

WORLD POLITICS

A REVIEW OF THE WORLD'S TROTSKYIST AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

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THE INTERNAL CRISIS IN CHINA

(The following is the text of a statement issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on November 6.)

(1) The crisis that has shaken the Chinese Communist party during recent months is undoubtedly the gravest since the Mao Tse-tung group assumed leadership of the party. It has been marked by profound divisions at all levels, including the Political Bureau; by battles among tendencies in all the main fields, by an extremely violent type of struggle; by the intervention of certain sectors of the masses stimulated by the ruling group and by various efforts to curb this intervention.

It is difficult to delineate exactly the actual development of the crisis, its origin and the composition of the groups opposing each other yesterday and today. It is likewise difficult to establish whether the Mao group began with an overall tactical and strategic plan from the first or whether the leaders were largely taken by surprise in the events that ensued and made successive adaptations corresponding to the vicissitudes of the crisis.

In a general way, the following phases can be distinguished.

(a) A first phase extending from November 1965 to the end of April 1966 in which the ruling group seemed to be feeling out the ground, provoking seemingly secondary polemics but at the same time putting across without fanfare a reorientation or rectification in certain basic sectors (army, industry).

(b) A phase extending from May to the end of July 1966, marked by an offensive against the Peking group and some eminent intellectuals; and by the first wave of the "cultural revolution".

(c) A phase opened by the August plenum of the Central Committee involving new conflicts at the top, the second wave of the "cultural revolution" and the formation of the so-called Red Guards.

The third phase does not yet seem to have ended and the situation remains charged with possible brusque new flare-ups and changes.

(2) In the first two phases of the crisis, the dominant theme advanced by the ruling group was affirmation of the primacy of politics in all domains. Beyond the sloganeering and ritualistic references to Mao's thought, the real content lay in the determination of the party and state bureaucracy to defend and consolidate its hegemony in relation to other sectors of the bureaucracy and to any actual or potential centrifugal tendency. The conflict became concretized in a confrontation of different specific positions on problems dealing with perspective, partly immediate, partly intermediate or long range.

In the military domain an important group - whose spokesman was quite likely the chief of staff himself, Lo Jui Ching - sought to secure relative autonomy, stressing the decisive significance of technique in a modern war. This group very likely also emphasized the necessity of re-establishing the alliance with the Soviet Union, the military support of which was considered

irreplaceable in the event of imperialist aggression against China. The Mao-Lin Piao group upholds the idea of the primacy of politics over technique in military matters. They emphasize concretely a conception of the army more linked to the traditions and experiences of the civil war and the anti-Japanese struggle. These traditions and experiences were considered the only valuable ones in the event of a conventional type of war by imperialism on the Asian continent.

In the domain of industry, two conferences held last spring reaffirmed in the most emphatic way the idea that the guiding role in the plants must be played by the party, that any technocratic tendency must be extirpated; and, in general, anyone must be fought who sought to give primacy to the specialists and to introduce in economic management criteria like those spread during recent years in the Soviet Union and in the other European workers states.

In the field of culture, the ruling group was still more obviously intent on blocking any centrifugal tendency, any "autonomist" tendency whose success, even if only partial, could have serious implications extending to the entire political arena. In reviving arguments advanced among others by Khrushchev at the time of his last confrontation with the intellectuals, Mao's partisans continuously pointed to the danger that critical, oppositionist movements in the cultural sphere could become the vehicle of a political opposition. It was not by accident that the adversaries of the ruling group were accused of operating like a potential opposition party and of wanting to provoke a repetition in China of the Hungarian experience with the Petofi circle.

If the importance which such polemics have in the eyes of the Mao group is to be understood, its interpretation of Soviet developments since Stalin's death and the Twentieth Congress have to be borne in mind. According to the Maoists, the victory of revisionism dates from that time, and the breaches were opened step by step by the promulgation of a whole new series of criteria and concepts, and by the sudden appearance of multiple centrifugal tendencies within the bureaucracy itself. The ending of uncontested and absolute control by the political bureaucracy represented one of the major causes of an unfolding process which, it must be remembered, to the Chinese represents the progressive restoration of capitalism.

According to the official documents, foreign policy problems do not lie at the heart of the conflict. It is particularly symptomatic that there is not the least allusion to differences on the war in Vietnam or on the October 1965 events in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is certain that on international questions, the polemics developed with particular sharpness and intensity and the increasingly dramatic course of the crisis was determined to a large degree by the course of the situation in the Indochina peninsula, particularly following the intensification of the escalation and the increasing danger of imperialist aggression against the Chinese republic.

(3) In accordance with long-standing bureaucratic tradition, the ideas advanced by critical elements and opponents are not directly expressed by those involved, but indicated by the group that wins out. The very enormity of certain accusations, the repetition of stereotyped cliches used many times

in other contexts, the positions taken in recent years by some of the main figures under fire, suffice to place in doubt the accuracy of the version offered by the Mao group. According to them the entire opposition advocated out-and-out Khrushchevian orientations and made common cause with forces seeking the restoration of capitalism. The real question at issue is most certainly not the restoration of capitalism. What is involved essentially is an intrabureaucratic conflict, affecting various layers, over what line to adopt in relation to crucial issues of the present stage and to the long-range problems of perspective confronting the bureaucratic leadership at this stage. The specific social weight of bourgeois and restorationist forces in the dynamics of Chinese society is after all negligible and any explanation of the current crisis based on the hypothesis of a dangerous upsurge on their part can be dismissed as false and tendentious. Moreover, if the ruling group had wished to strike harder at these forces, in particular, by ending their still existing privileges, they could have done so rather easily without touching off a crisis in the party.

The Mao group, however, was up against really critical elements and opponents of different orientations. There is no doubt that for years tendencies have existed in China that could be legitimately characterized as Khrushchevian, in the sense that they have criticized the concepts and attitudes of the present leadership on the basis of a stand analogous to that of the leaders of the Soviet CP and most of the Communist parties. But there are also some who especially denounce the bureaucratic methods of the ruling group (referring at times to the battles of ten years ago), its extreme sectarianism; and therefore probably also certain opportunist orientations on key questions of the international workers movement. The official documents themselves have alluded on a number of occasions to the existence of critical left elements ("left opportunists," according to the well-known terminology). There is no doubt either that commencing at given moments centrist tendencies developed either in relation to "intermediate" positions adopted on several political or tactical problems or in relation to a conciliatory attitude aimed at blocking a complete rupture between the opposing groups and at avoiding a fait accompli.

Under the present conditions it is impossible to evaluate with certainty the relative strength of the different opposition tendencies. But it is clear that the 'Khrushchevian' tendency can be considered the most dangerous for the Mao group in the immediate period ahead, particularly because of the powerful international support it might have and which a leftist tendency, moving toward a revolutionary Marxist orientation, clearly would not have.

(4) The struggle has turned out to be probably much sharper and much longer than the ruling group counted on when it took the initiative. That is why it has raised the tenor of its harangues and conducted campaigns at a frantic pace, culminating in the demonstrations of August-September and the actions of the Red Guards. The plenum of the Central Committee, following a battle lasting some months was held after the elimination of Chief of Staff, of Peng Chen and a whole series of other leading figures and was the scene of dramatic conflicts. The Mao group won by a very close margin after ceding some concessions, at least on paper, particularly to the centrist elements.

The explanation for this new outbreak of the struggle is to be found in two facts: on the one hand, the first wave of the 'cultural revolution' ran into vigorous resistance; and on the other the isolation of the Chinese CP in the international Communist movement became greater following the estrangement of the North Koreans, the breakaway of the Japanese, and the difficulties encountered with the North Vietnamese. But once again it was the course of the war in Vietnam, with its new phases of escalation and the growing threat of an attack on China, that provoked a new confrontation at the level of the top leading bodies themselves.

(5) The second wave of the 'cultural revolution' and the formation of the Red Guards were the products of a situation of this nature within the party. In face of resistance and hesitation of all kinds, the group assembled around Mao and Lin Biao decided to mobilize the masses partially and to gain a new instrument of pressure capable of being used against a part of the apparatus of the party and the state. The decision was to take a distinctly limited sector - the student masses - with which the Mao group wanted to establish close relations and which it also considered it could control and channelize more easily. It is nevertheless significant that masses were called on to intervene in intra-bureaucratic conflicts and that Mao and Lin Biao, in order to mobilize the students, were obliged to use ideological themes that could have a favourable echo among more radicalized and politically conscious layers (see, for example, in the 16-point document the affirmation of the democratic rights of minorities and the reminder of the democratic revolutionary tradition of the Commune).

The Red Guard movement thus had a factional origin, and its aim as outlined in innumerable texts, is essentially to help the Mao group fight its adversaries, including those within the political sector that was profoundly split in the course of the struggle. But the weapon of the Red Guards proved to be very dangerous and threatened to become transformed into a boomerang. As a matter of fact at least some sectors of the movement did not limit themselves to singing the praises of Mao, spreading his works and destroying foreign symbols. They sought to translate into practice certain current ideological slogans. In other words they began to act not only under the inspiration of anticapitalist and vaguely anti-conservative sentiments but went so far as to attack privileges of the bureaucracy and to build a fire under some of the bureaucrats, including those who succeeded the Peng Chen group in the Peking leadership. It was difficult for the ruling group to denounce the infiltration of the enemy into the party and state at every level, and at the same time to demagogically exploit the real equalitarian aspirations of the masses, without having the movement inspired in this way hitting also at the symbols of bureaucratic power and taking on the settling of accounts with certain officials and ruling bodies of the party itself. It is of course difficult to distinguish between the spontaneous moves undertaken by the Red Guards and actions undertaken on decisions from above. But a whole series of facts emanating from various sources as well as a series of warnings and official appeals for order aimed, from all the evidence, at slowing down and channelizing the movement, testify to the fact that the students, to some extent at least, struck blows against some representatives of the bureaucracy, too,

and were ready to unleash actions which the bureaucracy as a whole had good reasons to halt as quickly as possible.

(6) The issue remains wide open after the new wave of the 'cultural revolution' and the ruling group does not seem to have been able to re-establish a relatively stable equilibrium within its midst. The opposition to its policies and the resistance to the actions it sponsors continues on a vast scale, even though it emanates from various sectors and from different and even opposed points of view. Dramatic changes and abrupt turns could still occur in a relatively short time.

A factor that accelerated the settling of accounts, making the crisis so dramatic is, as we have seen, the perspective of the Chinese leaders, that an imperialist aggression will probably be launched in the short run. It is precisely with this in mind that the Mao group sought to reinforce its positions, to eliminate all resistance, organizing even a psychological mobilization (this operated particularly in the formation of the Red Guards and in the choice of criteria for their organization and of the ideological themes). On their side, the adversaries of Mao and Lin Biao were drawn into a fight in order before it was too late, to change an orientation which they considered false. If an aggression actually does take place, all the hypotheses and positions will rapidly be tested.

It is possible nevertheless that the Mao group likewise believes that the perspective of war can be avoided. Certain aspects of its policies in recent months (particularly in the fields of industry and economic development) acquire meaning in the light of this hypothesis. If this turned out to be the case, the problem would be posed in less dramatic and urgent terms, the tensions would not be of an explosive nature in the immediate future. But the ruling group is preoccupied with preparing a long struggle against tendencies that today are still relatively weak and with eliminating at once any incipient evolution like that in the USSR at the time of Khrushchev and his successors.

In any case, the Chinese leadership will emerge much weakened from this test. Up to now the masses saw it as homogeneous and strong, standing in the tradition of the victorious revolution. But divisions have appeared openly and the wear and tear has proved to be serious. From now on the leadership will be judged by the cadres and activities and also by the broad masses in a much more critical and questioning spirit. This could facilitate the formation of a new vanguard.

(7) In the course of the recent crisis, some people again advanced the thesis that China is undergoing a Stalinist cycle analogous to that of the USSR after Lenin's death.

Without repeating all the arguments advanced by the resolution of our last world congress, we can note, however that the international political orientations of the Chinese CP, however much we have criticized them, cannot be equated to the traditional Stalinist lines of policy; and as for domestic policy, particularly economic policy, the specific traits that we have emphasized many times still exist. In addition it must not

be forgotten that despite the use of ideological terrorism at present, no reliable source has reported the arrest up to now of critical elements who, as a rule appear to remain members of the party and, in certain cases, of the Central Committee. As for relations with the masses, the methods peculiar to the Maoist leadership, more inclined to bureaucratic paternalism than to measures of repression, have not been abandoned and it is particularly significant that one of the most frequent ideological themes advanced by the ruling group is the one dealing with equalitarianism which the Soviet bureaucracy has condemned since the thirties as inspired by petty-bourgeois concepts. But above all it should be noted that after Lenin's death the bureaucracy rose victoriously, succeeding in consolidating its hegemony - if only temporarily from the historic point of view - against the forces that resisted it. The Chinese events of today however are unfolding within the framework of the world crisis of the bureaucratic system that opened up with the break between Stalin and Yugoslavia, exploding in the Polish and Hungarian October 19 1956 and reaching a new stage with the Sino-Soviet conflict of the Sixties and all its multiple repercussions.

(8) The current crisis has been marked up to now much more by the intra-bureaucratic conflicts than by confrontations between the masses and the bureaucracy as a whole. It expresses in the final analysis the limits and contradictions in the concepts and attitudes which the Chinese leaders have adopted since the period of 1958-59, under the pressure of national and international events. It also reflects the pressure of factors which are relevant today, be it only as general tendencies, and most strongly those which characterise the present international situation, to wit, the crisis of the communist movement and the imperialist aggression in Vietnam.

As the Fourth International has stressed from the time when the first indications of the conflict between Moscow and Peking became manifest the specific objective conditions in which it occurred impelled the Chinese leadership to adopt more progressive overall positions than the concepts of the CP of the USSR a posture more likely to get a favourable response from left-wing currents in the international workers' movement. But since the Chinese leadership remained within the framework of a bureaucratic regime, its relatively more progressive positions could not go beyond certain limits; moreover at a given moment, these progressive features tended inevitably to become dissipated and the Chinese bureaucracy could not avoid growing difficulties and a genuine impasse.

In the field of international policy, it was particularly in relation to the crisis in Indonesia and the course of the war in Vietnam that the Chinese positions underwent a severe test. The maintenance, despite criticisms levelled against Khrushchevism, of out and out opportunist orientations with regard to certain national bourgeoisies of the colonial or ex-colonial countries, and the determination to subordinate to a large degree the needs of the anticapitalist revolutionary struggle of the masses to the diplomatic needs of the state unquestionably contributed to the tragic defeat of the Indonesian CP, the most faithful ally of the Chinese CP for a number of years. The rejection a priori of a united front with the USSR and the other workers' states on the Vietnam war seriously

injured the cause of the National Liberation Front and the defence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and, in the final analysis, of the Chinese People's Republic itself, threatened as it likewise is by imperialist aggression. All this - together with the utilization of odious methods of pressure and even blackmail (for instance, on the matter of rice for Cuba, and the reprisals against the Japanese CP) - contributed in a decisive way to the growing isolation of the Chinese leaders in the international Communist movement, the organizations and groups that support them being in almost all cases sects without real influence, headed by bureaucrats much more concerned about faithfully echoing the official thesis promulgated by Peking than in elaborating a new revolutionary orientation for the workers' movement of their countries.

In the economic field, the great leap forward was rather rapidly abandoned and even the commune movement underwent serious rectifications. But the course followed during the past five or six years, while making possible an unquestionable reorganisation and a palpable recovery and even important gains in some scientific and military fields involved quite modest rates of growth, insufficient to assure the expansion needed by the Chinese economy. The orientations of the new plan do not yet seem to be fully determined; in any case, without profound changes, multiple difficulties will arise at various stages.

In the field of culture, after the rectification following 'the 100 Flowers' campaign, the Maoist leadership has oscillated between a relative and strictly limited liberalism and an absolutely rigid control, justified by Khrushchev-like arguments. The consequence was that the leadership has not been able to prevent critical concepts from emerging, within the top bodies of the party and the state as well as elsewhere. In addition the leadership provoked grave tensions when it tried to fill in the breaches which it considered in various ways to be very dangerous.

All these contradictions could not help but arouse conflicts within the leadership itself as it sought new ways to get out from under. These conflicts and the methods which the Mao group has applied in its campaign against its adversaries, particularly in the most recent phase, aggravated the crisis by further stimulating critical attitudes with regard to the leaders among broad masses of activists and cadres, creating a situation in which anti-bureaucratic tendencies are emerging, even if, only spontaneous and incipient ones. This could be the prelude to a new stage in which the tensions between the bureaucracy and the masses would take precedence over the intra-bureaucratic confrontation.

(9) The Fourth International maintains that the crisis in recent months has confirmed its estimate that the Chinese leadership, despite the positive role it played in criticizing the leadership of the CPUSSR and the majority of the Communist parties, remains a bureaucratic leadership. The struggle for proletarian democracy against such a leadership cannot bring about a qualitative change in the political regime except by means of a profound mobilization of the masses capable of breaking through the framework of the bureaucratic system, and by the action of a new Marxist revolutionary vanguard able to orient the mass movement towards establishing a democratic proletarian power.

At the present stage, the Fourth International reaffirms the need to establish a united front of all the workers' states and parties on a platform of consistent struggle against American aggression in Vietnam. While the Fourth International maintains its severe criticism of the major responsibility of the Soviet bureaucracy; while we hold that the distrust on the part of China can be explained by a whole series of positions by Moscow (extending from its passive attitude in Vietnam to its equivocal policy in Europe and from military aid to the reactionary Hindu bourgeoisie to the loan granted the militarist government of Brazil); while we believe that a Soviet leadership measuring up to its duties would reaffirm its alliance with China in the hour of danger and make clear to imperialism without any possibility of misunderstanding that a war against China would be considered an attack against the Soviet Union, it likewise condemns the outright rejection by Mao-Lin Piao of a united front and joint action.

As for the economic problems, while the Fourth International rejects any Liberman-type technocratic solution, involving in reality a strengthening of various particular layers of the bureaucracy and an accentuation of inadmissible social inequality in a workers' state, we likewise hold that a balanced economic growth in China is not possible except by instituting workers management by, supplying the methods of democratic centralized planning, and by the democratic co-ordination of the workers' states economic planning.

The Fourth International maintains that a workers' state must adhere to equalitarian concepts - in the concrete historic sense outlined by Marx and Lenin - and abolish all forms of privilege. With regard to the current propaganda of the Chinese CP, we denounce first of all the gap between ideological expressions and reality and call attention next to the fact that in the final analysis real communist equality cannot be established except on the basis of a very high level of the productive forces, and to the fact that in the transitional period the only means to approach this aim is by fighting against any form of bureaucratic domination and leadership and for the widest internal democracy in the party, in the unions, in the mass organizations, in the activities of the state and in the administration at all levels.

In the field of culture, the Fourth International while rejecting the deformation of the positions of Trotsky and the Trotskyists by the official organs of the Soviet bureaucracy reaffirms that the struggle against the ideology of the past and against the possible distortions emanating from the influence of the class enemy cannot be conducted effectively through administrative measures and the imposition of stereotyped slogans or ossified norms. It must be won on the basis of the autonomous development of the potentialities of the new society, from an expansion of the genuinely critical spirit and the free confrontation of varying orientations and concepts. In particular the practice of a leadership cult carried to its most grotesque expression, must be condemned in the most emphatic way, since this practice threatens to stifle any spirit of independent judgment, to cripple any collective teamwork, thereby making impossible a really democratic life in the labour movement and in the state.

With regard to the problems of the international workers' movement, the Fourth International holds that a whole series of recent experiences - in the first place the catastrophe in Indonesia - must be critically probed to the bottom. Those responsible for the policy which led to the disastrous defeat must be mercilessly denounced. The renovation of the world Communist movement in a new mass international to the formation of which the Fourth International has made and will continue to make an indispensable contribution is not possible without the most complete internal democracy and real equality among all sectors of the movement, without the rejection of any direct or indirect imposition of weight by the most powerful workers' states. Only along this road will it be possible to develop a strategic and tactical line corresponding to the burning necessities of our times and to assure enthusiastic single-minded discipline in action.

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW Contents of January-February, 1967 Issue.

1. In Defense of Black Power by George Breitman.
An answer to some opponents of Black Power. Breitman is the editor of Malcolm X Speaks, and he has written extensively on Black Nationalism and the Afro-American struggle.
2. Programme of Polish Opposition by Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzewski.
A translation of part of the Open Letter which caused its authors' current imprisonment in Poland. The full text is due for publication in New York. This part, chapter 10 of the document outlines a program of working class opposition 'to the entrenched bureaucracy.
3. Yugoslavia at the Crossroads.
A first-hand account of political and economic forces which are shaking Tito's regime. The article is based on notes of recent visitors to Yugoslavia and it includes an almost verbatim report of a program for revolutionary change.
4. "Wage-Price Spiral" Inflation by Dick Roberts.
An analysis of current price trends in America and their relationship to the escalation of the war in Vietnam. Roberts is managing editor of the International Socialist Review.
5. Monopoly Capital by Ernest Mandel.
An article length review of Baran and Sweezy's controversial analysis of contemporary capitalism. Mandel is a prominent European Marxist, and the author of a number of books and articles on economics.

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STALIN AND THE NAZI AGGRESSION AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION .

(In its first issue, the new Italian political magazine La Sinistra (The Left) published the minutes of a discussion held at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism between historians and members of the General Staff of the army. The discussion, which was held behind closed doors, concerned a book entitled simply June 22, 1941 (the day Hitler launched his invasion of the Soviet Union.)

(The editors of La Sinistra explain the importance of this document: " In the months preceding the Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU, a furious political struggle developed around an attempt to undertake at least partial rehabilitation of Stalin. News of the struggle eventually reached the West; and a letter which a group of Soviet intellectuals sent to the Central Committee of the CPSU expressing their concern over the feared rehabilitation, received considerable publicity. The book by Nekrich, which was published in the Spring of 1965, and which had become a significant element in the struggle of these tendencies, was subjected to violent attack because of its anti-Stalinist position. It became the topic of a debate that served as a testing ground in the attempt to move toward a condemnation of the views contained in it, and thereby to a reversal of the position taken by the 20th-Congress. This attempt at rehabilitation failed because of the opposition not only of broad groups of intellectuals but also of high-ranking representatives of the army. As the reader will see, the discussion published below, besides involving Stalin, touched on the policy of the USSR in the period of the nonaggression pact with Germany, as well as the repressions to which the Polish Communists fell victim and the policy of the Comintern in the so-called Third Period. This is the first time we have heard - even by way of rumor - that Soviet historians were engaged in reviewing with such breadth and daring the official theses about Soviet policy."

(The text below was translated by World Outlook from the Italian version in the October issue of La Sinistra. The footnotes are those supplied by the editors of La Sinistra.)

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Agenda: discussion on A.M.Nekrich's book, "June 22, 1941." Present: Major General E.A.Boltin, Major General B.S. Telpuchovsky, Professor G.A.Deborin and A.M.Nekrich, academician in the historical sciences. Chairman: Boltin.

Deborin: The central question is the research into the causes of our failures in the first period of the war. In his section, "The Warnings that Were Disregarded", the basis of Nekrich's thesis is incorrect. He reduces everything to Stalin's stupid pigheadedness. This is superficial. This means that with Stalin's death the problem ceased to exist. But this is not accurate. It was not only a question of Stalin. In one instance the author bases himself on a statement by Marshal Golokov, who, in those years was the head of the Intelligence Service of the Red Army. (He cites that part of the book.) Golikov did not inform the Government as much as he deceived it. Altogether his reports were a complete deception. These reports are divided into two parts: the first consists of the reports that Golikov considered reliable; these include information about the German preparations to invade England. The second part consists of reports which he considered unfounded; for example, the report from R. Sorge on the dates bracketed for the German attack on the USSR. It is necessary to go more deeply into the criticisms of the cult of the personality. There were persons who altered intelligence reports to please Stalin, to the disadvantage of the truth.

The Tass communiqué of June 14, 1941, was a normal diplomatic maneuver. It was necessary to test the reaction of the German Government. But because of the

situation that had been created in our country this was taken to be true.(1)

In evaluating Stalin's behaviour it is not necessary to base ourselves on Krushchev's statements, which are often not objective. Thus, for example, it is difficult to agree with the statement that Stalin feared the war. Since he received incorrect intelligence, he reached incorrect conclusions. Stalin placed too much hope in the pact, while the Germans, under cover of the pact, were preparing to attack. And Stalin's judgment was conformed by all those who surrounded him. We cannot blame everything on Stalin.

There is a series of errors of fact in Nekrich's book. Among other things 45-millimeter cannon were useless against the German tanks and because of this the government decided to stop producing them.

A voice in the hall: That's not true! The 45's were used throughout the war and worked splendidly against tanks. It was a crime to stop production of the 45's. We fought the German tanks with our fists. At the beginning of the war we didn't have any anti-tank weapons at all.

Deborin: Besides Blucher and others knew that the Tukhachevsky-Yakir group were innocent and still they condemned them.

A voice in the hall: Of course they knew it.

Deborin: But, comrades, I do not believe that it can be doubted that Voroshilov and Budienny, who were there at the time, were men of conscience and honor! (2)

Outraged voices in the hall: Voroshilov was not at the trial. What honor and conscience did these persons have? Cowards and bootlickers! (Deborin leaves the podium amid tumult in the hall.)

Anfilov, of the General Staff: First of all, on the honor of Budienny & Voroshilov - these persons neither had nor have any honor. Considerable material in our archives, which is barred for the time being from being made public, compels us to draw decidedly negative conclusions concerning their activities. I will cite only one minor episode. Toward the middle of 1937, at a very representative gathering, Stalin said: "And Voroshilov and I arrived at Tsaritsyn in 1918 and in a week we unmasked the enemies of the people." And he said this about many of the ex-officials of the General Staff and front-line forces who served the Soviet government with honor.

Voice in the hall: And he drowned them all in the river without a trial!

Anfilov: "While you," Stalin continued, "are not even able to unmask your neighbours." After Stalin, Voroshilov joined in, declaring he was in complete

(1) The communique referred to was written, according to A. Tascia (*Due anni di alleanza germano-sovietica* - The Two Years of the German-Soviet Alliance), by Stalin himself. In it the British ambassador, who had tried to warn Stalin of the imminent German attack, is accused of spreading false rumors, the product of propaganda emanating from powers hostile to Germany and the USSR.

(2) The tribunal which condemned the Tukhachevsky-Yakir group was presided over by Ulrich and was composed of Alksnis, Budienny, Shaposhnikov, Belov, Dybenkov, Kashirin, Goryachev and Blucher. Voroshilov, who supported Stalin in the decapitation of the General Staff, did not take part in the tribunal. However, it was he who announced, June 12, 1937, that the Soviet generals had been shot on charges of having been in contact with an enemy power.

agreement with Stalin and he called on us to denounce our own friends and colleagues. My heart beats with anger when I see Voroshilov on the mausoleum during parades. (3)

And now, as regards the beginning of the war. If all our forces had been prepared for battle, something that depended completely on Stalin, we would not have suffered such a disastrous defeat in the first period of the war and, in general, the war would not have been so long, so bloody or so costly.

Of course it is necessary to take into account also the degree of responsibility of our most important military leaders. In their speeches, Golikov and Kuznetsov seemed to be heroes. In reality Golikov passed on to Stalin a report in which the entire Barbarossa Plan was outlined, writing, however, that it was a provocation emanating from those who wanted to see us go to war against the Germans. Kuznetsov writes that when he received the communication from the naval attaché in Berlin, Vorontsov, on the dates and plans of the German attack, he immediately referred everything to Stalin. It is true. But in which way did he refer it? You should read his story! He writes that Vorontsov's report was a provocation sent us by counter-espionage.

Stalin is still the main culprit in the tragedy. Not long ago, I spoke with Zhukov. He told me that Golikov was directly responsible to Stalin and did not report at all either to the head of the General Staff (Marshal Zhukov) or to the People's Commissar of Defense (Timoshenko) - he doesn't speak with any of us.

Zastavenko, from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism: The people around Stalin did not help to evaluate the situation properly. In the beginning of June (June 5, 1941) Kalinin gave a speech at the Political-Military Academy. He said: "The Germans are preparing to attack us but we are ready. And the sooner they do it the better. We will wring their necks."

Voice in the hall: The old windbag!

Zavstavenko: That was the way the Politburo judged the situation; they underestimated the power of the Germans. Stalin was not the only one responsible for what happened. (Murmurs in the hall.)

Dashichev, of the General Staff: Deborin has said some incorrect things concerning the 45 cannons. At the beginning of the war this cannon shot clear through all kinds of German armor. To stop production amounted to disarming the army, since the other type of cannon (the 82 millimeter) was not yet ready for production. The army found itself without antitank artillery and without ammunition.

As for our sources - the worst thing is that the Soviet sources have not yet been published. For example, to consider the communication of the Soviet attaché on the fact that the war would be begun on June 22, it is necessary to quote from the book by the English historian, Ericson. When will all the sources finally be opened and made available? Berezhkov records the meeting of Ambassador Schulenburg and Molotov in the presence of Pavlov when Schulenburg betrayed his country by revealing that Germany would attack the USSR on June 22. Schulenburg wept and begged him to mobilize the Soviet armed forces in the hope that Hitler would be frightened. But they did not want to believe Schulenburg. (4)

(3) Voroshilov, who was commander of the 10th Army on the Tsaritsyn front, was the chief opponent of the kind of military organization projected by Trotsky.

(4) Schulenburg, German ambassador to Moscow at the time, later became involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler and was executed in 1944.

On the trials of our military leaders (the Tukhachevsky-Yakir group) - the false evidence was prepared by the Gestapo but the idea came from Stalin, who caused it to be suggested to the fascist leaders through General Skoblin. Our misfortune is that these documents are inaccessible. Golikov committed crimes, not only because he doctored intelligence to please Stalin, but because he had the best agents of our counter-espionage abroad arrested.

Voice in the hall: Including Sorge!

Dashichev: Are the causes of the tragedy of June, 1941, completely clarified in this book? It is necessary to explain them still more profoundly. Stalin was the one chiefly responsible for this tragedy. He was the one who created such a situation in our country. Stalin's greatest crime was to usurp power, to destroy our best cadres in the army and the party. None of our leaders, although they understood the international situation, had the courage to fight for the measures needed to defend the country. This is their terrible guilt before the party and the people. There are still people today who say we must not speak ill of Stalin, that Stalin was not the only one. This is wrong. For a driver of a bus, any accident that happens is his fault. Stalin took the responsibility of leading the country on himself alone. And his guilt is enormous.

It is necessary to define with more precision the positions of Churchill, Schulenburg, Räder, Halder (the latter two in Hitler's staff were opposed to a war with the USSR.) It is necessary to explain the motives for their actions; they were not exactly lovers of our country. Hitler strongly influenced the decision of the military. During a meeting at the highest level, Hitler said: "The Red Army has been weakened as never before; this is the fundamental factor which leads me to make this decision. It is necessary to go to war to prevent the formation of the new cadres." Every historian must have the courage to speak the truth.

Roshchin, of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism: Some hold that we must speak only of the victories and that it is better to remain silent with regard to defeats, but we must not do this. Such a procedure damages not only the science of history but causes enormous harm to our state. It is necessary to analyze and to understand the causes of the defeats in order to prevent mistakes in the future. Stalin was the one chiefly responsible for the defeat. I do not agree with Debordin with regard to the Tass communiqué - it was not a diplomatic maneuver but a crime. This communiqué disarmed the people morally. Stalin and those around him did everything to prevent the Soviet people from readying themselves for war. When Kuznetsov informed Malenkov that some defensive measures had been carried out by the fleet - it was June 17, 1941, - Malenkov laughed at him and said: "You act as if the war was going to start tomorrow." Zhdanov was present at this meeting; his attitude was more serious, but even he did nothing. Malenkov revoked all the measures taken. But even our military leaders cannot avoid responsibility.

Malnikov, of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR: According to Debordin, it would seem that Nekrich over-rated the negative role of Stalin in his book. This is not true. The role of Stalin is under-rated in fact.

Let us speak about a problem that still cannot be raised to-day because it is tabooed, that is the negotiations between Molotov and Hitler in Berlin in November, 1940. Let us examine the situation. The Barbarossa Plan was

* Insert:..decapitated; 80% of its commanders have been liquidated. The Red army has been ...

nearing completion. the movement of German troops towards the frontier of the USSR was beginning. The Hitlerite diplomats were stepping up their activities in the Balkans and Finland. To hide these preparations from the Soviet government, Hitler proposed a to-level meeting. The chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Molotov, goes to Berlin. Hitler conveys to him a plan for partitioning a good deal of territory in general. Molotov asks concretely for the Dardanelles, Bulgaria, Rumania and Finland. Hitler did not want to initiate a discussion of this type because he feared that the news would leak out to his future allies. In response to Molotov's requests he proposed that the Soviet Union should join the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. (5) This demonstrates his principles of action.

Vasilenko, of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism: Deborin's concern that the book puts too much emphasis on Stalin's role is without foundation. Objectively we had every possibility of resisting the Germans. But Stalin ruined everything. When it was too late to justify his shameful defeat, he put forward the commonplace notion that the aggressor is always better prepared for war.

Kulish: We are witnessing the birth of a "new" understanding of the causes of the defeat at the beginning of the war, proposed by Deborin. It was not only and not so much Stalin, he says. This is in the line of the cult of the personality. That Stalin is guilty or not too guilty is a typical notion of the cult of the personality - it is always Stalin alone. It is necessary to study the problem more deeply. Why did such a situation develop? How did our government, ruled by Stalin, rule the country? How did it defend our people against the danger? Was the government fit for the position it occupied? No, it was not fit. It is necessary to analyze the process that produced Stalin, who was not fit for his position as head of the party and the state, with unlimited powers.

Still another very obvious error: in all our historical literature, the reunification with the western Ukraine and western Belorussia is always held to be a factor that improved the defensive capacity of the country. Still we know that things were different. These areas, for a series of well-known reasons, weakened the frontier defensive capacity. Therefore in judging the reunification of the western regions, it is better to speak of the liberating and internationalist functions of the Red Army.

Gnedin: It is a good book. I do not want to speak but the discussion but the discussion has forced me to take the platform. For two years I gave intelligence reports to Stalin and Molotov. All these reports passed through my hands. Golikov, of course, was a deceiver, but that is not the question. All the "reliable" parts of the reports were usually reflected in one way or another in our official press, but Stalin paid attention fundamentally to the things considered "dubious". He knew everything and his policy was to do nothing. Golikov was responsible for the repressions among the cadres of the GPU, but it is not his fault that defensive measures were not taken. In our historical literature it is claimed that Stalin became head of the government

(5) Molotov remained in Berlin on the 12th & 13th November, 1940. Hitler tried to convince Molotov that the Soviet Union's natural sphere of interest was in Asia, while Molotov asked instead for European territories. On Hitler's offer to join the Axis, Molotov replied, according to the testimony of the interpreter Schmidt (Statist auf diplomatischer Buhne 1923-45) that this was acceptable in general but only on the basis of equality.

on May 5, 1941, to prepare the country for defense. But we do not have a single fact to confirm this evaluation. And Stalin, in fact, did nothing to strengthen the defensive capacity of the USSR. We have every reason to believe that Stalin became head of the government not to prepare the country for war but to make a deal with Hitler. (6)

Slezkin, of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR: I was at the front and when I was 19 years old I participated in the battles of the frontier in 1941.

Stalin acted in a way that can easily be described as criminal. The situation of the cult of the personality - provocations, repressions - created a vicious circle. Everyone strove to please his own boss, giving him only such information as would please him, or adding a negative commentary on information which would not please him. Everyone tried to avoid expressing his own ideas. All this brought immeasurable harm to the country. Everyone is guilty for not having decided to say what they thought. The more important the officials, the higher you go, the greater the responsibility. At a certain level the renunciation of truth in the name of one's own privileges is a crime, and the higher the level, the greater the crime. The chief culprit was Stalin. The 1939 pact was perhaps necessary. It was a crime to base one's hopes on this pact, and above all to cease, as a result of it, to fight against fascism (and this was done on orders from Stalin.)

Yakir, of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR: (7) The book is very good. Some speakers have dealt with the Tukhachevsky-Yakir affair. I believe that the speeches on the fascist provocation, on the "red fascicle" and the documents contained in it are useless and even harmful, in that they draw the discussion away from the central point. There was no red fascicle at the trial and the red fascicle was not brought up. All of the accused were found guilty on the basis of accusations inspired by Stalin which were made to the War Council of June 1-4, 1937, and of the desire openly expressed by Stalin to be rid of them. Some among the preceding speakers have spoken of Stalin as "Comrade Stalin". This is improper. Stalin is no one's comrade and still less ours.

Stalin impeded the development of our armaments by liquidating many eminent technicians, among others the founders of missile science, Ikomirov, Langeman (the inventor of the katusha, a multiple rocket launcher used as ground artillery), Kurchevsky, Bekaury. It is necessary to study the problem of the concentration camps. Study it from the economic point of view. It was wartime and in the concentration camps were imprisoned millions of healthy men, who were specialists in all sectors of the economic and military life of the country. Furthermore, considerable forces were required to guard them.

Telegin: The author has a noncritical attitude towards foreign sources, in particular toward memoirs which contain few elements of truth....

Voice from the hall: And in our memoirs?

Telegin: In our memoirs, too, there are many outrageous lies. (Laughter)

(6) Before May 5, 1941, Stalin had no official responsibilities in the government of the USSR. Shortly after, the Belgian, Norwegian & Greek diplomats, representing countries occupied by the Germans, were expelled from the USSR. At the same time, Bogomolov was sent as ambassador to the pro-Nazi Petain government.

(7) The son of the Yakir mentioned in the proceedings

It is necessary to remember that there are obvious traces of the exaggerations of the Krushchev period in these memoirs. (Murmurs in the hall.)

Telpukovsky: The political leaders of all countries underestimated Hitler. However, after the fall of France, these evaluations were reconsidered, except those of Stalin. Stalin relied on the hope that Hitler, if he did not break his neck, would become entangled in the war in the West. Clearly, when the war began, Stalin was still making attempts to avoid the conflict. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the three separate strategic directives of the high command of the Red Army in the first days of the war. Stalin is the main culprit, but there were others too, each in his own sphere.

Petrovsky, of the Institute of Historic Archives: It is necessary to keep in mind that fascism emerged while Lenin was still alive. Mussolini took power in Italy, the Kapp putsch, etc. Lenin pointed out that fascism was the main enemy. Stalin did not pay any heed to Lenin's warning and declared that the social democracy was the main enemy. This "theory" was widely disseminated and divided millions of workers throughout the world. Stalin is a criminal.

Boltin: Comrade Petrovsky, in this hall, on this platform, it is necessary to choose your words. Are you a Communist?

Petrovsky: Yes.

Boltin: I have not read in any document, in any directive of our party, obligatory for both of us, that Stalin was a criminal.

Petrovsky: The Twenty-third Congress of the party voted to remove Stalin from the Mausoleum for his crimes against the party. Therefore, he is a criminal.

Snegov: Nekrich's book is an honest and useful book. When there is disorder in a military unit, when the breechlocks are in one place and the guns in another, when the patrols and sentries are asleep, the unit is defeated. When headquarters orders it, the commander of the detachment of this kind is shot. And none of us has anything to laugh about. Stalin was in the same position as the commander, but his detachment was the entire country. Stalin ought to have been shot and instead they are now trying to justify him.

Why is Nekrich's book, where Stalin is attacked, submitted so quickly to discussion and even condemned, while the book of the notorious falsifier of the history of the party, I. Petrov, which attributes positive acts to Stalin which he never did, has awaited discussion for some years already? Why did Debordin attempt to justify Stalin? When Hitler was preparing to attack Poland, Stalin helped him. (8) He shot all the Polish Communists in the USSR and outlawed the Polish Communist Party. Why is the fourth partition of Poland defined as a liberating expedition? How can you be a Communist and speak calmly about Stalin who betrayed and sold out Communists, who liquidated almost all the delegates to the 17th Congress and almost all the members of the Central Committee elected at that Congress, who betrayed the Spanish Republic, Poland, all the Communists in all countries?

(8) It is evident that it is considered that the existence has been confirmed of the secret August 23 protocol which granted Germany a free hand in attacking Poland (the partition of which was provided in the protocol) and which promised to furnish Soviet supplies for the war against France and England.

Deborin (in conclusion): I have not created any new theory and I have not taken on the task of defending or justifying Stalin. It is necessary to examine all the aspects of the cult in greater depth. As for Snegov's remarks, we have heard what Snegov said about Poland more than once. And these claims came from the enemy camp. It is strange that Snegov also shares this point of view. Comrade Snegov, you must tell us to which camp you belong.

Snegov: I am from Kolyma. (9)

Deborin: All these things have to be verified.

Voices in the hall: Do you want his telephone number? Like the old days? (They do not permit Deborin to continue.)

Nekrich: Thank you for your observations. There's no doubt that Deborin does not hold the ideas that have been attributed to him. One often exaggerates in the heat of the discussion. The main one responsible for the grave defeats and the whole tragedy of the first period in the war is Stalin. However, one should not give his own chief incorrect information just to please him. Stalinism begins with us, with the little people. Stalin wanted to outwit Hitler and instead deceived himself and the whole business ended in a catastrophe. He knew better than anyone about the liquidation of the leading cadres and about the weaknesses of the army.

Snegov (three minutes on a point of personal privilege): I thought that I was participating in a scientific discussion. Deborin, instead of scientific proofs, has introduced "arguments" vintage 1937. But it is not easy to frighten us with concentration camps! Times have changed and the past will not return. (Applause.)

Boltin(in conclusion): This meeting has produced many new and interesting things on the entire problem in its complete context. The remarks of comrades Snegov and Petrovsky were very impassioned. I can agree with much of Comrade Snegov's remarks but not all. Our country cannot be accused of desiring to deprive the Polish state of its independence or of partitioning it. This is the point of view of the bourgeois historians and the White emigrants. It was up to us to defend the independence of Poland. Some comrades have described criticism of the cult of the personality as an exaggeration of the Krushchev period. This is fundamentally wrong. The resolutions of the twentieth and twenty-second congresses on the cult of the personality are not exaggerations of the Krushchev period but are of vital importance for every honest Communist. (He thanks the author and all those present.)

The sessions lasted from 10.15 to 4.45, with an intermission of one hour.

(9) Kolyma was a famous concentration camp in the Stalinist period.

A Letter to Tribune by Ernest Tate on the Beating He Received
Outside The S.L.L.s Meeting on November 17th .

8 Teynbee Street,
London, E.1.

To The Tribune

December 20th, 1966.

Dear Editor,

Recently Francis Flavius referred in his column to my being physically assaulted outside the 17th November meeting of the Socialist Labour League held, ironically enough, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution.

I don't understand why Flavius attacks me as a 'sectarian' without knowing my views; I have never discussed them with him. Perhaps he has his own reasons. But I'm sure if he were to venture outside the general area of St. John Street and make contact with the other currents in the Left he might learn something from them and he might also discover what 'sectarianism' really means.

However, having said that, I think it is good that the question has been raised for discussion in Tribune. Flavius makes the point that he doesn't know what occurred outside the SLL meeting'. Leaving aside his possible fear of legal action, this would seem to cast some doubts on the truthfulness of the information I related to him and which Peace News and The Socialist Leader courageously printed. Many others have seen my failure to go to the police and make a complaint against the attackers as only strengthening these doubts. Nevertheless, I wish to maintain my right not to call the police as I feel that such affairs are matters between various sections of the working class movement, and for what are to me obvious reasons, not between the state and the socialist movement or any segment of it. Someone has yet to rationally explain to me what good purpose would be served in having some mistaken and misguided individuals thrown into prison. The problem is a political one, of people having the wrong ideas, therefore it has to be dealt with on that level.

The day socialists call the police to arbitrate their relations with other socialists will be a sad one indeed. It has been the experience of the working class movement that state intervention into its affairs does not solve anything, but instead makes things very complicated. We should be strong enough, and mature enough, to settle our own disputes. I am convinced that an independent enquiry into the events of the 17th November will prove that the statements I have made on what took place are truthful.

When I spoke to Flavius he mentioned that although I, Ernest Tate, may have some scruples about calling upon the state to prosecute fellow socialists, Gerry Healy would not. As it now appears, Flavius would seem to be proven correct. Peace News, The Socialist Leader and myself each received solicitors' letters from Gerry Healy threatening legal action. Rather than face the prospect of a long legal fight, Peace News and The Socialist Leader rewarded Healy with an apology and, although they are not the richest journals in England, he took from them an additional ten guineas each.

The leaders of the Socialist Labour League hope to shut me up by resorting to the courts, after having failed by more brutal means on the 17th November. The issue is still freedom of speech and freedom of discussion within the Left. My reply to the legal threats has been to repeat my original charges in detail, informing the SLL leaders that I refuse to be intimidated. I have posted my reply, over 1,000 copies, all over the country, and to the addresses of all the Labour and socialist journals to which I have access. If any Tribune readers wish to have copies, write to me at the above address enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Fraternally

signed

Ernest Tate

.....

From World Outlook, Dec. 16th.

Text of a Letter from French Trotskyists on the Tate Case

(The following letter was made public by Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. The letter referred to in the first paragraph appeared in the December 2 World Outlook together with related correspondence.)

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December 1, 1966

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party
New York

Dear Comrades,

We have taken cognizance of the letter which you sent to the SLL (Socialist Labour League) of Great Britain November 21 following the assault on Comrade Ernest Tate during a meeting held by that organization.

The Political Bureau of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (French section of the Fourth International) joins in your protest against methods that are outrageous in the workers movement in general and in the Trotskyist movement in particular.

The employment of these methods is, in the case in question, the result of a deliberate policy, since it is not an isolated incident. During November, the group that calls itself the "Organization Communiste Internationaliste," and which publishes La Verite, held a meeting in Paris at which the main speaker was G. Healy. He devoted most of his speech to attacking the Fourth International (which he claims to have unmasked as having gone over to the camp of the bourgeoisie) and the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire de France (Revolutionary Communist Youth of France), levelling against them slanders such as he printed in his paper against the majority of the participants in the demonstration in Liege. After this verbal assault, members of the JCR who were present in the hall, asked that one of them be given the floor. This was sufficient for the sergeants at arms to set upon them with blows. Members of the Voix Ouvriere, who objected to such methods, were likewise attacked. We are attaching to this letter a copy of an article which appeared in Voix Ouvriere testifying to the Facts....

