

An Answer to the Chinese

By E. Germal

The article "On the Question of Stalin," published September 13 in the joint edition of the Peking People's Daily and Red Flag as the second in a series of answers to the "Open Letter" of the Central Committee of the CPSU, [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] is undoubtedly the most contribution to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the present discussion in the world Communist movement, the one which does most damage to the favorable reception given up to now to the CCP and the one which most seriously hinders the progress of Communist adhesion and militants towards revolutionary Marxism insofar as it is being taken up by this discussion.

Full of factual errors and distortions, it is also loaded with contradictions either within the article itself or with other important documents of the CCP or recent declarations made by Mao Tse-tung.

But the most striking aspect of the article is its complete divorce from reality, not only in the slightest knowledge of the opinions or aspirations of the masses inside the Soviet Union, but also in the rampant workers states can take seriously a statement like this: "This great majority of Soviet people disapprove of such abuse of Stalin. They increasingly [I] cherish the memory of Stalin."

Any attempt by the leaders of the CCP to build their tendency within the world Communist movement on such a line can only lead to rapid and increasing isolation, greatly facilitating the efforts of the Khrushchev tendency to re-establish monopolism and some kind of central bureaucratic control over the greater part of the world Communist movement.

We are convinced that the leaders and members of the left-wing oppositional tendencies inside the CP of the colonial and imperialist countries will also rapidly discover this through their own experience. We are convinced that they will warn their Chinese comrades with increasing insistence that a fight against right-wing revisionism that at the same time attempts to revive the cult of Stalin is doomed from the beginning. We are convinced that they will state the slogan, "In the fight against Khrushchev's revisionism, let's not go back to Stalin but move forward to full-fledged Leninism." And we are convinced that with the help of experience and fraternal discussion, this slogan will find increasing echoes within the Chinese CP itself, including its leadership. For that reason, we think it worth while to submit the article "On the Question of Stalin" to much more strident criticism than it intrinsically deserves in hope that it will help speed the process of clarification among left-wing Communists in China as well as everywhere else.

Some of the arguments advanced in the article "On the Question of

Stalin" are so self-defeating that they seem almost naive. The author writes:

"Khrushchev has maligning Stalin as 'despot of the type of Ivan the Terrible.' Does not this mean that the experience of the great CPSU and the great Soviet people provided over 30 years for people of the world over was not the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but that of life under the rule of a feudal 'despot'? ... Khrushchev has maligning Stalin as a 'fool.' Does not this mean that the CPSU, which waged heroic revolutionary struggles over the past decades, had a 'fool' as its leader?"

They seem to forget a detail. The Soviet people and the CPSU have been led for nearly ten years now by a group headed by Khrushchev whom this very same article denounces as a slanderer, a maligner, a falsifier of history, a fool, a coward, a splitter of the world Communist movement, an objective agent of revisionism that serves as a bourgeois agency within the working-class movement. Other CCP documents have compared Khrushchev and his group to the social-patriots of 1914 whom Lenin termed "bourgeois agents within the working-class movement." In these repetitions figures have been at the head of the CPSU for some ten years now by the very man at the top leadership of the Soviet Union for 30 years? Why should this be assumed to be a self-apparent absurdity in the case of Stalin and yet be taken as perfectly logical in the case of Khrushchev?

The authors of the article "On the Question of Stalin" say that Khrushchev maligning Stalin in his secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, which



Stalin

Congress of the CPSU when he admitted that Stalin had murdered the main cadres of Lenin's Bolshevik party. They dare to say that this admission is a "distortion of historic truth." But facts are facts. Let the leaders of the Chinese CP answer these questions:

Yes or no, did Stalin execute the majority of the members of the Leninist Central Committee that led the October Revolution, founded the Soviet state and the Third International, and won the Civil War?

Yes or no, were these great Communist leaders murdered under the vile slander and abuse accusation that they were spies and agents of fascism and imperialism? Not only from the moment they opposed Stalin but even before the first world war?

Yes or no, did Stalin murder not only thousands of Communist leaders in the political opposition but also the majority of delegates to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth party congresses of the CPSU, i. e., the majority of Communist cadres who had supported him against the Trotskyist Opposition but who were still too much tied to the old Bolshevik tradition to accept the monstrous Moscow trials and the systematic use of lies, slander and physical violence to "solve" inner-party discussions?

We venture to predict that the authors of the article "On the Question of Stalin" will not attempt to answer these questions. No honest answer is possible but yes. Yes if the answer is "yes," then it follows that Khrushchev did not "malign" and "slander" Stalin in his secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. What he did was to admit part of the historical truth and reveal some fresh details against the truth, sophisms evaporate like snow in the sun.

The authors of the article even dare to approve an old speech made by Khrushchev in January 1937 in which the present first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU said of those who opposed Stalin, "In lifting their hand against Comrade Stalin, they are against all of us, against the working class and the working people!"

Have the authors of the article forgotten that the first one to "lift his hand" against Stalin was no one but Lenin himself? Have they forgotten that Lenin, against whom the founder of Bolshevism advised the Central Committee to raise the slogan "Lenin against his hand against the working class?"

An "Error"

"The leaders of the CCP fall into another glaring contradiction when they tell us that they try to defend Stalin against Khrushchev's 'maligning' him as a murderer and despot on the other hand they themselves state:

"On certain [I] occasions and on certain questions, he [Stalin] confused two types of contradictions which are different in nature... contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, and contradictions among the people, and also confusion of the scope of the needed in handling them. In the work led by Stalin of suppressing the counter-revolution, many counter-revolutionaries and serving punishment were duly punished. But at the same time there were innocent people who were wrongly convicted, and in 1937 and 1938 there occurred the error [I] enlarging the scope of the suppression of counter-revolutionaries."

What was the scale of this "error" of Zinovief, first head of the Communist International, was shot as a counter-revolutionist. Who was Bukharin who succeeded Zinovief as the leading figure of the Comintern. So was Kamennev, member of the Leninist Political Bureau, Trotsky, founder of the Red Army, was murdered by an agent of Stalin. Rykov, another member of the Leninist Political Bureau and former chief of the Soviet government, was executed as a counter-revolutionist. Parasikov, Radak, Sokolnikov, Bahuyev, Smilga, Serebriakov, I. N. Smirnov, Muravov and many others were similarly liquidated. Do the leaders of the Chinese CP believe that all these Communist, these comrades-in-arms of Lenin, the majority of the members of the Central Committee in which Lenin sat from 1917 to 1923, were really counter-revolutionaries? Do the leaders of the Chinese CP believe that the top staff of the Red Army, executed after a secret mock "trial" in 1937, were really counter-revolutionaries? Do the leaders of the Chinese CP believe that the majority of the delegates of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth congresses of the CPSU were really counter-revolutionaries?

Their dilemma is hashish. If they say "yes" then the only possible conclusion is that the Soviet Union was founded by counter-revolutionaries and Lenin himself guided the Communist party and the Soviet Union until he died with the help of a majority of

"counter-revolutionists, spies and fascist agents" in that case, by the logic used by the leaders of the Chinese CP, he was a fool if not worse. The banner must then be raised for the "rehabilitation" of Lenin against the authors of the article as apologists for the crimes of Stalin!

If they say "no," if they decide that these slaughtered comrades were innocent victims of Stalin's purges, "innocent people wrongly convicted," then how can they reduce this man slender and mass murder, often accompanied by mass torture, of thousands of old

brought into the Central Committee while remaining on the job.

The majority of the Central Committee decided not to act on this advice. They completely misunderstood or underestimated the historic role of Lenin, and the social formation. Unwittingly they thereby facilitated Stalin's destruction of Soviet and party democracy and the establishment of his bureaucratic dictatorship. When they finally grasped the danger, it was too late. For this mistake they paid with their lives.

Left Opposition

It will remain the eternal merit of Trotsky and the Left Opposition to have correctly understood the gravity of the danger from the time of Lenin's death. They correctly defended a policy of industrialization and the maintenance of Soviet democracy. Success in this could have allowed the bureaucratic deformation of state and party. Although they suffered defeat, their struggle paved the way for the Biro and the program of communism, making it possible to transmit their views to the next generation. The cause of the Left Opposition became the cause of the Fourth International, the cause of revolutionary Marxism today, the cause of Leninism.



Lenin

Khrushchev and the ruling staff of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is true, are trying to transform Stalin into a scapegoat for the collective error in its bureaucracy and the leadership of the CPSU in the 1930s and later. When the authors of the article say that "Lenin wanted Khrushchev's declaration in 1937-38, when they refer obliquely to the 'error' of their own butchery of Ukrainian Communists and intellectuals during the Yeasserite, they do well, he if they are not to be..."

They write, for instance, "Why does Khrushchev, who was in the center of the cult and the state in Stalin's period, and who actively supported and firmly defended the policy of suppressing counter-revolutionists, repudiate everything done during this period and shift the blame on the error of his period alone, while altogether whitewashing himself?"

It occurs, a good starting point and at the same time serves the more serious purpose of warning Khrushchev that if the fight becomes rougher, the Chinese or people allied to them, might at a certain point begin discussing specific crimes committed during the period of the purges by Khrushchev and other associates of his now on the President of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

If this approach is pursued, two possibilities are open. One is to whitewash Stalin, which also whitewashes Khrushchev and the whole Soviet bureaucracy. The other is to indict Khrushchev and the rest of his colleagues for their joint responsibility in Stalin's crimes. The Chinese leaders seem to be for the time being — to have adopted the first course. This leads away from the truth, away from Leninism, away from the Soviet masses. As for us, we prefer the other course.

Un-Marxist Theory

The authors of the article under examination satisfy themselves with denouncing the completely un-Marxist theory of the "personality cult" without attempting to offer a Marxist, dialectical materialist explanation of the contradictions in Soviet society. Indeed, they even maintain that these contradictions are essentially nonexistent and that all that is involved is the "interrelationship of leaders, party, class and masses." This is all the stronger in view of the fact that Mao Tse-tung himself, as late as 1955, i. e., after the Hungarian Revolution, in his

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Leaders' Sense of St...

speech entitled "On the Contradictions within the People," came close to a "Trotskyist" — that is, a Maoist — analysis of the contradictions. Mao's view was quite different from Khrushchev's remarks on the question of "class," which cannot be taken seriously by any Marxist. (A cult that dominated society completely, yet had no roots whatsoever in its infrastructure) Mao's view was different, too, from that of the authors of "On the Question of Stalin" with their vulgar platitudes about the "leaders" and the "masses."

In his well-known speech Mao reduced the basic contradiction "within the people," in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the contradiction between workers engaged in production and the bourgeoisie. (We grant the term used by Marx and Lenin, "bourgeoisie.") From this analysis it is but a step to understanding the "subjugation" of the masses as resulting from a temporary defeat of the workers by the bureaucracy and the capitalist class. (The question of the revolution, backwardness of the country and lack of "material" "subjugation" by the factor" (the party) after the death of Lenin.

Instead of taking this step forward, the directors continue the Chinese leaders seem today to be taking a step backward to an abstract level of social contradictions "within the people" during the dictatorship of the proletariat, to an abstract denial of the crimes of Stalin. The stream of history is moving in a direction opposite to these new errors!

Hungarian Revolution

It is in the light of the same contradiction between the workers and peasants on one hand and the bureaucracy on the other that the Poland-USSR uprisings in East Berlin and East Germany July 16-17, 1953, and the demonstrations and revolts in the USSR in October 1956 must be viewed. The contradiction between the social forces in these countries was rendered all the more bitter by economic exploitation and national oppression practiced in these countries under Stalin.

In their first article of reply to the "Open Letter" of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the editors of the People's Daily and *Troop* implicitly recognize this fact, for they state: "By moving up troops in an attempt to subdue the Polish comrades by armed force, it (the leadership of the CPSU) committed the error of great-power chauvinism."

The authors also reveal (a fact widely known in Communist circles) that the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party strongly opposed Khrushchev's intervention in Poland and thereby probably saved the Polish working class and Comraads from a repetition of the Hungarian tragedy. All the more astonishing is their pride in having pressed for counter-revolutionary intervention against the Hungarian workers: "We insisted on the taking of all necessary measures to smash the counter-revolutionary rebellion in Hungary and firmly opposed the abandonment of socialist Hungary."

The main social force in rebellion in Hungary was the working class. A couple of facts prove this to the hilt. After Soviet troops smashed the Nagy government, the workers organized one of the longest and most solid general strikes in the history of the international workers' movement. The freely elected leadership advanced the following purely socialist demands: "We state expressly that the revolutionary working class considers the factories and the land as property of the people. . . . We ask for free elections, but only those parties should be allowed to participate in them who recognize and have already recognized the socialist order."

The authors of "On the Question of Stalin" did not, of course, compose a pure and simple apology for Stalin, as some people have incorrectly assumed. They note many "errors" committed by Stalin in many fields. Among other things they censure Stalin for "also giving some bad counsel in the international Communist movement. These mistakes caused some [1] losses to the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement."

When the authors turn to their own country and their own revolution, this heavy veil of discre-

Marx

tion and underestimation is replaced by a thinner curtain. We learn that "in the late 30s, the 40s and the early 40s, the Chinese Marxist-Leninists represented by Comrades Mao Tse-tung and Liu Chao-shi resisted the influence of Stalin's mistakes. . . ."

In other words, in China affairs, Stalin was wrong for 30 years! A slight error, of course, especially if you happen to know, as the article admits, for the first time — at least by implication — that the right-wing errors that led to the tragic defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 were directly inspired by Stalin's "bad counsel."

Instead of repeating the tired phrases about "Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Bukharinists and other bourgeois agents," the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party would do better to make an objective study of the real positions held by L. D. Trotsky and the movement founded by him, both in the past and at present. Thus they would discover that Trotsky correctly opposed both the "rightist" and "leftist" errors of Stalin and the Comintern, long before 1927, and 1932, even before Mao Tse-tung felt that something was wrong.

Surely the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party must know that the Trotskyists everywhere in the world have been the staunchest defenders of the great Chinese Revolution and the great People's Republic of China against the attacks of Nehru's capitalist regime and its apologists. Surely they must know that these same Trotskyists everywhere in the world defend the Chinese Communist Party against the slanders of the Khrushchevites who have suddenly discovered that it is Mao Tse-tung and his comrades and not the American imperialists who are "warmongers," and people desirous of "provoking nuclear world war." At a moment when the Chinese CP is under a constant barrage of slanders of the purest Stalinist type; at a moment when Khrushchev and his henchmen are labeling the Chinese comrades "splitters" and "wreckers" because they dare introduce their Communist literature into the Soviet Union, even printed what blasphemy! — in the Russian language, it is scarcely a good example of proletarian morality for the Chinese comrades to employ the same kind of slanders against the Trotskyists. Please don't do to others what you don't want done to you, comrades!

When *Izvestia* devotes a half

page to proving that the Fourth International favors the side of the Chinese CP — an important set of points in the dispute with Moscow and hence a "bloc" exists between Peking and the Trotskyists, it is not so embarrassing to the leaders of the Chinese CP to claim that these supporters are "bourgeois agents."

But Stalin's "bad counsel" was not limited to Chinese affairs. Let us recall a few examples. Isn't it well known that Stalin opposed the Yugoslav Communist Party's fighting for power from 1943 on, as in 1946 he opposed Mao Tse-tung's turning toward the struggle for power? Isn't it well known that he advocated the same capitalist-imperialist line for Vietnam? How do the Chinese leaders judge the fact that every revolution that achieved the dictatorship of the proletariat by its own independent force in Stalin's time had to do so against his opposition?

Some of Stalin's "errors" happily did not prevent final victory. But what about the more disastrous "errors" that caused the consequences to this very day? Do the Chinese leaders believe that the Chinese struggle for light in the original line advocated in Germany from 1929 to 1933, according to which not fascism but the socialist revolution was the main target to be attacked by the German Communist Party? Do they believe in the "rightist" collaborationist, right-wing, opportunist line applied by Stalin in Spain in 1936-39 which strangled the Spanish social revolution and thereby greatly facilitated Franco's military victory? And what about participating in and upholding capitalist governments, aiding in reconstructing the bourgeois army and the bourgeois state apparatus in France and Italy after the second world war, a course carried out by the Communist parties under Stalin's instructions, which ended up by destroying highly favorable conditions for the victory of the working class in Western Europe?

The balance sheet of these "errors" is indeed staggering and classed over such a long period, in so many countries, can they still be called just "errors"? For a Marxist, wouldn't it be more correct to call it a fundamentally wrong policy? And in that case, isn't it necessary to probe for the social roots of Stalinist opportunism, just as Lenin probed for the social roots of reformist opportunism?

People Control

It is true, as the authors of the article claim in passing, that the leaders of the Chinese CP succeeded in correcting or preventing some of these "errors" and essentially kept their own counsel. They were able to do so and finally lead the Chinese Revolution to victory because of the feebleness of Comintern control due to their relative geographical isolation. But they know that Stalin intervened directly in the leadership of the Chinese CP several times to try to put people in charge when he considered sufficiently subservient to himself.

It is scarcely cause for wonder then that in most Communist parties, ruthless intervention by the Stalinist International apparatus succeeded in eliminating from leadership genuine revolutionary figures, rooted in the labor movements of their own countries. The Kremlin replaced these revolutionaries by servile, spineless creatures of Stalin's orders, no matter how contradictory or how they contradicted the interests of the international revolutionary movement and the diplomatic maneuvers and passing needs of Soviet foreign policy.

Ever since the Tito crisis of 1948, and more especially since Stalin's death in 1953, the world crisis of Stalinism has continued to deepen. In order to save what

they rightly consider to be the essence of their rule — economic privileges and a monopoly of politics — the Soviet bureaucrats have been forced to make one concession after another to the Soviet masses as they press for restoration of Soviet democracy. The abandonment of the Stalin cult in 1956 at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU was the most important of these concessions, the one that created the most contradictions within the international Stalinist apparatus itself.

Today no objective basis whatever exists, either in the Soviet Union or in the East European workers' states, for a return to that cult. The Soviet masses are not much interested in Byzantine speculation about what Stalin said or really meant by this or that statement about the party and its cadres. But they are extremely interested in preventing any return to a system under which their standards of living was ruthlessly sacrificed in the name of an industrial "gigantism" in which breathtaking waste occurred due to bureaucratic mismanagement. They are very interested in overcoming the inhuman housing shortage that began in Stalin's time. They are more and more interested in participating directly in control and management of the economy and state — rights of the exercise of which was utterly destroyed under Stalin.

When they hear the Chinese leaders say, "Long live Leninism!" they think of Lenin's teachings on socialist democracy, on the highest functions being exercised by the



Khrushchev

people workers, on the dictatorship of the proletariat being the first form of the state destined to wither away from the moment of its creation. On all these great themes of Lenin's work *State and Revolution*, the Chinese leaders are, however, strangely silent.

Faced with this deepening mood of the masses, no sector of the Soviet bureaucracy that keeps in touch with reality dares to play with the "defense of Stalin," for this would be the most certain way of cutting themselves from the rank and file of the party and the masses of workers and peasants, and most likely precipitating an immediate violent political crisis in the country. For the same reason, any policy geared to "rehabilitate Stalin" bars a "bloc" with any part of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is a stark attempt to make an alliance with the shade hanging over the bureaucracy in opposition to the real social forces of the Soviet Union, including the bulk of the bureaucracy itself.

To seek such an "alliance" can lead to nothing but isolation and utter failure. In the same way, no policy of "alliance" exists today for the creation of an international Communist movement, one would provide servant to the Chinese state or any other state. The Yugoslavs

found this out all too soon at themselves.

On the other hand, it is perfectly true that even since the Twentieth Congress, a dual process has been affecting the leadership of the world Communist movement. Parallel to the so-called "de-Stalinization" process a more and more pronounced right-wing orientation has developed among the leadership of nearly all the Communist parties in the capitalist countries, imperialist and colonial alike.

Because they rightly criticize the neo-reformist, neo-Bernsteinian theory and practice of a "peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism through gradual structural reforms"; because they oppose the criminal policy of trying to convince the American workers and Negroes that they should support the Democratic Party, which also happens to be the party of the most rabid Jim Crow South; because they have so consistently and correctly condemn the shameful capitulation of the Dengs before the Indian bourgeoisie; because they advocate that the Latin-American masses should follow the road laid by the Cuban revolutionists; in brief, because they in general advocate in most capitalist countries a more Leninist line, they have been completely correct revolutionary Marxist — and defend the Leninist teachings on the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Chinese Communists have already won much sympathy among the rank and file of the world Communist movement and they can win more.

Peer Policy

But the bleak file of these parties will assure that it is utterly impossible to advance the cause of socialism by "defending Stalin." They can only feel embarrassment over anyone who tries it. To try to "rehabilitate Stalin" is to help the bourgeoisie and socialist militants to the Chinese position nor facilitate the task of winning stronger positions among the masses of their respective countries. This line also cuts them off from the genuine left-wing Communist movement, the workers who are against Khrushchev, not because he has carried out "de-Stalinization" but because he doesn't go far enough with it. Since the elements most sympathetic to the Chinese CP are generally the most independent-minded in all these Communist parties, the strange "campaign" advocating a "return to Stalin" instead of a "return to Lenin" insults their intelligence, clashes with their class consciousness and proletarian instincts and arouses an opposition which they will most certainly express.

The bureaucratic maneuver of speaking up for Stalin thus only leads into an impasse. In China itself, the Communists who come to understand this will increase in number from month to month. In the case of China, as has already been shown in the case of the Soviet Union, the effort to build an international faction will have important consequences through the introduction of strong pressure and contradictions within the movement of those who start it. It is very important to have a correct program!

For Chinese Communists the choice today is very clear: either backward to Stalin, to complete isolation from the masses in the "isolationist" camp and growing isolation from the advanced militants and left Communists of the capitalist countries; or forward to Lenin, to full restoration of Leninism in correspondence with the needs and aspirations of the great majority of Communist workers of the world socialist revolution today.

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