

Jose Maria Sison's Evaluation of Stalin, the CPSU and the United Front Against Fascism

Sison's view that "Stalin's merits within his own period of leadership are principal and his demerits are secondary" (p. 17) is not supported by Stalin's record of domestic policy after 1929 and his foreign policy after 1935.

To begin with, it must be recognized that Stalin's political positions after Lenin's death in 1923 were more correct in meeting the challenges of building socialism in the early years of the Soviet Union than those of the other top leaders of the CPSU.

In the early 1920s, Stalin defeated Trotsky's line that it was impossible to build socialism in the Soviet Union unless the working class in Western Europe, mainly Germany, was first successful in overthrowing their bourgeoisies. This political struggle was critical to overcome pessimism about the prospects for socialist construction in the Soviet Union.

In the 1920s, Stalin also defeated Trotsky's "left" line of rapid industrialization at the expense of the exhausted peasantry, and Bukharin's mirror opposite rightist line of continuing the New Economic Policy based on a permanent political alliance with the rich peasants. Stalin had to overcome opposition in much of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to the first Five-Year Plan of undertaking industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture at the end of the 1920s.

Under the leadership of Lenin and then Stalin, CPSU adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s that made it possible to rebuild the Soviet economy and reconstitute its working class after four years of devastating civil war. While the CPSU maintained firm control over the socialist state and over most strategic industries and financial institutions, the NEP permitted Russian capitalists to manage many industries. The NEP also invited foreign concessions in some industries. As the Soviet economy got back on its feet in the late 1920s, cancellation of the concessions began.

In 1922, Lenin signed the first military treaties with Germany. First Lenin and then Stalin took advantage of the desire of the Weimar governments to engage in cooperative training and weapons development with the Red Army at air bases and tank training grounds in the Soviet Union. This military cooperation came to an end when Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in 1933 with a virulently anti-Bolshevik program that included suppression of the German Communist Party.¹

¹ *Hitler's Nemesis: The Red Army, 1930-1945*, by Walter S. Dunn, Jr. (1994), pp. xvi, 15, 107. Dunn's book is based on declassified Soviet military sources that became available after 1991, as well as captured German records on the Red Army.

The Top Down Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture in 1929-1932

Sison writes that “the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture [in the early 1930s] was carried out in accordance with the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin,” and that collectivization was opposed by “the violent reaction of the rich peasants who refused to put their farms, tools and animals under collectivization, slaughtered their work animals and organized resistance.” (“Stand for Socialism,” pp. 13, 14)

Sison avoids discussion of the top-down, militarized collectivization that took place in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. This turned potential allies into enemies, leading to the deportation of two million kulaks (rich peasants) to Siberia and Central Asia and the employment of the Soviet military and armed workers against peasants who resisted collectivization. These policies also led to widespread famine and the death of millions of peasants in the Ukraine and other regions.

In a speech to the CCP Central Committee in 1955, Mao addressed several important aspects of the collectivization that was underway in China, including the voluntary nature of collective-formation and the importance of uniting with rich and middle peasants who had livestock:

“It is necessary to observe the principles of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, make comprehensive plans and give flexible guidance. Given these conditions, the co-operatives, I think, will be able to achieve better quality, increase production and prevent the loss of livestock. We must by all means avoid the mistake once made in the Soviet Union which led to the slaughtering of livestock in large numbers. . . . Since we have only a few tractors, oxen are a treasure, they are the chief implement in agricultural production.”²

In the Soviet Union from 1929-1933, the collectivization of agriculture was not a voluntary, largely process, as there was in new democratic China in the early 1950s under Mao’s leadership. This included the formation of mutual work teams based first among poor and middle peasants, and then proceeding to lower and higher levels of peasant collectives that drew in the rich peasants. In socialist China, widespread state coercion was not needed to force the middle and rich peasants to join the collectives.

The Rapid Industrialization of the Soviet Union in the 1930s

Beginning in 1929, successive five-year plans accelerated the development of heavy industry. Mass production techniques were adopted with capitalist technical contracts from American companies. Entire auto, tractor and steel industries were expanded and modernized in this way. These factories formed the basis for Soviet

² “The Debate on the Co-operative Transformation of Agriculture and the Current Class Struggle,” Concluding Speech to the Enlarged Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the CCP, October 11, 1955, *Selected Works, Volume IV*, p. 221.

war industry, turning out tanks, artillery and other weapons. By 1937, the Soviet Union had become the third largest industrial power in the world behind the U.S. and Germany.³

However, in the course of this all-out industrialization drive in the 1930s, Stalin and the CPSU leadership promoted the idea that building socialism was a matter of increasing production, employing one-man management, letting the cadres decide key matters in the plants, and making widespread use of material incentives. The widespread use of U.S. managers and technicians reinforced the CPSU's belief that civilian and war production could be accelerated without making revolutionary transformations on the factory shop floor.

Just as in the case of Liu Shiaoqi and Deng Xiaoping in China in the 1960s and the 1970s, the line that the development of the "productive forces" outweighs the promotion of revolutionary politics created fertile ground for the development and promotion of capitalist roaders like Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the 1930s.

In contrast, Mao's political and economic line for the development of the socialist economy in China was concentrated in the slogan of "grasp revolution, promote production." By 1971, piece rate system and individual bonuses had been abolished in most Chinese factories. "Triple combinations" of workers, technicians and managers were organized to solve technical problems and make innovations at the point of production. Managers and full-time cadre were required to work on the shop floors on a regular or rotating basis.⁴

These revolutionary innovations stimulated production in socialist China. During the Cultural Revolution years of 1966-1976, industrial production grew at a documented rate of more than 10 percent annually.⁵ The capitalist methods employed in Soviet industry in the 1930s raised production, but at a high cost to socialism.

The Great Purges of 1937-1938 and their Grievous Political Legacy

Sison's summation of Stalin's leadership of the CPSU in the late 1930s mainly consists of political apologetics for Stalin. Sison states that "One ramification abetted the failure to distinguish contradictions among the people from those between the people and the enemy, and the propensity to apply *administrative measures* against

³ *Hitler's Nemesis*, pp. xvii, 3.

⁴ *China's Industrial Revolution: Politics, Planning and Management, 1949 to the Present, 1977*, by Stephen Andors, 218, 187.

⁵ *The Deng Xiaoping Era: 1978-1994*, by Maurice Meisner (1996), p. 1989; Mobo Gao, "Debating the Cultural Revolution: Do We Only Know What We Believe?" *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2002, pp. 424-425.

those construed as enemies of the people...Thus, in the 1936-1938 period, *arbitrariness* victimized a great number of people.” (“Stand for Socialism,” p. 14)⁶

This analysis prettifies the widespread political repression that was employed against all perceived political dissent, including much of the leadership and rank and file of the CPSU, from 1937 up to the German invasion in 1941. Sison employs the muted term of “arbitrariness” to the show trials and executions of “Old Bolsheviks” such as Kamenev, Bukharin and Zinoviev, and to most of the high command of the Red Army, who were falsely accused of being “German agents” or “saboteurs.”

Red Army Chief of Staff Tukhachevsky was removed from his command after the German Gestapo took advantage of the purges by forging documents accusing him of treason, and sent them to the NKVD via President Benes of Czechoslovakia. In May 1937, Tukhachevsky was arrested and executed by the NKVD (the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the forerunner of the KGB).⁷

The Old Bolsheviks and the top generals of the Red Army were only the highest profile victims of the Great Purges of 1937-1938, under which Stalin, Molotov and Nikolai Yezhov of the NKVD executed over 680,000 people, and sent 1.3 million into prison camps by 1939.⁸ These figures do not come from anti-communist historians, but from the detailed archives of the NKVD, which were opened up to Russian and Western historians in 1991.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has provided more detail on this period: “For two full years in 1937 and 1938, top Communist officials in every branch of the bureaucracy— government, party, industrial, military, and finally even police— were denounced and arrested as ‘enemies of the people.’ Some were shot; others disappeared into the Gulag...Only 24 members of the Central Committee elected at the 18th Party Congress in 1939 had been members of the previous Central Committee, elected five years earlier at the Congress of Victors” in 1934.⁹

For Sison to state that many of the 680,000 people executed during the Great Purges of 1937-38 were “real British and German spies and bourgeois nationalists” (“Stand for Socialism,” p. 14) was to accept NKVD falsifications and refuse to face difficult historical facts.

When Sison wrote “Stand for Socialism” in 1992 after he had settled in the Netherlands, he studiously avoided discussion of the grave damage done to socialism in the Soviet Union by the Great Purges. We will never know how many revolutionary communists both within and outside the CPSU were falsely accused

⁶ The italics are meant to underline Sison’s political euphemisms and his attempt to avoid mentioning the Great Purges of 1937-1938 that took place under Stalin’s leadership.

⁷ *Hitler’s Nemesis*, pp. 3-4.

⁸ *The Russian Revolution*, by Sheila Fitzpatrick (2008), pp. 166, 184.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

of being “counter-revolutionaries” and executed by the NKVD or sent to Siberian prison camps to experience slow death.

Stalin’s Great Purges eliminated a major revolutionary cohort in the CPSU. The Purges also made any form of political dissent life-threatening, thereby undermining the basis of both socialism and the continuing class struggle under socialism.

Capitalist roaders like Khrushchev not only escaped the wrath of the NKVD, but served up political opponents to Yezhov’s executioners in 1937-1938.¹⁰ Thus, the Great Purges were a major factor in preparing the ground for the capitalist restoration led by Khrushchev, Brezhnev and their revisionist allies in the leadership of the CPSU and the military that took place in 1957.

Sison diverts attention from the formation of this grouping of capitalist roaders in the top leadership of the CPSU by discussing only a social stratum of lesser political importance: “The new intelligentsia produced by the rapidly expanding Soviet educational system had a decreasing sense of proletarian class stand and an increasing sense that it was sufficient to have the expertise to become bureaucrats and technocrats in order to build socialism...” (“Stand for Socialism,” p. 15)

If Sison did not have full access to the revealing contents of the NKVD archives on the Great Purges when he wrote “Stand for Socialism” in 1992, there is no excuse for his even more blatant attempt to justify Stalin’s actions in 2004: “It seemed adequate that Stalin paid attention to those that could be construed as enemies of socialism and agents of imperialism.” What about the 680,000 people, supporters of socialism and opponents of imperialism, that Stalin and the NKVD’s Yezhov “paid attention to”? (“At Home in the World,” p. 161)

A materialist discussion of Stalin’s actions that politically repudiates, instead of lightly criticizes, his actions during the late 1930s is necessary to make sure that something like the Great Purges is never repeated under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. This is necessary to win over revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces around the world who are well aware of these executions and imprisonment of millions of honest party members and people in the Soviet Union. As part of this, Sison’s euphemistic description of 680,000 executions by Stalin’s secret police as “administrative measures” must be rejected.

In a certain sense, it is even more important for Maoists in the Philippines to discuss and repudiate Stalin’s Great Purges because of the anti-infiltrator (DPA) campaigns from 1985-1989 that falsely charged CPP and NPA members with being enemy agents. The Philippine government has time and again used these campaigns as

¹⁰ According to the Ukrainian NKVD chief, it was “only after the faithful Stalinist Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev arrived in Ukraine [that] the smashing of enemies of the people began in earnest.” *Khrushchev*, by William Taubman (2003), pp. 119-120.

examples of how the “Stalinist” CPP would handle political dissent if it came to power.

The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945

Sison correctly points out that the historic victory over Nazi Germany came at a steep political cost to the Soviet Union. Sison notes that Stalin “made concessions to conservative institutions and organizations. For instance, the Russian Orthodox Church was given back its buildings and its privileges....the line of Soviet patriotism further subdued the line of class struggle among the old and new intelligentsia and the entire people.” (“Stand for Socialism,” p. 16)

The war with Nazi Germany of 1941-1945 was not fought to defend socialism, but to defend the national interests of Russia, the most developed republic in the USSR. This undermined the process of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, both during and after the war.

Sison does not come to grips with the lack of combat readiness of the Red Army in 1941 as a result of the purges by Stalin and the NKVD and executions of nearly the top military command of the Red Army in 1937-38.¹¹ In addition, Stalin and his newly appointed Chief of Staff, Georgi Zhukov, adopted an incorrect military strategy in the face of the looming German invasion.

In the late 1920s the Red Army had adopted a strategy of “strategic defense,” which was appropriate for the deployment of its relatively weak armored and air force. In June 1941, the military strategy of Stalin and Zhukov was to halt a German invasion as close to the border as possible, and then to launch a “deep” counter-offensive that would surround and destroy the German army’s main forces.¹²

This strategy was a very costly failure. In June 1941, most of the Red Army was annihilated by the Wehrmacht and German air force, losing more than 3 million killed or missing. The German army rapidly broke through the Red Army’s weak border defenses, and encircled and captured whole Red armies at a time. With no plan for a strategic retreat, Stalin ordered his commanders to stand and fight--and face certain destruction.

As a result of the disaster at the front in June 1941, 40% of the population of the USSR, including its most economically developed regions and principal wheat-

¹¹ According to *Stalin’s Keys to Victory*, “The disaster experienced by the Red Army in 1941 was a direct result of earlier decisions made by Stalin. In 1938, he had purged the army of practically all officers from the level of division commanders upward.... The atmosphere of fear created a philosophy of referring all decisions to higher authority and refusal to take responsibility. Inaction was preferable to any action that might be considered wrong in the future. Such a condition was suicidal in the face of the German blitzkrieg.” (p. 163)

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 7.

growing areas, were occupied by the German army. Fanatical Nazi SS and Gestapo units followed the German army into these regions, and undertook a reign of terror and executions of millions of suspected communists, government officials and Jews.

Stalin and Zhukov were able to correct their military errors, and replace the Red Army's losses with the emergency mobilization of 5.3 million reservists by June 30, 1941. The reorganized Red armies, which now adopted the doctrine of "strategic defense," stopped the German army at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad in the unusually harsh winter of 1941-42.

The Russian government's mobilization allowed the Red Army to increase its strength at the front to 6.1 million in 1943, after the encirclement and capture of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad, the initial turning point of the battle against Nazi Germany. By 1945, 2 million women were fighting in the Red Army, driving tanks, serving as lethal snipers that killed 12,000 German soldiers and flying combat aircraft.¹³

While the U.S. government extended a "Lend-Lease" program of military equipment, the Soviet army largely fought with Russian-made weapons. All of the huge ex-automobile and tractor factories employing as many as 40,000 workers had been built under U.S. technical supervision in the 1930s.¹⁴ These factories turned out T-34 tanks, anti-tank guns and long range artillery, including the mobile multiple-fire Katyusha artillery, which the intimidated German soldiers called "Stalin organs."¹⁵

The victories at Stalingrad in late 1942 and at the decisive tank battle at Kursk south of Moscow in the spring of 1943 made it clear to Stalin and the leadership of the Red Army that it was only a matter of time before they defeated Nazi Germany without a U.S.-British "second front" in Western Europe, which was still a year away.¹⁶

Through the sacrifice of at more than 20 million people—at least 9 million civilians and 11 million military dead or missing--the people of the Soviet Union, led by the leadership of the CPSU and the Red Army, successfully defended Russia and ended Nazi Germany's threat to the people of Europe and the world.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 133, 163, 169.

¹⁶ While the U.S., British and French imperialists had been glad to let the Soviet Union do the bulk of the fighting against the German army in order to weaken both of their armed forces, they agreed to an invasion of France in 1944 when they grew concerned that the Red Army would occupy all of Germany, and even drive further into Western Europe. The much hyped "D-Day" in June 1944 of U.S.-British forces took place only as the Red Army crossed the Soviet border into Poland. It was the Red Army, not the U.S.-British forces, that liberated the Nazi concentration camps in Poland and eastern Germany, saving the lives of thousands of Jews and political prisoners from a number of countries in Europe.

The Rise of Khrushchev and his Revisionist Allies in the Top Levels of the CPSU

According to Sison, in 1952 “Stalin realized he had made a mistake in prematurely declaring that there were no more classes and class struggle in the Soviet Union. ... But it was too late, the Soviet party and state was already swamped by a large number of bureaucrats with waning proletarian revolutionary consciousness. These bureaucrats and their bureaucratism would become the base of modern revisionism.” (“Stand for Socialism,” p. 16)

Sison claims that “Khrushchev’s career as a revisionist in power started in 1953. He was a bureaucratic sycophant and actively took part in repressive actions during the time of Stalin. To become the first secretary of the CPSU and accumulate power in his own hands, he played off the followers of Stalin against each other and succeeded in having Beria executed after a summary trial.” (pp. 19-20)

It is not coincidental that Sison claims that Khrushchev’s career as a revisionist in power started in 1953, the year of Stalin’s death. In fact, Nikita Khrushchev rose to power as First Party Secretary of the Ukraine and member of the CPSU Presidium and Politburo in 1938 in the midst of the Great Purges, which he loyally carried out in the restive Ukraine. During World War 2, Khrushchev was appointed Lieutenant-General and became the political-military commander of Kiev Military District No. 2. after its liberation in 1944.¹⁷

Thus, Khrushchev achieved high positions and cultivated revisionist allies in the CPSU and the Red Army during the 1930s and 1940s, at a time when Stalin was General Secretary of the CPSU. In March 1953 Khrushchev was appointed Secretary of the CPSU after Stalin’s death. It took Khrushchev four years to eliminate his rivals and consolidate power. Stalin’s last secret police chief, Lavrenti Beria, who had led the NKVD purges in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1936-1937, was the first to fall in December 1953.¹⁸

In February 1956 at the 20th CPSU Congress, Khrushchev made his famous “secret speech”—none of the foreign communist delegations were invited--detailing Stalin’s imprisonment and execution of tens of thousands of innocent Party leaders and members. Khrushchev did not criticize his own widespread use of executions by NKVD agents against members of the Ukrainian Communist Party.

Mao wrote that Khrushchev’s “opening the books” on Stalin’s Great Purges was justified. However, Mao also pointed out that Khrushchev was undertaking “de-

¹⁷ *The Khrushchev Era: 1953-1964*, by Martin McCauley (1995), pp. 9-11.

¹⁸ *Beria: Stalin’s First Lieutenant*, by Amy Knight (1993), pp. 79-86.

Stalinization” in order to attack the socialist construction that did take place in the Soviet Union under Stalin’s leadership. In other words, Khrushchev was playing the

“Stalin card” in order to clear the way politically for the open restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

The “secret” nature of Khrushchev’s speech was quickly ended when it was read at “closed” Party meetings, and when it was published abroad. Following the 20th Party Congress, anti-communist riots erupted first in Poland. Then in October 1956, a much more powerful anti-Soviet uprising took place in Hungary. These revolts targeted unpopular regimes that had been publically identified with Stalin. As they took on an openly pro-Western orientation and threatened to bring to power governments that would leave the Soviet bloc, these revolts were crushed by Soviet troops and tanks directly (Hungary) and indirectly (Poland).¹⁹

In the spring of 1957, CPSU Politburo members Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich—who had reservations about Khrushchev’s method of de-Stalinization and his adoption of a line of “peaceful competition” with the U.S. imperialists--deposed CPSU Secretary Khrushchev at an emergency meeting of the CPSU Presidium. In response, Khrushchev played his military trump card, calling on the support of Marshal Zhukov, who Khrushchev had appointed Minister of Defense. Zhukov’s jets flew 100 Central Committee members loyal to Khrushchev to the Kremlin in order to restore him to power.²⁰

Thus, revisionist military coups in the Soviet Union in 1957 and China in 1976 brought openly state capitalist forces to power.

Sison’s Inaccurate and Self-Serving Chronology of Khrushchev’s Rise to Power

Sison’s chronology serves his inaccurate claim that “Khrushchev’s career as a revisionist in power started in 1953,” the year of Stalin’s death. It denies that a new bourgeoisie in the Soviet party developed *during* the period of Stalin’s leadership,

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 71-73. While Mao criticized Khrushchev for sending Soviet military forces into Hungary after seeking “advice” from the Chinese CP after the fact, Mao did support the Soviet intervention in Hungary because the uprising was clearly under the leadership of the reactionary Petofi Clubs and the U.S. imperialists, who were trying to break up the Soviet bloc. Mao had serious criticisms of how the Communist Parties in Hungary and Poland were handling political dissent, leading to popular revolts that could have been minimized. Nevertheless, Mao considered the Soviet Union and its East European allies to still be socialist in late 1956.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 76-77. In the wake of the Khrushchev-Zhukov coup, Khrushchev’s chief rivals were politically sidelined for good. Molotov was made the ambassador to Mongolia, Malenkov was appointed the director of a power station in a remote corner of Central Asia, and Kaganovich was made director of a cement factory in Sverdlovsk. Ibid., p. 78.

and was poised to seize nationwide power under Khrushchev's leadership after Stalin's death.

It was also misleading to claim, as Sison does, that "the new bourgeoisie" in the USSR arose from "the bureaucracy and the new intelligentsia." In his 1996 paper, "Long Live Lenin and Stalin," Liwanag/Sison writes that "In the historical experience of both the Soviet Union and China... eventually a new petty bourgeoisie arose from the new intelligentsia and bureaucracy as a result of uneven development and the errors and shortcomings of the revolutionary party of the proletariat in the conduct of the two-line struggle with the bourgeoisie." (p. 12)

This is an attempt by Sison to negate the Maoist understanding that a new bourgeoisie of capitalist roaders develops *within the leadership of the party itself* and is the main target of genuine communist party leaders, party members and the people in socialist society. Instead Sison claims that the new bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union developed from government bureaucrats and intellectuals, and appeared only after Stalin's death. Instead, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and other capitalist roaders in the CPSU gained important positions of power beginning in 1936 (or earlier) when Stalin claimed in a major speech that exploiting classes had disappeared and class struggle in the Soviet Union had ended.

Mao's View of Stalin in the 1950s

In the middle of the 20th century, the prevailing view in the international communist movement was that a capitalist class had to be anchored in the *private ownership* of the means of production. In a November 1936 speech on a new Draft Constitution for the CPSU(Bolshevik), Stalin claimed that due to the nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture, no exploiting classes and class struggle existed in the Soviet Union.²¹ In contrast, Mao recognized that class struggle would persist and intensify at key points in socialist society. As he pointed out in 1957 in *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*:

"In China, although in the main socialist transformation has been completed with respect to the system of ownership... the class struggle is by no means over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the different political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological fields between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will continue to be long and tortuous and at times will even become very acute. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook and so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of which will win out, socialism or capitalism, is still not really settled."²²

²¹ www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/11/25.html

²² www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5, Section VIII.

This theoretical perspective has immense political implications. A claim that exploiting classes have been abolished under socialism strongly implies that the main threat to socialism must be external (capitalist encirclement and aggression), and that internal opposition is not rooted in the contradictions among classes but rather in sabotage or imperialist subversion. In contrast, Mao emphasized the existence of internal contradictions and dangers to socialism, and that they must be addressed through political and ideological means.

Denying the existence of internal contradictions in socialist society leads to serious political problems in the communist party and among the masses of people. In a speech at a CCP Cadres Meeting in Shanghai in March 1957, Mao asked: "Are there any contradictions in socialist society? Lenin once talked about this question and thought there were contradictions. But Stalin did not admit this for a long time. During Stalin's later life, people were neither allowed to speak ill of the society nor to criticize the party or the government. In fact, Stalin mistook contradictions among the people for those between ourselves and the enemy, and consequently regarded those who bad-mouthed [the party or government] or who spread gossip as enemies, thus wronging many people."

In Nanjing that same day, Mao stated: "After describing an incident involving students who had brought a petition to a party leader in Nanjing and had yelled, "Down with bureaucratism" and wanted certain problems resolved, Mao commented, "As I see it, if these were brought in front of Stalin, I think a few heads would surely have rolled." ²³ These talks indicated that Mao was extremely critical of Stalin's methods of handling popular dissent.

This and many other talks by Mao on the subject of Stalin in the mid-1950s were not published outside the CCP at the time. Mao may have wanted to deny support to Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin and on socialism in the Soviet Union beginning in 1956. China was also receiving a significant amount of economic aid from the Soviet Union in building its industrial base, and China was protected from the U.S. imperialists by the Soviets' strategic nuclear missile force in the 1950s.

Mao and the leadership of the CCP were based in Ya'nan when the 1937-1938 purges in Moscow and other cities took place. They were dependent on the pro-Soviet Comintern representatives in the CCP for information about political developments in Moscow and the Soviet Union. Stalin and the NKVD kept the extent of the purges beyond the show trials of the "Old Bolsheviks" and top commanders of the Red Army from becoming public knowledge.

²³ *The Writings of Mao Zedong: 1949-1976, Volume II: January 1956-December 1957*, ed. John Leung and Michael Kau, 1992, p. 465.

It was not until the mid-1950s, after socialist construction had begun in the People's Republic, that Mao began to discuss Stalin's mistaking of "contradictions among the people for those between ourselves and the enemy." Unfortunately, most of the international communist movement, including Mao and the leadership of the CCP, was not aware of the true extent and damage done by the Great Purges under Stalin's leadership. The number of executions and deportations in 1937-1938, and up to the outbreak of war in 1941, was a closely guarded state secret until the NKVD archives were opened up in 1991.

Stalin, the Comintern and the United Front Against Fascism

On p. 15 of "Stand for Socialism," Sison claims that "Stalin encouraged and supported the communist parties and anti-imperialist movements in capitalist countries and the colonies and semi-colonies through the Third International." This is exactly the opposite of what happened in international policy under the leadership of Stalin and the Comintern after the adoption of the United Front Against Fascism beginning in 1935.

From Spain²⁴ to France and Italy and from the U.S. to the British colonies of India and Malaya, communist parties that slavishly followed the Comintern's line formed, and subordinated themselves to, anti-fascist united fronts with their own bourgeoisies or colonial rulers.

In the U.S., the CPUSA under the leadership of Earl Browder was dissolved during World War 2 in order to place its membership at the direction of the Roosevelt administration and the U.S. army under the pretext of the U.S. wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. To its lasting shame, the CPUSA leadership did not oppose the jailing of 120,000 Japanese-Americans and Japanese nationals as "subversives," including Japanese-American members of the CPUSA.²⁵

As applied to China, Stalin and the Comintern's representatives in the CCP repeatedly tried to pressure Mao and the CCP to merge its Red Armies into Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary Guomindang forces and give up its liberated areas in the name of forming a national united front against Japanese fascism in 1937 and

²⁴ See "The Line of the Comintern on the Civil War in Spain," *Revolution* magazine, June 1981. This 65-page article critically examines the line and policies of the Comintern in the revolutionary struggle against Franco's fascist revolt and placing limits on it in line with the Comintern-CPSU alliance with the British and French imperialists. www.bannedthought.net.

²⁵ In 1964, Mao described Browder's political capitulation to U.S. imperialism during World War 2. ("The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchov's Revisionism," the 8th Comment of *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, pp. 403-405, 390)

1938, and then again in 1946 as civil war between the CCP and the GMD was approaching.²⁶

There was a history to this incorrect political line. In the 1920s, Stalin and the Comintern pressured the CCP to maintain a united front with Chiang Kai-shek's GMD both before and after the GMD's armies committed massacres of thousands of communists and trade union members in Shanghai on April 12, 1927 and in other major cities.²⁷

The only communist-led independent revolutionary movements that emerged from World War 2 were in Greece and the Philippines (both of which had sharp struggle within their communist parties), and with the greatest impact, in China. Mao stated at one point that if the CCP had given up its liberated areas and merged its Red armies into the Guomindang's armed forces, there wouldn't have been a revolution in China.

In 1948 in Moscow, Stalin noted belatedly that "the Chinese comrades have succeeded" at a meeting attended by Molotov, Zhdanov, Malenkov and Suslov from the CPSU, the Yugoslav representative Kardelj, and the Bulgarian and Comintern leader Dimitrov. Without mentioning Mao by name, Stalin admitted that he had made a mistake about the Chinese revolution.²⁸ However, Stalin explicitly distinguished his support for the Chinese revolution from the "Greek uprising."

The Role of the Communist Party of Greece in the Anti-German Resistance from 1941-1944 and the Civil War in Greece from 1946-1949

The left-wing EAM (National Liberation Front) and ELAS (the People's Liberation Army), both led by the KKE (Communist Party of Greece), rose to prominence during the Resistance against German and Italian occupation forces from 1941-1944. Throughout the intense fighting against the British army in 1944-1945, and the Greek Civil War in 1946-1949, these communist-led forces received weak support or were opposed by Stalin, who placed Soviet national interests over support for the revolutionary movement in Greece.

²⁶ "The Political, Military and Negotiating Strategies of the Chinese Communist Party (1937-1946) and Recent Developments in Nepal" (2007) www.mlmsrg.com

²⁷ See "The Prospects of the Revolution in China" (November 30, 1926) by the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The ECCI refers to Chiang's armed force as a "revolutionary army... [which is] one of the advantages of the Chinese revolution." This article also asserts that "The withdrawal of the Chinese Communists from the Kuomintang at the present time would be a profound mistake" pp. 505, 508. Also see "Questions of the Chinese Revolution," by the CPSU(B) (April 21, 1927). Written nine days after the massacre of thousands of Communists in Shanghai, this article refers to the "victorious advance of the national army on Shanghai." p. 660. Both articles are reprinted in *On the Opposition*, by J.V. Stalin (FLP, 1975).

²⁸ *Conversations with Stalin*, by Milovan Djilas (1962). pp. 173, 182.

The Greek landscape was favorable to guerrilla operations. By 1943 the Axis forces and their collaborators were in control only of the main towns and connecting roads, leaving the mountainous countryside to the Resistance. After the September 1943 armistice with Italy, ELAS seized control of Italian garrison weapons across the country. In response, the Western imperialist allies began to favor rival anti-Communist resistance groups. Still, after the German army withdrew from Greece in October 1944, the ELAM-ELAS controlled the majority of Greece, and had more than 50,000 men and women under arms.

At this point there was little to prevent ELAS from taking full control of the country. At a KKE Conference in 1950, Athens Party leader, Vassilis Bartiotis, stated that “On October 12, 1944, we could have easily seized power with the forces of the First Army Corps of ELAS alone ... We did not seize power because we did not have a correct line, because we all vacillated, including me ... Thus, although we had decided on armed insurrection, beginning in September 1944, instead of going ahead, instead of organizing the struggle for power, instead of seizing power, we capitulated and did not seize power.”²⁹

A critical reason for why the KKE-ELAS-EAM did not launch a nationwide offensive to seize power throughout Greece in late 1944 was that the KKE leadership was instructed to not do so by Soviet military envoy Col. Grigorii Popov. Popov’s instructions to the KKE were that they were not to “precipitate a crisis” with the British imperialists, who were about to return to Greece with the royalist Greek government.³⁰

Underlying the Soviet strategy was the “Percentages Agreement,” signed in October 1944 by Stalin and Churchill. They agreed that the Soviets would control 90% of Romania, while the British would control 90% of Greece. While the KKE leadership were aware of the Soviet position via Col. Popov’s, they had not been informed of the existence of the Soviet-British Percentages Agreement.³¹

Under these circumstances, most of the KKE leadership accepted the Soviet position that the KKE should put the brakes on the revolutionary struggle, while other KKE leaders--such as Andreas Tzimas, EAM political chief, and Aris Velouchiotis, the military commander of the ELAS—wanted to mobilize the KKE’s forces to stop the British forces from embarking in Athens.

In October 1944, the government of King George II, which had spent the war in Cairo, returned to Greece under the protection of the British army commanded by General Ronald Scobie. When Scobie demanded that the ELAS-EAM be disbanded,

²⁹ *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry, 1943-1949*, Andre Gerolymatos (2004), p. 131. A political summation six years later, particularly one that does not take into account the lack of support of the Greek revolution by the Soviet Union, may contain a great deal of hindsight.

³⁰ *Red Acropolis*, pp. 121-123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127. It is not known if and when Col. Popov’s mission informed the KKE leadership about the agreement.

ELAS commander Velouchiotis decided that General Scobie's demands should be resisted.

Josef Broz Tito, whose communist partisans had liberated Yugoslavia from the Germans in 1944, may have played a role in the resistance of some of the ELAS forces to the demand by the British that they disarm.³² Although EAM and the KKE had participated in the coalition government brought into being in late 1944 by the newly returned pro-British Greek government from Cairo, their differences with the traditional bourgeois parties led to the resignation of EAM ministers.

On December 3, 1944, a peaceful pro-EAM rally of 200,000 people in central Athens was shot at by the police, leaving 28 protesters dead and 148 wounded. The killings ushered in the "Dekemvriáná" (the December events), a month of full-scale fighting in Athens between EAM forces and the British army. These clashes, which led to the defeat of the EAM in Athens, were followed by a period of "White Terror." During the White Terror that lasted until early 1946, the Greek government with British support captured approximately 40,000 Communists or ex-ELAS members. Entire villages that had helped the pro-communist partisans were attacked by right-wing gangs.

As a result, a number of veteran partisans hid their weapons in the mountains, and 5,000 of them escaped to Yugoslavia, although the KKE leadership did not encourage this. Many ex-ELAS members formed self-defense troops, without approval from the KKE leadership.

Under the 1946 British-backed Treaty of Varkiza, the KKE remained legal. Its new leader Nikolaos Zachariadis, who returned from East Germany in April 1945, said that the KKE's objective now had the objective of a "people's democracy" to be achieved by peaceful means. This line of "peaceful transition" was opposed by a number of KKE leaders, including former ELAS leader Aris Velouchiotis. The KKE under Nikos Zachariadis renounced Velouchiotis when he called on the veteran guerrillas of the ELAS to start a new revolutionary struggle.

The Greek Civil War was fought from 1946 to 1949 between the Greek National Army—backed by the British and U.S. imperialists—and the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), the military branch of the KKE. Its Provisional Government in northern Greece was given logistical support by Yugoslavia and by Albania, and by Soviet-occupied Bulgaria for a brief period of time.

In 1946, KKE reversed its former position of collaboration with the Greek government as thousands of communist sympathizers were falling victim to the pro-British government's White Terror. In February 1946, the KKE leadership decided

³² Curiously, Tito was the KKE's main arms supplier and military base. At the same time, Tito was a British ally, owing his physical and political survival in 1944 to British military assistance. From 1944 to 1949, Tito proved to be a more reliable ally to the Greek communist resistance than Stalin.

"since our enemies are continuing the one-sided civil war, we will answer with the same means."³³

The king's return to Greece reinforced British influence in the country. The head of the Athens station of MI6, admitted that "Greece was a kind of British protectorate." Fighting resumed in March 1946, as armed bands of ELAS veterans infiltrated Greece through bases in mountainous regions near the Yugoslav and Albanian borders. They were now organized as the Democratic Army of Greece, under the command of ELAS veteran Markos Vafiadis.

The Yugoslav and Albanian governments were the main source of support for the DSE fighters, but the Soviet Union remained ambivalent. KKE leader Zachariadis visited Moscow on several occasions, but returned with little in the way of military support.

In 1947, President Truman announced that the United States would step in to support the Greek government. Through 1947 the scale of fighting increased. The DSE launched large-scale attacks on towns throughout Greece. Army morale was low and it would be some time before the military support from the United States became effective.

Rural areas suffered as a result of tactics dictated to the Greek National Army by U.S. advisers. As admitted by high-ranking CIA officials in the documentary *Nam: The True Story of Vietnam*, an efficient strategy applied during the Greek Civil War, and later in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, was the evacuation of villages. This deprived the partisans of supplies and recruits.

In September 1947, however, the KKE's leadership decided to move from guerrilla tactics to full-scale conventional war, despite the opposition of DSE Commander Vafiadis. In December 1947 the KKE announced the formation of a Provisional Democratic Government in the Macedonian region of northern Greece, with Vafiadis as prime minister. In 1948, the DSE suffered heavy defeats at the hands of the Greek Army and its U.S. advisers. During the Civil War 100,000 ELAS fighters—mostly KKE members—were imprisoned and at least 3,000 were executed.

Two significant blows to the KKE and DSE toward the end of the civil war were political, not military. In a meeting in Moscow in June 1948, Stalin stated his unqualified opposition to the "Greek uprising." Stalin explained that the U.S. and Britain would "never permit [Greece] to break off their lines of communication in the Mediterranean."³⁴ Stalin was intent on avoiding a military confrontation with the U.S. and British imperialists, and this required cutting off material and political support to the Greek revolutionary struggle.

Instead of making arrangements to provide badly needed military assistance for the KKE and DSE to use against the U.S.-backed Greek Army through the long land

³³ Red Acropolis, p. 208.

³⁴ *Conversations with Stalin*, by Milovan Djilas (1962, 1990), pp 181-182.

border between Bulgaria and Greece, Stalin used the word "svernut," Russian for "fold up," to express what the Greek Communists should do.³⁵

As for Tito, he closed the strategically important DSE camps in Yugoslavia as a price for joining the Western imperialist bloc in 1949. This was all the more damaging

because Yugoslavia had been the KKE's main supporter dating from the years of the Nazi occupation up through the Civil War.

The KKE had to choose between its loyalty to the USSR and its relations with its closest ally. After some internal conflict, the great majority of KKE members left for Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan in central Asia. They were to remain there, in military encampments, for three years.

In October 1949, pro-Soviet KKE leader Zachariadis, under pressure from Stalin,³⁶ announced a "temporary ceasefire to prevent the complete annihilation of Greece." This marked the military defeat of the KKE-DSE and the end of the Greek Civil War. The final victory of the U.S.-supported government led to Greece's membership in NATO, and rule by a U.S.-backed military junta between 1967 and 1974.

Ultimately, neither the Soviet nor Yugoslavian governments proved to be reliable allies for the KKE and the revolutionary struggle in Greece between the crucial years of 1944-1949 when the possibilities for revolutionary advance were the most favorable. The KKE's successful achievement of anti-imperialist revolution against the British and the U.S., followed by an advance to socialism, would have required a more self-reliant revolutionary struggle that could have withstood the denial of Soviet aid and the closure of the DSE camps in Yugoslavia by Tito in 1949.

The leadership of the KKE, the ELAS (in 1944-1945) and the DSE (1946-1949) did not take consistent revolutionary and anti-imperialist stands. Some of the KKE leadership vacillated at key points in the revolutionary struggle, joined reactionary governments (particularly the pro-Soviet KKE leader Nikos Zachariadis) and signed pro-British "peace treaties" aimed at disarming the revolutionary forces. More revolutionary KKE leaders and members refused to compromise with British and U.S. imperialism and with the royalist Greek government.

While the Comintern did not exist after 1943, the political thinking of Stalin and the political line behind the United Front Against Fascism of advancing Soviet national interests in Greece by negotiating counter-revolutionary deals with the Western imperialists continued. The revolutionary forces in the KKE, its armed forces and its mass organizations paid a heavy price.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Red Acropolis, Black Terror, pp. 227.

The PKP-Led Hukbalahap during World War 2 and the 1948-1957 Civil War

Based on the official history of the CPP in *Philippine Society and Revolution*, in the U.S. colony of the Philippines, the Philippine Communist Party (PKP) followed the line of the nearby Chinese CP more closely than that of the Comintern during World War 2. The PKP fought against the Japanese occupation forces and maintained its political and military independence and initiative from the anti-Japanese guerilla forces supported and financed by the U.S.

In early 1942, Gen. MacArthur's forces and Filipino "volunteers" of the USAFFE (U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East) were facing impending defeat at the hands of the Japanese army on the Bataan Peninsula. The revolutionary cadre of the PKP, over the objection of the revisionist Lava-Taruc forces in the party leadership, met in Central Luzon on February 6, 1942 and decided to form a people's army to fight the Japanese occupation forces. This was a broad coalition of guerilla forces commonly referred to as the Hukbalahap (the People's Anti-Japanese Army).³⁷

One historian claims that a number of veterans of the Chinese CP's Eighth Route Army served as military instructors for inexperienced Hukbalahap units. Van der Kroef states that these Chinese instructors blended among Chinese-Filipino members of the PKP; 10% of the country's population is of Chinese ancestry.³⁸

In spite of the efforts of the Lava-Taruc party leadership to impose a line of "retreat for defense" on the Hukbalahap, by March 1943 the PKP-led Hukbalahap numbered 10,000 guerilla fighters. They were supplemented by numerous Barrio United Defense Force units in the villages, which carried out recruiting, intelligence collection, supply and civil justice functions.³⁹ These units forced Japanese units to leave garrisons in the cities and towns, and annihilated them in the flames of guerilla warfare in the countryside.

The PKP Central Committee repudiated the "retreat for defense" policy only in September 1944. This paved the way for the Hukbalahap under the leadership of the PKP to liberate almost the entire region of Central Luzon, and dispatched armed units to Manila and Southern Luzon. One month later, the Hukbalahap had to confront MacArthur's forces which had landed in the Visayas and were trying to recapture the Philippines for U.S. imperialism.⁴⁰

However, after adopting a largely self-reliant revolutionary line of maintaining their independence and initiative from U.S. forces during most of World War 2, the PKP

³⁷ PSR, p. 30;

³⁸ *Communism in South-East Asia*, also by Justus van der Kroef (1980), p. 24.

³⁹ PSR, p. 30-32. *Communism in South-East Asia*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ PSR, p. 31;

under the Lava-Taruc leadership took a opposed stand to that adopted by Mao and the CCP in China when the U.S. troops returned to the Philippines in late 1944.

According to *Philippine Society and Revolution*: "Misled by the bourgeois reactionary gang of the Lavas and Tarucs, the Hukbalahap welcomed the U.S. imperialist troops that marched through Central Luzon from Lingayen in 1945. Some units of the people's army fought together with the U.S. imperialist troops in dislodging the Japanese troops from the Floridablanca airfields, but were surprised when after the battle the U.S. troops turned their guns on them and disarmed them. In Manila, the imperialist aggressors also disarmed and turned back units of the Hukbalahap that had preceded them. Squadron 77, a unit of the people's army, was massacred in Malolos, Bulacan while on its way from Manila after being disarmed." ⁴¹

In the face of this U.S. military campaign of repression, the Lava-Taruc leadership of the PKP hailed the establishment of a puppet U.S. commonwealth government after a sham declaration of "independence" in 1946. The PKP leadership accepted the government's offer to take part in elections, even though the Party and Hukbalahap units were coming under fierce attack from a Filipino Army reorganized by the U.S. military. This brought the PKP's cadre out into the open and exposed them to violent suppression. ⁴²

In 1950, the PKP Politburo under Jose Lava declared the existence of a "revolutionary situation" and adopted an adventurist line of quick military victory. All units of the people's army were ordered to make simultaneous attacks on provincial capitals, cities and enemy camps throughout 1950. In response, campaigns of encirclement and suppression were launched against the thinly spread people's army and their overextended supply lines.

Just as with the military adventurist "Red Area-White Area" line adopted by the CPP leadership in the 1980s, this putschist orientation led to steady defeats of the PKP's armed forces at the hands of the puppet Quirino regime (1948-1953), and then by ex-guerilla Ramon Magsaysay, who became Defense Minister in 1950. Magsaysay conducted a bloody counter-insurgency campaign under the direction of U.S. military advisers during his regime of 1954-1957. This led to the final military defeat and capitulation of the PKP under the Jesus Lava leadership.⁴³

The class collaborationist United Front Against Fascism (UFAF) of the 1930s and 1940s outlasted the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 and undoubtedly influenced the revisionist Lava-Taruc leadership of the PKP and their attempts to block the development of a revolutionary struggle against both the Japanese occupation forces and the returning U.S. Army.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 29-32.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 32-34.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 38.