who were liquidated during the period from 1935 to 1938. But this whole succession of tragedies and crimes on a colossal scale, which ended up in the *physical liquidation of the major part of the Communist cadres in the USSR* — all that, for the authors of the *History of the CP of the USSR*, is reduced to — the verification of membership cards!

It is true that farther on — without any connection with the Kirov affairs, the persecutions of the oppositionals, or the Moscow Trials — the *History* mentions "the mass repression against the politically defeated ideological enemies," which also made victims "of numerous [!] communists and honest citizens," and "persecutions and deaths" of which Zhejov and Beria were the authors. But this is a matter only of two or three sentences in a passage on "the personality cult" itself — it is hard to believe it, but that's the way it is! — fitted into a long development concerning — "the strengthening of Soviet democracy" and "greater democracy in the party"! (Vol II, pp 124-27).

Question 26: Does the "personality cult of Stalin" furnish a sufficient explanation for all these baffling phenomena?

Answer: One after another, we have examined three "errors" of Stalin that brought on the most baleful consequences for the Soviet state and working class, as also for the world proletariat: forced collectivization, with the destitution and

rian question. But whereas the Mensheviks believed that the liberal bourgeoisie could carry out a radical agrarian reform, and Lenin believed that this reform could be the labour of a coalition government between a workers' party and a peasant party, *Trotsky stated that only the proletariat is capable of giving the land to the peasants in a radical way.* He specified, in effect, that history had shown that the peasantry was unable to form great national "really peasant" parties, and that it always followed the lead of either a bourgeois or workers' party.

The History of the October Revolution proved Trotsky right, since *it was only at the moment when the Bolshevik government was formed, that the decree on the distribution of land to the peasants was voted.*

In order to make the victory of October possible, Lenin *changed* the orientation of the party at the April 1917 Conference, modified the party programme which called for setting up only a democratic republic, and had written in it the goal of setting up immediately the dictatorship of the proletariat, a soviet state.

All that is very clear today. But *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* tries to wriggle out of it in various ways. It tries to *deny* that there was a change in the Bolshevik Party's strategy in April 1917. To do so, it indicates that the aim of the April Theses drafted by Lenin and the decision of the Bolshevik Party's April Conference was "the struggle for the passage from the bourgeois-democratic revolution over to the socialist revolution [vol I, p 225]." We shall return later to what is erroneous in this formula. But we may already observe that it is *in opposition* to the "strategic goal" of the Bolsheviks in 1905, as the *History* itself defines it, since it correctly states (vol I, p 92) that the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" foreseen by Lenin in 1905 was not a socialist dictatorship but only a "democratic" dictatorship. Do the authors of the *History* want to contest the fact that the October Revolution set up a proletarian, socialist, dictatorship in Russia?

a parasitical excrescence that has appeared on the Soviet proletariat, the workers' state, at a particular period of its history, owing to quite special historical phenomena; the isolation of the first workers' state, its maintenance in spite of the temporary ebb of the world revolution, but its maintenance in a country that was poor and bled white, suffering from an enormous economic and cultural backwardness. And so, to wipe out bureaucratic degeneration in the USSR, it is not necessary to have a *social revolution*, it is not necessary to overthrow the mode of production or the social order; a *political revolution* is sufficient, a change in the form of government, reestablishing political freedoms for the Soviet proletarians, internal democracy in the party, the soviets, and the state.

Question 28: Do the events that have occurred in the USSR since Stalin's death not demonstrate that the bureaucracy is not a social stratum having its own interests and privileges to defend?

Answer: Giuseppe Boga, special correspondent of *l'Unita* in Moscow from 1953 to 1967, and intelligent spokesman for the Khrushchev theses, writes in *The Big Turn — from Stalin to Khrushchev*:

The accusation of Trotskyist and Social-Democratic — and later Yugoslav — origin, which considers that the "Stalinist bureaucracy" has become a "new class" falls of its own weight. It could never alter the production relationship in its own favour. No essential principle of communism was ever threatened. It is the nature of bureaucratic elements to tend to become differentiated and stratified, and to become separated from the people. But this tendency cannot be in accordance with the structure of Soviet society; it enters into open conflict with it. This is confirmed by the history of these last years. The anti-bureaucratic action being carried out today by the Soviet Union through speeches and publications has the very accent of a "class struggle." This method has

been criticized with some reason, for it overmagnified the target. It well demonstrates, however, the intolerance of this people toward anything which, from near or far, seems to attack its principles. Lenin had remarked that the struggle against bureaucratic phenomena stretched out over dozens of years; socialist society contains the conditions for their final defeat. [Page 113 of the French edition, published by François Maspéro.]

We have deliberately quoted this long text by an *official* ideologist of the Communist Parties in order to strip bare the deformations, contradictions, and boomerangs that it contains.

We have just reminded our readers that Leon Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement have never considered the Soviet bureaucracy to be a new class; to be fair, it must also be added that neither have the Yugoslav Communists ever adopted such a position, except during the brief period during which Milovan Djilas exerted a predominant ideological influence over them. As for the Social-Democrats, eternal adversaries of the October Revolution and the Soviet Union, it is "the Soviet Union" (i.e. the state itself) that is carrying out communist tendencies like the Trotskyists or the Titists.

In the passage of Boffa that we have just quoted, it is admitted that "the anti-bureaucratic action" being carried on today in the USSR takes on the very accent of a "class struggle," or, more exactly, of a *social struggle*. The assertion that it is "the Soviet Union" (i.e. the state itself) that is carrying out this action is contradicted in the following sentence, since it is there asserted that "this method has been criticized with some reason." In reality, it is the state which criticized and definite social strata (youth, progressive intellectuals, workers) who vigorously carried on this "anti-bureaucratic action." But if these strata have in fact been carrying on the anti-bureaucratic action *as a social struggle*, how could one continue to dispute the fact that it is indeed a matter of a social phenomenon, i.e. of the appearance of a stratum of privileged people?

Taking up Lenin's position on the problem of bureaucracy, Boffa rightly stresses that the founder of the Soviet state emphasized the fact that the problem is complex and of long duration. But he carefully refrains from picking up the quotations reproduced here, which confirm that Lenin nowise excluded the possibility of a bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR. Need we recall that even Stalin, as late as 1925, nowise excluded this possibility?

The fact that the Soviet bureaucracy has never been able "to alter the production relationships in its own favour" seems true but in fact is based on a misunderstanding. The bureaucracy had no interest in "altering" the existing production relationships, for the good reason that these scarcely prevented the flowering and extension of its privileges. Those privileges are, roughly, limited to the sphere of distribution. To ensure itself these privileges, the bureaucracy has to have supreme control over the whole social product. It is in this arbitrary and parasitical control of the Soviet social surplus product by a well-delimited stratum of people, that, in the last analysis, the root of bureaucratic degeneration lies. This root has not been extirpated since Stalin's death or since the XXth Congress.

Even if it has been somewhat lessened, social inequality in the USSR continues to be extraordinary for a country which claims to be socialist. Directors of trusts, and other highly placed bureaucrats, earn easily 10 to 20 times as much as a medium-skilled worker (not to speak of the worstpaid strata — women street-sweepers, business clerks, etc. — whose salary is exceeded by sometimes 30 times). The management of the enterprises and the economy is strictly reserved for the members of the privileged stratum. There is neither genuine workers' co-management nor the semblance of democratic workers' control. The labouring masses have no way of bringing their collective weight to bear on central decisions about planning and economic policy. The most they can do is to protest against the effects of this policy on their immediate living standards, and thus bring a certain pressure on the government.

The arrival of the Khrushchev era has nowise modified the basic features of this regime. The only democratization that has taken place has been *at the top of the bureaucracy*, for which the Central Committee has become a genuine small parliament. True, many reforms of the Khrushchev period have improved the masses' living and working conditions; but these were conceded to the masses under growing pressure from 1953 to 1956 — a pressure which found its logical conclusion in the Polish and Hungarian revolutions, which Khrushchev tried at any cost to avoid in the USSR. These reforms no more certify the disappearance of the bureaucratic regime in the USSR than the reforms wrenched from capitalism in the West since the rise of the labour movement certify the disappearance of capitalism.

And when Boffa asserts that no essential principle of communism was ever threatened, he contradicts what he himself said a few pages earlier where he recalls that, contrary to Lenin's teachings, the high salaries for "specialists" were extended to party and state functionaries, thus violating the "rule of the Paris Commune." Now Lenin explicitly stated — following Marx, what is more — that these high salaries constituted the main source of a possible "demoralization" of the soviet power, its bureaucratic degeneration. That is therefore precisely what it is about in the Soviet Union since the victory of Stalin.

Question 29: Since foreign policy is the natural prolongation of internal policy, does that also in its turn certify a bureaucratic degeneration in the USSR?

Answer: No doubt about it. Without going back to phenomena from before World War II (defeat of the Chinese revolution, Hitler's arrival at power, policy of a Popular Front in France and Spain, etc), we can draw the proofs thereof from the (quite brief) developments in the second volume of the *History of the CP of the USSR* concerning the Soviet Unions postwar international policy.

Thus the *History* does mention the conquest of power by the Yugoslav CP and the Chinese CP, but it takes care

not to mention, in the case of these two — the only two victorious social revolutions that took place during and after World War II — that it was Stalin it was the Soviet CP, that advised Tito and Mao Tse-tung against taking power. Is it not bizarre that a pure workers' state, that a "socialist" government, sets the brakes against the development of communism in the world?

When the authors of the *History* take up the first postwar phase (vol II, pp 230-31), they do mention the strengthening of the French and Italian Communist Parties, the aggravation of the class struggle. But suddenly they are talking about the offensive of the bourgeoisie and the threat of fascist and cryptofascist regimes! This raises the question: Why did these Communist Parties, profiting by the terrible weakness of capitalism in their respective countries, which the *History* admits, not first try to use the offensive arm? The answer is well known: at the moment when capitalism was the most weakened, the French, Italian and Belgian CPs throwing Lenin's teaching overboard, entered bourgeois coalition governments, collaborated in rebuilding the bourgeois state apparatus (Maurice Thorez: "A single state, a single army, a single police."), held back strikes, and drove with all their strength for the reconstruction of the capitalist economy. It was only when this criminal policy had sufficiently strengthened previously weak capitalism that the bourgeoisie was able to go over to the offensive, beginning in 1947-48, for the masses had been demoralized and disappointed by the reformist policy followed by the CPs.

Can such a policy, which was nevertheless dictated by Moscow, be the emanation of a really communist government?

And lastly, beginning with the XXth Congress, the CP of the USSR has been with increasing violence extolling the revisionist policy called "peaceful co-existence" — a policy which supposes that the war can be avoided without the destruction of capitalism, that capitalism can collapse without a proletarian revolution, that the world victory of socialism can be the

more or less automatic, more or less direct, result of the strengthening of the Soviet economy. Such a thesis disarms the toilers, sows passivity and skepticism about the revolutionary possibilities of the world proletariat, and in practice thwarts authentic revolutions that have burst out in spite of the policy of the CPs, such as the Algerian revolution.

In another quarter, unquestionably, the Soviet government carried on a victorious war against Nazi imperialism, the existence of the Soviet Union permitted the destruction of capitalism (from above, without revolution) in the countries of Eastern Europe, and it aided the development of the colonial revolution. But these two contradictory aspects of Soviet international policy are only the reflection of the contradictory nature of the bureaucracy: it is attached to the new forms of property and the mode of production created by the October Revolution, while being a *conservative force* that exploits these new forms for its own selfish interests. This dual aspect of the bureaucracy we find again here in its international policy.

Question 30: Is the Soviet Union a classless society, a socialist society?

Answer: The authors of the *History of the CP of the USSR* assert (vol II, p. 113) that the exploiting classes have been suppressed in the USSR. This assertion is correct. But that does not prevent two distinct classes from continuing to exist in the country: the working class and the peasant class, whose interests, without being permanently in opposition, often clash, and in a violent way. The survival of these two classes is due in the last analysis to the insufficient degree of development of the productive forces. The survival of production for the market, of money, of wages — this has definitively the same roots. As Marxists we understand that the survival of the state is also due to this cause. The assertion that the survival of the state would be due to the need to organize the economy or to defend the country (vol II, p 129) is untenable from the Marxist viewpoint, for these

functions can be more adequately fulfilled in a classless society, by other forms of social organization.

Consequently, the USSR has not yet built socialism (the classless society), but still finds itself in a transitional phase from capitalism to socialism. And as the productive forces develop and the cultural level rises, the masses will sweep away the bureaucratic regime that is an obstacle to the optimum upsurge of society.

In another quarter, unopposedly, the Soviet Government carried on a vigorous war against class inequalities (the existence of the Soviet Union prevented the destruction of capitalism (that is, without revolution) in the countries of Eastern Europe, and it aided the development of the socialist revolution. But these two contradictory aspects of Soviet international policy are only the reflection of the contradictory nature of the transition: it is attached to the new forms of property and the mode of production created by the October Revolution, while being a conservative force that explains these new forms for its own selfish interests. This dual aspect of the bureaucracy we find again here in its international policy.

Question: Is the Soviet Union a classless society or a socialist society?

Answer: The answer of the Workers of the CP of the USA is: (1) It is not a classless society because the bourgeoisie still exists in the country; the working class and the peasant class whose interests are being permanently in opposition to each other, and in a violent way. The survival of these two classes is due in the first instance to the backward nature of development of the productive forces. The survival of production for the market of masses of wages — this has definitely the same roots. As a result we understand that the survival of the state is due to this cause. The survival that the survival of the state would be due to the need to regulate the economy or to defend the country (the U.S.S.R.) is inseparable from the Marxist viewpoint for these

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