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## **Stand For Socialism Against Modern Revisionism**

## **II. The Legacy of Lenin and Stalin**

### **The Record of Stalin**

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Lenin died in 1924. He did not live long enough to see the start of fullscale socialist economic construction. This was undertaken by his successor and faithful follower Stalin. He carried it out in accordance with the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin: proletarian dictatorship and mass mobilization, public ownership of the means of production, economic planning, industrialization, collectivization and mechanization of agriculture, full employment and social guarantees, free education at all levels, expanding social services and the rising standard of living.

But before the socialist economic construction could be started in 1929 with the first five-year economic plan, Stalin continued Lenin's New Economic Policy and had to contend with and defeat the Left Opposition headed by Trotsky who espoused the wrong line that socialism in one country was impossible and that the workers in Western Europe (especially in Germany) had to succeed first in armed uprisings and that rapid industrialization had to be undertaken immediately at the expense of the peasantry.

Stalin won out with his line of socialism in one country and in defending the worker-peasant alliance. If Trotsky had had his way, he would have destroyed the chances for Soviet socialism by provoking the capitalist powers, by breaking up the worker-peasant alliance and by spreading pessimism in the absence of any victorious armed uprisings in Western Europe.

When it was time to put socialist economic construction in full swing, the Right opposition headed by Bukharin emerged to argue for the continuation of the New Economic Policy and oppose Soviet industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. If Bukharin had had his way, the Soviet Union would not have been able to build a socialist society with a comprehensive industrial base and a mechanized and collectivized agriculture and provide its people with a higher standard of living; and would have enlarged the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois nationalists in the various republics and become an easier prey to Nazi Germany whose leader Hitler made no secret of his plans against the Soviet Union.

The first five-year economic plan was indeed characterized by severe difficulties due to the following: the limited industrial base to start with in a sea of agrarian conditions, the continuing effects of the war, the economic and political sanctions of the capitalist powers, the constant threat of foreign military intervention, the burdensome role of the pioneer and the violent reaction of the rich peasants who refused to put their farms, tools and work animals under collectivization, slaughtered their work animals and organized resistance.

But after the first five-year economic plan, there was popular jubilation over the establishment of heavy and basic industries. To the relief of the peasantry there was considerable mechanization of agriculture, especially in the form of tractor stations. There was marked improvement in the standard of living.

In 1936, a new constitution was promulgated. As a result of the successes of the economic construction and in the face of the actual confiscation of bourgeois and landlord property and the seeming disappearance of exploiting classes by economic definition, the constitution declared that there were no more exploiting classes and no more class struggle except that between the Soviet people and the external enemy. This declaration would constitute the biggest error of Stalin. It propelled the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking among the new intelligentsia and bureaucracy even as the proletarian dictatorship was exceedingly alert to the old forces and elements of counterrevolution. The error had two ramifications.

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 those loosely construed as enemies of the people. There were indeed real British and German spies and bourgeois nationalists engaged in counterrevolutionary violence. They had to be ferreted out. But this was done by relying heavily on a mass reporting system (based on patriotism) that fed information to the security services. And the principle of due process was not assiduously and scrupulously followed in order to narrow the target in the campaign against counterrevolutionaries and punish only the few who were criminally culpable on the basis of incontrovertible evidence. Thus, in the 1936-38 period, arbitrariness victimized a great number of people. Revolutionary class education through mass movement under Party leadership was not adequately undertaken for the purpose of ensuring the high political consciousness and vigilance of the people.

The other ramification was the promotion of the idea that building socialism was a matter of increasing production, improving administration and technique, letting the cadres decide everything (although Stalin never ceased to speak against bureaucratism) and providing the cadres and experts and the toiling masses with ever increasing material benefits. The new intelligentsia produced by the rapidly expanding Soviet educational system had a decreasing sense of the proletarian class stand and an increasing sense that it was sufficient to have the expertise and to become bureaucrats and technocrats in order to build socialism. The old and the new intelligentsia were presumed to be proletarian so long as they rendered bureaucratic and professional service. There was no recognition of the fact that bourgeois and other antiproletarian ideas can persist and grow even after the confiscation of bourgeois and landlord property.

To undertake socialist revolution and construction in a country with a large population of more than 100 nationalities and a huge land mass, with a low economic and technological level as a starting point, ravaged by civil war and ever threatened by local counterrevolutionary forces and foreign capitalist powers, it was necessary to have the centralization of political will as well as centralized planning in the use of limited resources. But such a necessity can be overdone by a bourgeoisie that is reemergent through the petty bourgeoisie and can become the basis of bureaucratism, decreasing democracy in the process of decision-making. The petty bourgeoisie promotes the bureaucratism that gives rise to and solidifies the higher levels of the bureaucrat bourgeoisie and that alienates the Party and the state from the people. Democratic centralism can be made to degenerate into bureaucratic centralism by the forces and elements that run counter to the interests of the proletariat and all working people.

In world affairs, Stalin encouraged and supported the communist parties and anti-imperialist movements in capitalist countries and the colonies and semicolonies through the Third International. And from 1935 onward, he promoted internationally the antifascist Popular Front policy. Only after Britain and France spurned his offer of antifascist alliance and continued to induce Germany to attack the Soviet Union did Stalin decide to forge a nonaggression pact with Germany in 1939. This was a diplomatic maneuver to forestall a probable earlier Nazi aggression and gain time for the Soviet Union to prepare against it.

Stalin made full use of the time before the German attack in 1941 to strengthen the Soviet Union economically and militarily as well as politically through patriotic calls to the entire Soviet people and through concessions to conservative institutions and organizations. For instance, the Russian Orthodox Church was given back its buildings and its privileges. There was marked relaxation in favor of a broad antifascist popular front.

In the preparations against fascist invasion and in the course of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45, the line of Soviet patriotism further subdued the line of class struggle among the old and new intelligentsia and the entire people. The Soviet people united. Even as they suffered a tremendous death casualty of 20 million and devastation of their country, including the destruction of 85 percent of industrial capacity, they played the pivotal role in defeating Nazi Germany and world fascism and paved the way for the rise of several socialist countries in Eastern Europe and Asia and the national liberation movements on an unprecedented scale.

In the aftermath of World War II, Stalin led the economic reconstruction of the Soviet Union. Just as he succeeded in massive industrialization from 1929 to 1941 (only 12 years) before the war, so he did again from 1945 to 1953 (only eight years) but this time with apparently no significant resistance from counterrevolutionaries. In all these years of socialist construction, socialism proved superior to capitalism in all respects.

In 1952, Stalin realized that he had made a mistake in prematurely declaring that there were no more exploiting classes and no more class struggle in the Soviet Union, except the struggle between the people and the enemy. But it was too late, the Soviet party and state were 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.

When Stalin died in 1953, he left a Soviet Union that was a politically, economically, militarily and culturally powerful socialist country. He had successfully united the Soviet people of the various republics and nationalities and had defended the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. He had rebuilt an industrial economy, with high annual growth rates, with enough homegrown food for the people and the world's largest production of oil, coal, steel, gold, grain, cotton and so on.

Under his leadership, the Soviet Union had created the biggest number of research scientists, engineers, doctors, artists, writers and so on. In the literary and artistic field, social realism flourished while at the same time the entire cultural heritage of the Soviet Union was cherished.

In foreign policy, Stalin held the U.S. forces of aggression at bay in Europe and Asia, supported the peoples fighting for national liberation and socialism, neutralized what was otherwise the nuclear monopoly of the United States and ceaselessly called for world peace even as the U.S.-led Western alliance waged the Cold War and engaged in provocations.

It is absolutely necessary to correctly evaluate Stalin as a leader in order to avoid the pitfall of modern revisionism and to counter the most strident anticommunists who attack Marxism-Leninism under the guise of anti-Stalinism. We must know what are his merits and demerits. We must respect the historical facts and judge his leadership within its own time, 1924 to 1953.

It is unscientific to make a complete negation of Stalin as a leader in his own time and to heap the blame on him even for the modern revisionist line, policies and actions which have been adopted and undertaken explicitly against the name of Stalin and have—at first gradually and then rapidly—brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism. Leaders must be judged mainly for the period of their responsibility even as we seek to trace the continuities and discontinuities from one period to another.

Stalin's merits within his own period of leadership are principal and his demerits are secondary. He stood on the correct side and won all the great struggles to defend socialism such as those against the Left opposition headed by Trotsky; the Right opposition headed by Bukharin, the rebellious rich peasants, the bourgeois nationalists, and the forces of fascism headed by Hitler. He was able to unite, consolidate and develop the Soviet state. After World War II, Soviet power was next only to the United States. Stalin was able to hold his ground against the threats of U.S. imperialism. As a leader, he represented and guided the Soviet proletariat and people from one great victory to another.