



ВОЕННАЯ ПРИСЯГА

«Я, гражданин Союза Советских Социалистических Республик, вступаю в ряды Рабоче-Крестьянской Красной Армии, принимаю присягу и торжественно обязуюсь быть честным, храбрым, дисциплинированным, беззаветным бойцом, строго хранить воюющую и людскую дружбу, беспрекословно выполнять все воинские уставы и приказы начальников и командиров.

Я обязуюсь добровольно принять участие в боях, не колеблясь брать оружие в неравное сражение и до последнего дыхания быть преданным своему Народу, своей Советской Родине и Рабоче-Крестьянской Правительству.

Я вступаю сюда по призыву Рабоче-Крестьянского Правительства вступить на службу в ряды Рабоче-Крестьянской Советской Социалистической Республики и, как член Рабоче-Крестьянской Красной Армии, я обязуюсь защищать ее мужественно, смело, с достоинством и честью, во имя своей страны и своей жизни для достижения полной победы над врагами.

Такой же по форме текст и содержание был принят и подписан тысячами других воинов Советского Союза.

the soviet victory over fascism

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Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
274 Moseley Road, Birmingham, B12 0BS
www.cpgb-ml.org

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Preface to the second edition

The articles in this booklet were written at the time of the sixtieth anniversary of the victory over fascism, with the two-fold aim of paying tribute to those millions, especially the Soviet people, who fought against Hitlerite fascism, and of refuting the falsification by the imperialist bourgeoisie and its ideologues of the history of the second world war.

At the time, back in 2005, all but one (that of Mario Sousa on Anthony Beevor's Stalingrad) were published in Lalkar, and were subsequently reproduced as a booklet in 2006.

Since that print has been sold out, and in view of the continued bourgeois falsification of the history of WW2 – of its causes and consequences, and of the role of the various powers in defeating fascism – there is a clear need for a second print.

No changes have been made to the contents of the material here reproduced, which speaks for itself. We have simply changed the title to reflect its continued relevance and timelessness.

Once again, we bow our head to those who fought against fascism, especially the Soviet people, the Red Army and the Soviet partisans, whose exceptional sacrifices, stubborn willpower and fortitude, mixed with the pain of bereavement, brought about this

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world-historic victory over fascism.

It only needs to be added that their victory would have been near-impossible had it not been for the construction of socialism in the USSR under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, headed by that legendary and intrepid defender of the dictatorship of the proletariat and builder of socialism, Joseph Stalin.

Let the bourgeoisie shower abuse on Soviet socialism, on the CPSU and on its leader Joseph Stalin; let it belittle the signal contribution of the Soviet Union in smashing Hitlerite fascism to smithereens; let it falsify the history of the Soviet Union in general and of its role in the second world war in particular; let it rage and fume – the proletariat and oppressed people everywhere will learn to see through this falsification and treat it with well-deserved contempt.

The continuing crisis of imperialism, with the resultant misery it is heaping on the proletarians in the centres of imperialism as well as upon the vast masses in the oppressed countries; the endless genocidal wars that imperialist powers – US imperialism in particular – have been and are waging against the oppressed people are beginning to lay bare the hollowness of imperialism's claim to be a promoter of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, peace and prosperity.

Slowly but surely, people are beginning to realise that there can be no peace and no prosperity unless and until this bloodthirsty system is consigned to the dustbin of history. That is why every class-conscious worker must insist that the struggle for peace and prosperity must be linked with the struggle to overthrow imperialism. This is the message that must permeate the working-class movement.

Harpal Brar

London, 1 May 2016

Preface to the first edition

The bourgeoisie turns everything into a commodity, hence also the writing of history. It is a part of its being, of its condition for existence, to falsify all goods; it falsified the writing of history. And the best-paid historiography is that which is best falsified for the purposes of the bourgeoisie.*

This shrewd observation of Engels' should be firmly kept in mind when judging the controversies raging between the proletarian and the bourgeois camps concerning the interpretation of the causes and the events that led to the second world war, the role in this war of the imperialist camp on the one hand and the socialist Soviet Union on the other and, finally, the results of this war. These controversies are not merely concerned with our view of the past, important though that is. They are, more importantly, meant to influence and shape the future.

The imperialist ruling class can hardly be expected to admit that modern war is a product of, and inseparable from, imperialism; that

* F Engels, *Material for the History of Ireland*, 1870

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tens of millions of people were slaughtered during the war in order to decide which group of imperialist bandits – Anglo-American-French or German-Italian-Japanese – was to have the greatest share in plundering the world; that the elimination of war is possible only through the complete elimination of the division of society into classes; that it is 'impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist world which inevitably engenders imperialist war, it is impossible to escape that inferno, except by a bolshevik struggle and a bolshevik revolution'.*

In addition, the ruling classes of the imperialist 'democracies' were all complicit in the rise and strengthening of fascism, a fact which they cannot, for obvious reasons, be expected to own up to. This being the case, the ruling class of every imperialist country is obliged willy nilly to falsify the writing of history, since actual history brings out in bold relief the genocidal and murderous nature of imperialism – this bloodthirsty monster that has spilt such colossal amounts of blood, reduced humanity to starvation, misery and degradation, and put the fate of human civilisation at risk.

The Soviet victory in the second world war was a disaster for imperialism. If the first world war had ushered in the Great October Socialist Revolution and brought into existence the mighty USSR, the second world war gave birth to an entire socialist camp, which encompassed a third of the globe and a quarter of the world's population, and which shook imperialism to its very foundations. Just as the war itself was a product of imperialism, the victory of the Soviet Union in this titanic struggle was firmly rooted in the system of socialism. Precisely for this reason, it has been the unceasing endeavour of the imperialist bourgeoisie to distort and falsify the history of the second world war – for the sole purpose of prettifying the nature and role of imperialism and maligning that of the Soviet Union.

The imperialist anti-Soviet propaganda barrage reached a cre-

* 'The fourth anniversary of the October Revolution' by V I Lenin, 14 Oct 1921

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scendo in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR and the eastern European people's democracies. If the fiftieth anniversary of the victory against fascism became the occasion for a virulent ideological campaign against the erstwhile Soviet Union, its leadership and the socialist system, the sixtieth anniversary has brought arrogant demands from the imperialist bourgeoisie and its highly-paid ideological scribblers that the present-day bourgeois rulers of Russia apologise not only for the Soviet successes in smashing to smithereens the anti-Soviet plots of the imperialist 'democracies' and for its liberating role in freeing the peoples of the USSR, eastern and central Europe from the jackboot of fascism through the defeat of the mighty fascist war machine almost single-handedly, but also for its very existence.

Visiting Georgia on 10 May 2005, George W Bush, the moronic head of the most bloodthirsty imperialist power, which presently is in occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, which has killed, in partnership with British imperialism, more than one hundred and fifty thousand innocent Iraqis, and set up torture chambers in Iraq, Guantanamo and elsewhere for the brutal treatment of Iraqi and Afghan patriots, had the temerity to assert that for 'much of eastern and central Europe, victory [in the second world war] brought the iron rule of another empire. VE Day marked the end of fascism, but not the end of oppression'.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the EU, issued a statement on 6 May saying that the fall of the Berlin Wall, not the defeat of Nazi Germany, marked 'the end of dictatorship' in Europe. 'We remember,' said the commission, 'the many millions for whom the end of the second world war was not the end of dictatorship, and for whom true freedom was only to come with the fall of the Berlin Wall.'

When at the end of April 2005 the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, bowing to overwhelming public sentiment in the Russian Federation, declared that the break-up of the Soviet Union was 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century', this became the

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occasion for truly reactionary outbursts on the part of the ideologues of imperialism and the latter's stooge counter-revolutionary regimes in Poland, Georgia and the Baltic statelets. Estonia and Lithuania boycotted the 9 May celebrations in Moscow to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against fascism, whereas Latvia's president, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, attended merely to question Russia's interpretation of history, asserting that the 1945 arrival of the Red Army was less of a liberation for the Baltic states than the replacement of one occupation (Nazi) by another (Soviet), which was allegedly worse. According to the semi-fascistic regimes in the present-day Baltic states, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the resultant independence (or rather, recolonisation by the US and EU imperialism) of the former republics of the USSR was a miracle, not a catastrophe.

The *Financial Times* in an editorial on 7 May 2005, while paying lip service to 'the biggest sacrifice in defeating Hitler . . . paid by the former Soviet Union, which lost twenty-seven million lives – more than twice the combined losses of the western allies and Germany', went on to utter the profanity, which flies in the face of all known facts and historical truth, that Russia 'needs to acknowledge the Soviet Union's role in collaborating with Hitler in occupying eastern Europe in 1939-40 and in imposing its rule on the region in 1945', adding that 'Red Army soldiers were rarely seen as liberators by those they sought to liberate'. Even a cursory look at the reports of the time and film footage, which shows the Red Army being greeted as liberators in country after country where people had suffered the torture, brutality, humiliation and hunger of Nazi occupation, would at once prove the downright falsity of the *Financial Times's* assertion.

Writing in the *Financial Times* of 11 May 2005, the incurably reactionary commentator Martin Wolf, driven to a lurid frenzy by President Putin's remark, went to the length of asserting that the 'greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century was not, in fact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union but its creation', adding moronically that the 'Soviet party-state was the organisational model and nega-

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tive inspiration for Hitler's national socialism'. Like all bourgeois charlatans, he too is obliged to feign his admiration for the 'heroism of the people of the Soviet Union' who 'destroyed that vile [Nazi] regime', for which 'humanity must remain eternally grateful'. This, however, is merely a ruse, a prelude to his delirious assertion that 'the psychopath who controlled the Soviet state made that war far more likely and more costly than it needed to be, not least for his own people'.

The writer of the sentence just quoted obviously believes that to assert is to prove, for he offers not a shred of evidence for this allegation. Further, his wild assertion is proof enough that it was not the target of his venomous attack, J V Stalin, who was a psychopath, but our stupid journalist, Martin Wolf, who, through his mercenary commitment to, and defence of, murderous imperialism (monopoly capitalism) has acquired (like hordes of others in his profession whose wallets are stuffed with money from imperialist loot, and also are paid to malign socialism and portray imperialist exploitation and brigandage in bright and beautiful colours) all the traits of a psychopathic personality. Only this can explain his further assertion that

What came to those liberated by the Red Army was not freedom but four and a half decades of imprisonment. As for the Soviet Union itself, the experiment resulted in the deaths of tens of millions and, in the end, destitution.

Only a mercenary psychopath, lacking in all honesty and respect for facts, and ignoring all the poverty, criminality, declining life expectancy and cultural standards in the territories of the former USSR, could pen sentences like the one just cited. It was not the Soviet Union but its collapse that brought in its trail the destitution, misery and misfortune engulfing the peoples of the former USSR today from all sides.

While expressing hypocritically his 'admiration for the courage of the Russian people and . . . gratitude for their contributions to our

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culture', Mr Wolf displays his unadulterated 'pleasure over the collapse of the Soviet regime' in the hope (some hope!) of seeing the 'emergence of a modern, prosperous and democratic Russia' — all code words for the sanctity of private property and intensified exploitation of one human being by another, and one nation by another. This becomes patently clear when Mr Wolf goes on to condemn the 'onslaught on Yukos, the oil giant', for, in the eyes of Mr Wolf, the attempt by the Russian government to recover unpaid taxes from one of the biggest thieves of the Soviet people's property, Mikhail Khodorkosky, 'puts the security of property into question' and undermines 'the rule of law!' 'Rule of law', indeed, which safeguards theft on a truly grand scale — all in the name of 'democracy', 'freedom', 'human rights' and suchlike cant.

Mr Wolf cannot even bear the thought that the peoples of the former Soviet Union are nostalgic about the calamitous disappearance of their once great and glorious socialist state. He wants to ban such sentiments, saying that

Russia will only be a normal [ie, bourgeois hell hole] country when its people welcome their freedom rather than regret the disappearance of their power.

However, the peoples of the erstwhile Soviet Union know better, for they know what they have lost. They therefore quite naturally look back with fondness and nostalgia to the days of the Soviet Union, which guaranteed them security of life and rising living and cultural standards, and which achieved such miraculous victories in every field — economic, scientific, cultural, diplomatic and military — under the leadership of the CPSU, headed for thirty long years by that fearless revolutionary and defender of socialism, Joseph Stalin.

This is what bourgeois ideologues, consumed by anti-communism, and their vision blinkered by their hatred of proletarian rule, find it impossible to understand. No wonder, then, that the *Economist* of 7 May wrote: 'What is surprising about Russian perspectives on Stalin

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is not that the odd eccentric town council has made an official bid to rehabilitate him, or that a couple of others want to erect statues in his honour', but that a sizeable portion of the population holds favourable views about him. 'Respect for Stalin,' it says 'is strongest among the old, the poor . . . as well as among residual communists, some of whom still leave flowers on his monument on the days of his birth and death.'

It is this nostalgia of the Russian people, their hankering after the Soviet system, and their love for the two giants, Lenin and Stalin, who so successfully roused the Soviet people to such heroic endeavour, that explains why the government of Vladimir Putin was obliged to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Soviet victory against fascism with such fanfare. Fifty world leaders watched the parade of seven thousand soldiers, including 2,600 veterans, who drove past the Lenin museum in the Kremlin in 130 rebuilt war-era trucks. Half the soldiers wore 1940s uniforms and weapons, to the accompaniment of wartime songs, waving banners with pictures of Lenin, Stalin and the Soviet hammer and sickle flag.

It is also this nostalgia that, *inter alia*, is contributing to the growth of the communist movement in the territories of the former Soviet Union. The defeat of socialism is almost wholly attributable to the treachery of Khrushchevite revisionism, which through its wholesale revision, and downright distortion, of Marxism in the field of political economy, philosophy and class struggle over a period of three decades, beginning with the twentieth party congress in 1956, prepared the conditions for the restoration of capitalism under the leadership of the Gorbachev clique. Learning from this defeat, the peoples of the former socialist countries, as well as people elsewhere, are bound, indeed have already begun, to regroup and fight for socialism.

Notwithstanding all the reverses undoubtedly suffered by socialism, humanity will not be broken by the imperialist butchery, nor will it be confused and demoralised by the wholesale revision, distortion and falsification of history attempted by the imperialist bourgeoisie

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and its hirelings. On the contrary, it will emerge victorious. Let the bourgeoisie rage and fume, let its ideological hod-carriers falsify history to their hearts' content; the proletariat and the oppressed people will see through this falsification and learn to treat it with the contempt it deserves. The articles in this pamphlet are a part of our contribution to the fight against the bourgeois falsifiers of history; our fight for truth in the struggle to overthrow imperialism, 'whose end is near and inevitable, no matter how monstrous and savage its frenzy in the face of death'.*

Harpal Brar

London, June 2005

* 'Prophetic words' by V I Lenin, 29 June 1918

The sixtieth anniversary of the victory over fascism: a festival of progressive humanity¹

The second world war, like the first, was the product of the growth of interimperialist contradictions. It began as a war for redivision and domination of the world. The crash of 1929, and the depression that followed it, made an interimperialist war a certainty. At the same time, all the imperialist countries were united in their hatred of the socialist Soviet Union, seeking for any opportunity to crush it.

In this complicated situation, the Soviet Union, through building her economic and military strength, as well as through some very deft diplomatic footwork, made sure that the then-coming war, instead of being a war waged against the USSR by the combined forces of imperialism, would be a war between two groups of imperialist bloodsuckers.

Only after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 did the war assume an anti-fascist character. Even then, as the narrative below clearly demonstrates, it was the Soviet Union alone (with the support and sympathy of hundreds of millions of people around the world, including the peoples of the imperialist countries) that fought against fascism, whereas her allies, Britain and the US, were throughout determined to defend their respective imperialist

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interests and ready to come to terms with Nazi Germany. Only the advance of the Red Army frustrated their schemes.

Sunday 8 May 2005 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against Hitlerite German fascism, which victory is popularly known in western Europe as VE (Victory in Europe) Day. It is indeed a festival of progressive humanity, to bring about which tens of millions of people all over the world paid with their lives.

While people everywhere fought against Hitler's fascist Germany, made sacrifices and contributed to the final victory against it, the most outstanding contribution was without doubt made by the peoples of the USSR under the victorious banner of Marxism Leninism and the leadership of the Bolshevik party headed by the legendary Joseph Stalin, who, smashing all imperialist plots and conspiracies against the Soviet Union, led the Soviet people – indeed, the people of the world – in the successful fight against the Hitlerite plague.

To rid mankind of the menace of fascism, and in the interests of socialism and democratic liberty, the Soviet people lost no fewer than twenty-seven million men, women and children.

THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY

This sixtieth anniversary, this festival of progressive humanity, has become the occasion for the bourgeois falsification of history. Western bourgeois ideologists, from Trotskyist slanderers to penny-a-liner journalists, are busily engaged in juggling facts and falsifying events. There is a kind of division of labour between the Trotskyist variety of bourgeois ideologues, on the one hand, and the ordinary ('ordinary' because shorn of 'Marxist' and 'left' terminology and therefore more easily recognisable and less dangerous) bourgeois ideologists, on the other hand.

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This sixtieth anniversary, as was the case with the sixtieth anniversary of the D-Day landings last year, has been greeted with a torrent of nauseatingly unctuous and hypocritical cant in the imperialist print and electronic media, with the sole purpose of hiding the real meaning, content and causes of the second world war, and to belittle the decisive contribution of the socialist USSR in smashing the seemingly invincible Nazi war machine.

Ten years ago, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the victory against fascism, we were treated to headlines such as 'Germany's fate settled in the Atlantic', 'How Hitler was defeated by his own madness' etc, when the fact is, as every well-informed person knows, that the fate of Nazi Germany was sealed on the eastern front, in the titanic battles of Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad and Kursk. Here is one example, which typifies the thrust of the entire imperialist propaganda machine, of precisely the kind of falsification of history alluded to above:

British democracy is alive and kicking. That is the message from the people of this country on this anniversary weekend. For those who fought to destroy Hitler's Third Reich fifty years ago were inspired by more than a love of country, passionate though that was. They went to war and won the victory over fascism for a greater cause. This infused their patriotism and earned them immortal greatness. Ordinary folk knew in their hearts that what was at stake was no less than the survival of simple, decent values: their right to be heard, to speak their minds without fear of the knock on the door at dawn, to run their lives according to their own lights. To live and let live, to go about their daily business in freedom under the law. Above all, to make and unmake governments elected in their name.

The struggle and sacrifice of those who fought in the European war enabled Britain to remain a sovereign nation. Let us never forget that the red, white and blue Union flag we fly this weekend flew alone in the face of an all-conquering Nazi tyranny before the tide

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turned in 1942. We were fighting for our own freedom and to free Europe from despotic rule.*

Of course, no one except the most malicious person would deny that ordinary British people, and the British soldiers who fought in the second world war, were inspired by the ideal of ridding humanity of the menace of fascism. That, however, is not at issue. What is at issue is the cause for which the ruling classes of Britain, France and the United States went to war against Germany.

All objective observers agree that British imperialism went to war against Nazi Germany not in the interests of freedom and the fight against fascism but to protect its own colonialist and imperialist interests after all the attempts of safeguarding the same through appeasement (that is through bartering other people's freedom in return for saving its own skin and material interests) had resulted in an ignominious and scandalous collapse.

Here, briefly, are the facts that led to the Union flag flying alone 'in the face of an all-conquering Nazi tyranny before the tide turned in 1942'.

1. Imperialism's hatred for the USSR

All imperialists, of the nazi and 'democratic' variety alike, and all imperialist politicians, social democrats no less than Conservatives, were fired by an intense hatred of the USSR, the only socialist state at the time, for the simple reason that through planned socialist construction, she was building a new life for her people, free of exploitation, oppression, unemployment, misery and degradation. And this at a time when the entire capitalist world was in the iron grip of the hitherto worst slump, which had forced fifty million working people

* Leading article, *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1995

on to the scrap heap, rendering them jobless, homeless and hungry.

The Soviet Union alone stood as a shining beacon and an example to the world's workers of how their lives too could change qualitatively for the better if only the state power was in the hands of the working class. Encircled as she was by bloodthirsty imperialists, the USSR was well aware of the dangers confronting it. Its leadership followed an extremely complicated, and singularly scientific policy on the question of war with imperialism, which may be summarised as follows.

2. The Soviet position on war with imperialism

First, it was the endeavour of the Soviet Union not to embroil herself in a war with imperialism.

Second, since it was not entirely up to her to avoid such a war, then, if imperialism should impose a war on the Soviet Union, the latter should *not* find herself in the position of having to fight alone, let alone having to face the combined onslaught of the principal imperialist countries.

Third, to this end, divisions between the fascist imperialist states on the one hand and the 'democratic' imperialist states on the other should be fully exploited. These divisions were real, based on the material interests of the two groups of states under consideration. Uneven development of capitalism had seen to it that Germany, Italy and Japan, having spurted ahead in the capitalist development of their economies (a development that had rendered obsolete the old division of the world), were demanding a new division, which could not but encroach upon the material interests of the 'democratic' imperialist states. There was thus real scope for this conflict of interests to be exploited by the socialist USSR.

Fourth, to this end, the USSR, pursuing a very complicated foreign policy, did its best to conclude a collective security pact with the 'democratic' imperialist states, providing, in the event of such

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aggression taking place, for collective action against the aggressors.

Fifth, when the 'democratic' imperialist states, overcome by their hatred of communism, refused to conclude a collective security pact with the USSR and continued their policy of appeasement of the fascist states, in particular that of Nazi Germany in an effort to direct her aggression in an eastwardly direction against the Soviet Union, the latter was forced to try some other method of protecting the interests of the socialist motherland of the international proletariat.

Addressing the eighteenth party congress of the CPSU in March, 1939, Stalin exposed the motives behind the policy of non-intervention adopted by the 'democratic' imperialist countries, particularly Britain and France, thus:

The policy of non-intervention reveals an eagerness, a desire . . . not to hinder Germany, say . . . from embroiling herself in a war with the Soviet Union, to allow all the belligerents to sink deeply in the mire of war, to encourage them surreptitiously in this; to allow them to weaken and exhaust one another; and then, when they have become weak enough, to appear on the scene with fresh strength, to appear, of course, 'in the interests of peace', and to dictate conditions to the enfeebled belligerents.

Cheap and easy!*

Further, referring to the Munich agreement, which surrendered Czechoslovakia to the Nazis (the leader writer of *The Sunday Times* cited above, displaying monumental 'forgetfulness', studiously avoided any reference to this pact, correctly fearing that such a reference would at once expose the hypocritical assertion that Britain's ruling class went to war against Nazi Germany in the interests of the fight against fascism and for 'decent values'), Stalin continued:

* Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Moscow, 1953, p754

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One might think that the districts of Czechoslovakia were yielded to Germany as the price of an undertaking to launch war on the Soviet Union . . .*

By way of outlining the tasks of Soviet foreign policy, as well as by way of a veiled warning to the ruling classes in the 'democratic' imperialist countries, Stalin went on to stress the need 'to be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull chestnuts out of the fire for them'.†

Thus it was that in the face of intransigent refusal on the part of Britain and France to conclude a collective security pact, and in the aftermath of the Munich agreement, about which the Soviet Union was not even consulted, that the latter turned the tables on the foreign policy of Britain and France by signing, on 23 August 1939, the German-Soviet non-aggression pact.

Sixth, in signing this pact, the USSR not only ensured that she would not be fighting Germany alone, but also that the latter would be fighting against the very powers who had been trying, by their refusal to agree on collective security, to embroil the USSR in a war with Germany. On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later, the Anglo-French ultimatum expired, and Britain and France were at war with Germany.

Of course, it is understandable that imperialism even today should attack and accuse the USSR and Stalin of 'betrayal' for concluding the non-aggression pact with Germany (conveniently 'forgetting' that the real betrayal had taken place at Munich a year earlier), for this pact advanced the cause of socialism and the liberation of humanity from the yoke of fascism. But those sorry Marxists who still, taking their cue from imperialism, continue to criticise the USSR for

* *Ibid*, p756

† *Ibid*, p759

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concluding the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, need to have their heads examined. They could do far worse than listen to the right-wing Austrian Professor Topitsch.

Professor Topitsch, whose anti-communist credentials and pro-imperialist sympathies are impeccable, and who cannot therefore be accused of harbouring any soft corner for Stalin or the USSR that he led, has this to say on the issue under consideration:

Thorough analysis of the interplay of the main events has led me to the conviction that . . . Stalin was not only the real victor, but also the key figure in the war; he was, indeed, the only statesman who had at the time a clear, broadly-based idea of his objectives.*

Further:

The events of the summer of 1939 show the fateful consequences of Hitler's lack of statesmanlike qualities and a world-oriented political vision, and make him look very inferior to his Russian counterpart. With regard to political intelligence and political style, their relationship is like that of a gambler to a chess grandmaster, and the assertion that the führer fell like a schoolboy into the trap set for him by Moscow can hardly be called exaggerated.†

On the Hitler-Stalin pact the same author writes:

After the conclusion of this treaty Hitler and Ribbentrop may have regarded themselves as statesmen of the highest calibre; instead their actions betrayed a frightening lack of political intelligence. Whereas Stalin had thoroughly pondered over the content and phraseology of the agreements, his opposite numbers were obviously incapable even of carefully reviewing the consequences which

* Ernest Topitsch, *Stalin's War*, London, Fourth Estate, 1987, p4

† *Ibid*, p7

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might result for Germany from those fateful documents. In point of fact, the two treaties fitted in perfectly with Soviet long-term strategy, to involve Germany in a war with the British and the French, make it dependent on Russia and, if the opportunity should arise, bring about its extinction as an independent power. Far-sighted as he was, Stalin was already thinking at this early stage of obtaining a favourable starting point for the realisation of such plans.*

By its April 1941 Treaty of Neutrality with Japan, the Soviet Union successfully managed to achieve in the east that which it had achieved in the west through the non-aggression pact with Germany.

Seventh, the provisions of the additional secret protocol went far enough to safeguard the Soviet 'spheres of interests', which proved vital to Soviet defences when the war actually reached her.

Finally, the German-Soviet non-aggression pact bought the Soviet Union an extremely valuable period of two years for strengthening her defence preparedness before she entered a war she knew she could not stay out of forever.

When the war was finally forced on the Soviet Union, she made the most heroic contribution in the crowning and glorious victory of the allies against Nazi Germany. The Red Army and the Soviet people showed their tenacity, and the tenacity and superiority of the socialist system, by defeating the Nazis in the USSR and pursuing them all the way to Berlin, liberating in the process country after country from the Nazi jackboot occupation and bringing socialism to eastern Europe.

All revolutionary and honest bourgeois historians and politicians agree on the above summary. Only the most die-hard anti-communists, particularly the Trotskyites, ever dare to dispute it.

* *Ibid*, p4

3. Bourgeois predictions of a Soviet collapse

By the summer of 1941, through a combination of luck and some bold strokes, Hitler's armies had chased the British off the continent of Europe and thus become the masters of western and central Europe, whose people groaned under fascist occupation. Hitler was at last in a position to wage war against the USSR, which he launched under the codename Operation Barbarossa at 3.30am on 22 June 1941.

When, on that fateful day, the German army crossed the border into the USSR, most western bourgeois politicians and military strategists gave her no more than six weeks before what they regarded as her inevitable collapse in the face of the mighty German armed forces. Their judgement had obviously been coloured by the fate of countries such as Poland and France, each of which lay prostrate within less than two weeks of being invaded by the German army. They were affected too by the fate of the British army, so humiliatingly expelled from the Continent in the May 1940 fiasco, which goes by the name of the Dunkirk spirit.

Furthermore, the bourgeois ideologues believed in their own anti-Soviet propaganda to the effect that the Soviet army had been 'decimated' and 'decapitated' as a result of the trial and execution of Tukhachevsky and other army officers on treason charges and was therefore in no position to wage war; that the Bolshevik party had been 'denuded' of leadership consequent upon the three Moscow Trials of the leading Trotskyites and Bukharinites on charges of treason, murder, sabotage and wrecking; that as a result of 'forced' collectivisation the peasantry was sullen and therefore most likely to revolt against the Soviet regime in the conditions of war.

In all this, the bourgeois ideologists were cruelly deluded.

Even before the war against the Soviet Union started, the chief imperialist ideologue, namely, Leon Trotsky, made, with malicious

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glee, a number of predictions about the 'inevitable' defeat of the USSR in the then coming war. In his *Revolution Betrayed*, he wrote:

Can we, however, expect that the Soviet Union will come out of the coming great war without defeat? To this frankly posed question we will answer as frankly; if the war should only remain a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union will be inevitable. In a technical, economic and military sense, imperialism is incomparably more strong. If it is not paralysed by revolution in the west, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October Revolution.*

In 1940, nearing the end of his life – a life full of irreconcilable hostility towards Leninism – Trotsky, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, again predicted the defeat of the USSR and triumph of Hitlerite Germany:

We always started from the fact that the international policy of the Kremlin was determined by the new aristocracy's . . . incapacity to conduct a war . . .

The ruling caste is no longer capable of thinking about tomorrow. Its formula is that of all doomed regimes 'after us the deluge' . . .

The war will topple many things and many individuals. Artifice, trickery, frame-ups and treasons will prove of no avail in escaping its severe judgement.†

Stalin cannot make a war with discontented workers and peasants and with a decapitated Red Army.‡

* L Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, 1936, p216

† Statement to the British capitalist press on 'Stalin – Hitler's quartermaster', 2 September 1939

‡ 'German-Soviet alliance', 4 September 1939

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The level of the USSR's productive forces forbids a major war . . . the involvement of the USSR in a major war before the end of this period would signify in any case a struggle with unequal weapons.

The subjective factor, not less important than the material, has changed in the last years sharply for the worse . . .

Stalin cannot wage an offensive war with any hope of victory.

Should the USSR enter the war with its innumerable victims and privations, the whole fraud of the official regime, its outrages and violence, will inevitably provoke a profound reaction on the part of the people, who have already carried out three revolutions in this century . . .

The present war can crush the Kremlin bureaucracy long before revolution breaks out in some capitalist country . . .*

4. Bourgeois predictions belied

Not only Trotsky, but also the imperialist bourgeoisie (which paid Trotsky so well, and for whom it opened the columns of its press, to write such rubbish and to spew out so much anti-Soviet venom) believed in these baseless assertions. It therefore came as a total surprise to the imperialists when the Soviet Union, far from collapsing under Nazi attack, proved to be the only force, not only to withstand but also to defeat and smash to smithereens the Nazi war machine.

As usual, and happily for humanity, all Trotsky's predictions were totally belied. After initial reverses in the first few weeks of the war, attributable in the main to the Nazi surprise attack, the Soviet defences stiffened. Before long they struck back. The rest of the world, like Trotsky, had given the USSR only a few weeks before collaps-

* 'The twin stars: Hitler-Stalin', 4 December 1939

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ing in the face of the onslaught of the allegedly invincible Nazi war machine. The Red Army and Soviet people, united as one under the leadership of the CPSU and their supreme commander Joseph Stalin, exploded this myth of Nazi invincibility. Soviet victories in the titanic battles of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, Leningrad and Berlin will forever be cherished not only by the peoples of the former, great and glorious Soviet Union, but also by all progressive humanity.

Each of these battles involved upwards of a million men on each side, and, in the words of Harrison E Salisbury:

Each inflicted on the Germans the kind of casualties which leave a lasting mark not only on an army but on a nation.*

The Battle of Moscow had been an epic event . . . It had involved more than two million men, 2,500 tanks, 1,800 aircraft and 25,000 guns. Casualties had been horrifying in scale. For the Russians it had ended in victory. They had suffered the full impact of the German '*Blitzkrieg*' offensive and, notwithstanding their losses . . . they had been able to mount an effective counterattack. They had begun to destroy the myth of German invincibility . . . †

This is how Marshal Zhukov evaluates the significance of the Battle of Moscow:

The final results of the Battle of Moscow proved to be inspiring for the Soviet side and depressing for the enemy.

A German General, Westphal . . . has acknowledged that the German army, once considered invincible, was on the brink of destruction . . . The Germans lost a total of more than half a million soldiers, 1,300 tanks, 2,500 guns, 15,000 trucks and a great deal of

* Introduction, *Marshal Zhukov's Greatest Battles*, MacDonald, London, 1969, p12

† Ian Grey, *Stalin – Man of History*, 1979, Abacus, p344

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other equipment . . .

The Soviet counteroffensive of the winter of 1941-42 was conducted under difficult conditions of a snowy, cold winter and, what is most important, without numerical superiority over the enemy . . .

For the first time in six months of war, in the Battle of Moscow the Red Army inflicted a major defeat on the main forces of the enemy. It was the first strategic victory over the Wehrmacht since the beginning of World War II . . . The skilled defensive operations [by the Soviet army], the successful launching of counterattacks and the swift transition to a counteroffensive greatly enriched Soviet military art and demonstrated the growing strategic operational-tactical maturity of Soviet military commanders and improved military mastery of Soviet soldiers in all services.

The defeat of Germany at Moscow was also of great international significance. The people in all the countries of the anti-Nazi coalition received the news of the outstanding victory of the Soviet army with great enthusiasm. All progressive mankind linked that victory to its hopes for an approaching liberation from fascist slavery.

The failures of German forces at Leningrad, at Rostov, near Tikhvin and the Battle of Moscow had a sobering effect on the reactionary circles of Japan and Turkey and forced them to assume a more cautious policy toward the Soviet Union.

After the defeat of Germans before Moscow, the strategic initiative on all sectors of the Soviet-German front passed to the Soviet command . . . After the defeat of the Nazis at Moscow, not only ordinary Germans but many German officers and generals were convinced of the might of the Soviet state and recognised that the Soviet armed forces represented an insurmountable obstacle to the achievement of Hitler's objectives.*

* *Marshal Zhukov's Greatest Battles*, 1969, pp100-102

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Marshal Zhukov concludes his account of the Battle of Moscow with the following question, and his answer to it:

I am often asked the question: 'Where was Stalin at the time of the Moscow battle?'

Stalin was in Moscow, organising the forces and means for the defeat of the enemy. He must be given his due. As head of the State Defence Committee, and with the members of the Supreme Headquarters and leaders of the People's Commissariats, he carried on major work in the organising of strategic reserves and the material-technical means essential for the military struggle. With his harsh demands, he achieved, one might say, almost the impossible . . .*

Here is another evaluation, from the opposite end of the political spectrum, of Soviet strength, which the Hitlerites, intoxicated by their own deceptive propaganda and easy victories in the west, had failed properly to take into account.

Topitsch correctly points out that Operation Barbarossa was based on an overestimation of German and an underestimation of Soviet military might, as well as other assumptions, which began to come apart from the moment the German army crossed the Soviet frontier.

When the Germans crossed the border into the east the feeling often came over them – from the führer down to the common soldier – that they were thrusting open a door into the unknown, behind which Stalin had wicked surprises in store for them, and that in the end doom might be lurking in the endless wastes beyond.†

* *Ibid*, pp102-103

† Topitsch, *ibid*, p103

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After their initial successes, gained through the tactical advantage of their surprise attack on the USSR, the Nazis began to believe that victory was already theirs and indulged in fantastic plans for the future.

But gradually it became clear that the Soviet Union was anything but a 'Colossus with feet of clay'. In spite of enormous losses, this vast empire could keep hurling new masses of men and material at the invader, and soon increasing numbers of the new types of tanks and the dreaded rocket-launchers appeared on the battlefields. The fourteen-day victory developed into a war lasting at least four years, fought with the greatest bitterness on both sides, and the dramatic victories of the first weeks turned out to be the beginning of the end for the Third Reich.*

Stalin's ruthless energy made sure that all reserves within the depths of the country were mobilised. Indeed, during the course of this frightful struggle the Soviet Union extended itself and took a decisive step towards becoming a superpower. By contrast, Germany was effectively diminishing itself with every step in its exhausting campaign in the east.†

The surrender on 1 February 1943 at Stalingrad, by the fascist General Von Paulus and twenty-three other generals, mesmerised the world. The victory of the Red Army at Stalingrad was as incredible as it was heroic. The Nazi losses in the Volga-Don-Stalingrad area were one and a half million men, three and a half thousand tanks, twelve thousand guns and three thousand aircraft. Never before had the Nazi war machine, which was accustomed to running over countries in days and weeks, suffered such a humiliating

* *Ibid*, p113

† *Ibid*, p115

defeat, a defeat 'in which the flower of the German army perished. It was against the background of this battle . . . that Stalin now rose to almost titanic stature in the eyes of the world'.*

From now on, nothing but defeat stared the Germans in the face, leading all the way to the entry of the Red Army into Berlin and the storming by it of the Reichstag on 30 April 1945 – the same day that the führer committed suicide. Six days later, Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, acting on behalf of the German high command, surrendered to Marshall Zhukov.

REASONS FOR THE SOVIET VICTORY

How was it possible for the USSR to succeed where others had failed so miserably? There are several reasons for this success.

1. The elimination of the fifth column

First, because the CPSU and the Soviet regime ruthlessly purged the party, the government and the armed forces of the fifth column elements.

In addition to the testimony of the accused at the above-mentioned trials – and for this testimony there is no substitute – impeccable bourgeois sources, who cannot be suspected of the least partiality towards the Soviet regime, are on record confirming the guilt of the accused at these trials. Joseph E Davies, at the time the American ambassador in Moscow, who, accompanied by an interpreter, at-

* Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin – A Political Biography*, Pelican, London, 1966, p472

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tended and carefully followed the proceedings at the Moscow trials, was profoundly impressed.

On 17 February 1937, a month after the second trial, in a confidential dispatch to Cordell Hull, the US Secretary of State, Ambassador Davies reported that almost all the foreign diplomats in Moscow shared his opinion of the justice of the verdict:

I talked to many, if not all, of the members of the Diplomatic Corps here and, with possibly one exception, they are all of the opinion that the proceedings established clearly the existence of a political plot and conspiracy to overthrow the government.*

Powerful, anti-Soviet forces saw to it that this truth about the fifth column in the USSR was not made public in the US or elsewhere in the western world.

Again, on 11 March 1937, Ambassador Davies recorded in his diary:

Another diplomat, Minister --, made a most illuminating statement to me yesterday. In discussing the trial, he said that the defendants were undoubtedly guilty; that all of us who attended the trial had practically agreed upon that; that the outside world, from the press reports, however, seemed to think that the trial was a put-up job (facade, as he called it); that while he knew it was not, it was probably just as well that the outside world should think so.†

One week into the Third Moscow Trial (that of Bukharin and others), Ambassador Davies wrote on 8 March 1938 to his daughter Emlen thus:

The extraordinary testimony of Krestinsky, Bukharin, and the rest

* Joseph E Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1942, p39

† *Ibid*, p83

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would appear to indicate that the Kremlin's fears were well justified. For it now seems that a plot existed in the beginning of November, 1936, to project a coup d'état, with Tukhachevsky at its head, for May of the following year. Apparently it was touch and go at that time whether it actually would be staged.

But the government acted with great vigour and speed. The Red Army generals were shot and the whole party organisation was purged and thoroughly cleansed. Then it came out that quite a few of those at the top were seriously infected with the virus of the conspiracy to overthrow the government, and were actually working with the Secret Service organisations of Germany and Japan.*

Far from weakening the Soviet regime or the Red Army, these trials helped to eliminate precisely those elements who would have collaborated with the Nazis and acted as a fifth column. In the summer of 1941, shortly after the Nazi invasion of the USSR, Davies wrote the following appraisal of the historical significance of the Moscow trials:

There was no so-called 'internal aggression' in Russia cooperating with the German high command. Hitler's march into Prague in 1939 was accompanied by the active military support of Henlein's organisations in Czechoslovakia. The same thing was true of his invasion of Norway. There were no Sudeten Henleins, no Slovakian Tisos, no Belgian De Grelles, no Norwegian Quislings in the Russian picture . . . †

The story had been told in the so-called treason or purge trials of 1937 and 1938 which I attended and listened to. In re-examining the record of these cases and also what I had written at the time

* *Ibid*, p177

† *Ibid*, p179

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. . . I found that practically every device of German fifth columnist activity, as we now know it, was disclosed and laid bare by the confessions and testimony elicited at these trials of self-confessed 'Quisling's in Russia . . .

All of these trials, purges, and liquidations, which seemed so violent at the time and shocked the world, are now quite clearly a part of a vigorous and determined effort of the Stalin government to protect itself not only from revolution from within but from attack from without. They went to work thoroughly to clean up and clean out all treasonable elements within the country. All doubts were resolved in favour of the government.

There were no fifth columnists in Russia in 1941 – they had shot them. The purge had cleansed the country and rid it of treason.*

An authoritative bourgeois correspondent concluded that

The purge eliminated Russia's fifth column. I found no British or American correspondent in Russia who thought that the famous confessions made by Radek, Tukhachevsky, Rykov, Krestinsky, Pletnov, Rozengolts and others had been extracted by torture.†

Let George Sava be our final bourgeois witness. In his *War Without Guns*, having stated that 'Russia's splendid resistance surprised many a diplomat of the democratic countries, who were convinced that Russia could not resist more than ten weeks', he goes on to make the following perceptive, nay penetrating, observation:

We may not understand the intricacies of Marxism, but we should have known that the grave Hitler has been digging for conservatives and democrats alike was intentionally made big enough to bury the

* *Ibid*, pp179-184

† Quentin Reynolds, *Only the Stars Are Neutral*, New York, 1943, p93

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Russians as well. Fortunately, unlike our diplomats, the Russians did realise the dangers and that is the reason for their ruthless suppression of fifth columnists.

The executions which so horrified us and were termed enigmatic and barbaric, should have been seen in a different light by an intelligent diplomacy, particularly if they considered the fate of Norway and France and the role which fifth columnists played in those two countries.

A clever diplomat could have willingly admitted that a little well-directed shooting in France and Belgium on the Russian model might have saved Brussels, Oslo, Amsterdam and Paris.

Thus it can be seen that once the western countries had become locked in a mortal conflict with Nazi Germany and became allies of the USSR, they had to overcome their deep-rooted anti-Comintern and anti-Bolshevik prejudices and speak out the truth in public on the Moscow trials as on many other issues; they had to admit publicly that these trials, far from weakening the CPSU(B), the Soviet government or the Red Army, had, by liquidating the fifth column in the USSR, strengthened the party, the government and the Red Army.

In making this belated admission they were only confirming the historical significance of these trials as being an integral part of the USSR's struggle – indeed, the struggle of the world as a whole – against the menace of Nazi world domination.

Stalin, in his report to the eighteenth party congress, answered the rubbish uttered on this question by the bourgeois press in the imperialist countries thus:

Certain foreign pressmen have been talking drivel to the effect that the purging of Soviet organisations of spies, assassins and wreckers like Trotsky, Zinoviev, Yakir, Tukhachevsky, Rosengoltz, Bukharin and other fiends has 'shaken' the Soviet system and caused its 'de-

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moralisation'. All this cheap drivel deserves is laughter and scorn. How can the purging of Soviet organisations of noxious and hostile elements shake and demoralise the Soviet system?

The Trotsky-Bukharin bunch, that handful of spies, assassins and wreckers, who kow-towed to the foreign world, who were possessed by a slavish instinct to grovel before every foreign bigwig and were ready to serve him as spies – that handful of individuals who did not understand that the humblest Soviet citizen, being free from the fetters of capital, stands head and shoulders above any high-placed foreign bigwig whose neck wears the yoke of capitalist slavery – of what use that miserable band of venal slaves, of what value can they be to the people, and whom can they 'demoralise'?

In 1937, Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich and other fiends were sentenced to be shot. After that, the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were held. In these elections, 98.6 percent of the total vote was cast for the Soviet government. At the beginning of 1938, Rosengoltz, Rykov, Bukharin and other fiends were sentenced to be shot. After that, the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics were held. In these elections 99.4 percent of the total vote was cast for the Soviet government. Where are the symptoms of 'demoralisation', we would like to know, and why was this 'demoralisation' not reflected in the results of the elections?

To listen to these foreign drivellers one would think that if the spies, assassins and wreckers had been left at liberty to wreck, murder and spy without let or hindrance, the Soviet organisations would have been far sounder and stronger [Laughter]. Are not these gentlemen giving themselves away too soon by so insolently defending the cause of spies, assassins and wreckers?

Would it not be truer to say that the weeding out of spies, assassins and wreckers from the Soviet organisations was bound to lead, and did lead, to the further strengthening of these organisations?

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Referring to the bloody but undeclared war at Lake Hassan on the Manchurian-Maritime Provinces frontier, fought between the USSR and Japanese imperialism – a war in which the Japanese got a bloody nose, which restrained them from attacking the USSR again – Stalin went on to add:

What, for instance, do the events at Lake Hassan show, if not that the weeding out of spies and wreckers is the surest means of strengthening our Soviet organisations?*

Thus the convergence of honest bourgeois and proletarian views alike compels us to the only conclusion possible, namely that the accused at the Moscow trials were justly tried and justly punished and that the liquidation of the accused eliminated the fifth column in the USSR, which in turn strengthened the ability of the Soviet regime and its armed forces to withstand, defeat and smash the seemingly invincible Wehrmacht.

If we are to believe the bourgeois-Trotskyist drivel – that after the trials the USSR's armed forces were left bereft of a general staff – how, then are we to explain the existence in the Red Army of such brilliant and legendary generals, whose exploits are known the world over, as Zhukov, Chuikov, Shtemenko, Yeremenko, Timoshenko, Vasilevsky, Sokolovsky, Rokossovsky, Koniev, Voroshilov, Budenny, Mekhlis, Kulik and many, many more?

* 'Report on the work of the central committee to the eighteenth congress of the CPSU(B)' by J V Stalin, 10 March 1939

2. Socialism

Second, the USSR was successful because she had been building up her industry and collectivising her agriculture on the lines of socialism. The implementation of such a programme, in addition to endowing the USSR with material strength, brought a resurgence of proletarian pride in their achievements, an ardent faith in the bright future of socialism, and a grim determination to defend the gains of socialism against external and internal enemies alike.

But this programme did not fall from heaven by itself, fortuitously as it were. It had to be fought for tooth and nail against its 'left' (Trotskyist) and right (Bukharinite) opponents; it had to survive the wrecking, sabotage and treasonable conspiracies of the Trotskyite and Bukharinite capitulators and despicable lackeys of imperialism. In a word, it was a programme born out of, and amidst, conditions of fierce class struggle.

Although the Soviet Union would have dearly loved to have been left alone in peace to continue the task of socialist construction, her leadership was well aware of the dangers, of the fact that imperialism would drag her into the war. It was not, therefore, within Soviet power to avert involvement in a war with imperialism, for, as a Chinese saying has it, 'The tree may prefer the calm, but the wind will not subside'.

Precisely for this reason, with the impending war in mind, the leadership of the CPSU had refused, in the teeth of opposition from the camp of the Bukharinite capitulators, to slow down the tempo of industrialisation. Speaking at the conference of leading personnel of socialist industry on 4 February 1931, Stalin stressed this point in his characteristically frank and unambiguous manner:

It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo somewhat, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades,

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it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities. This is dictated to us by our obligations to the workers and peasants of the USSR. This is dictated to us by our obligations to the working class of the whole world.

To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered because of her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons.

All beat her because of her backwardness, because of her military backwardness, cultural backwardness, political backwardness, industrial backwardness, agricultural backwardness. They beat her because to do so was profitable and could be done with impunity. You remember the words of the pre-revolutionary poet: *'You are poor and abundant, mighty and impotent, Mother Russia'*. Those gentlemen were quite familiar with the verses of the old poet. They beat her, saying: *'You are abundant'*, so one can enrich oneself at your expense. They beat her, saying: *'You are poor and impotent'*, so you can be beaten and plundered with impunity.

Such is the law of the exploiters – to beat the backward and the weak. It is the jungle law of capitalism. You are backward, you are weak – therefore you are wrong; hence you can be beaten and enslaved. You are mighty – therefore you are right; hence we must be wary of you.

That is why we must not lag behind.

In the past we had no fatherland, nor could we have had one. But now that we have overthrown capitalism and power is in our hands, in the hands of the people, we have a fatherland, and we will up-

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hold its independence. Do you want our socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If you do not want this, you must put an end to its backwardness in the shortest possible time and develop a genuine bolshevik tempo in building up its socialist economy. There is no other way. That is why Lenin said on the eve of the October Revolution: *'Either perish, or overtake and outstrip the advanced capitalist countries'*.

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.*

As a result of this gigantic effort, in 1940 gross output of Soviet industry was eight and a half times greater than the industrial production of tsarist Russia in 1913, whereas the output of large-scale industry had increased twelve-fold and machine-building 35-fold.

Thoroughly biased as he is against Stalin, the Trotskyite Isaac Deutscher, in his biography of Stalin, was obliged to make the following admission as to the decisive factors that underlay the Soviet victory in the second world war:

The truth was that the war could not have been won without the intensive industrialisation of Russia, and of her eastern provinces in particular. Nor could it have been won without the collectivisation of large numbers of farms.

The muzhik of 1930, who had never handled a tractor or any other machine, would have been of little use in modern war. Collectivised farming, with its machine-tractor stations scattered all over the country, had been the peasants' preparatory school for mechanised warfare.

The rapid raising of the average standard of education had also

* Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vol 13, pp40-41

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enabled the Red Army to draw on a considerable reserve of intelligent officers and men. *'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us'* – so Stalin had spoken exactly ten years before Hitler set out to conquer Russia.

His words, when they were recalled now, could not but impress people as a prophecy brilliantly fulfilled, as a most timely call to action. And, indeed, a few years' delay in the modernisation of Russia might have made all the difference between victory and defeat.*

Deutscher also dispelled any notion of popular hostility to the Soviet regime and correctly painted a picture of a Soviet people possessed of strong moral fibre, a strong sense of economic and political advance, and a grim determination to defend its gains:

It should not be imagined that a majority of the nation was hostile to the government. If that had been the case no patriotic appeals, no prodding or coercion, would have prevented Russia's political collapse, for which Hitler was confidently hoping.

The great transformation that the country had gone through before the war had . . . strengthened the moral fibre of the nation. The majority was imbued with a strong sense of its economic and social advance, which it was grimly determined to defend against danger from without . . .†

* Deutscher, *ibid*, p535

† *Ibid*, p473

3. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)

The third reason for Soviet victory was that they were led by such a revolutionary proletarian party as the CPSU(B), whose leadership as well as lower ranks were characterised by an unreserved spirit of dedication to the cause of the proletariat, and a self-sacrificing heroism, and commanded the respect of non-party masses. Of the twenty-seven million Soviets who died in the war, three million belonged to the communist party.

David Hearst of the *Guardian*, in his article, written in connection with the celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day, and filled with the customary anti-Stalinism (without which no bourgeois journalist can hope to keep his job and have his wallet stuffed), was compelled to make this admission:

All contemporary accounts by war veterans testify to a high degree of ideological commitment by all sections of society in volunteering for action after June 1941, the educated and uneducated alike. Why? In what name did so many communist party faithful go forward to meet certain death? In the name of the motherland? In the name of the Soviet Union, somehow dissociated from Stalin's evil guiding hand, of which they themselves were among the first victims?*

Having satisfied the moneybags who own the *Guardian*, and the editor, by a reference to 'Stalin's evil guiding hand', and having thus established his impeccable bourgeois journalistic credentials, Mr Hearst nevertheless found himself stumbling on the truth when he continued thus, by way of answering his own question:

Contemporary eye-witness accounts point to the contrary. A typical

* 'Coming to the aid of the party' by David Hearst, *The Guardian*, 1 May 1995

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reaction is the veteran Ivan Martinov's: 'Every one of us knows that it was the Communist Party which led everything at that time. The party formed the basis of the state machine.

Everyone knew that when our servicemen were captured, the Nazi order would be, "Communists, jews and commanders take one step forward," and they would be shot. Therefore the massive joining of the party during the war, meant only one thing – heroism and belief in the party cause.*

It may not be to his liking, but the fact of the matter is, as David Hearst must know, millions of Soviet soldiers, partisans and civilians went to their deaths with the slogan: 'For the motherland and for Comrade Stalin' on their lips – such were the love and affection with which the Soviet masses cherished their socialist motherland and its helmsman, such was the charisma ('evil guiding hand', if it pleases bourgeois scribblers and such other anti-proletarian gentry) of Joseph Stalin, who inspired the Soviet people to unprecedented feats of heroism.

By November 1942, the Germans occupied seven hundred thousand square miles of Soviet territory and a pre-war population of eighty million; millions of Soviet citizens were compelled to abandon their cities, villages, factories and plants and move eastward to avoid enemy occupation. Soviet troops were compelled by the extremely difficult military situation to retreat into the interior with substantial losses in men and material.

But even during that difficult period neither the Soviet nation nor its armed forces lost faith in the prospect of the ultimate defeat of the enemy hordes. The mortal danger helped to rally our people even more closely around the Communist Party, and, despite every hardship, the enemy was finally stopped in all sectors.

* *Marshal Zhukov's Greatest Battles*, p152

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The mass heroism of Soviet soldiers and the courage of their commanders, reared by our party, were demonstrated with particular force during the fierce fighting of that [November 1942] period. A positive role was played by the personal example of party members and young communists who, when necessary, sacrificed themselves for the sake of victory.*

4. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The fourth reason for the victory of the Soviet Union was the existence of this unique institution in the history of humanity, namely the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – a multinational state established by the victorious proletariat consequent upon the Great Socialist October Revolution, which had outlawed exploitation of one human being by another within each of its constituent parts, and exploitation of one nation by another. In truth, this was a free and fraternal association of dozens of nations who lived together to construct a common bright future, and where injury to one was regarded as an injury to all.

David Hearst, in the article referred to above, cited Professor Yuri Polyakov, a historian and a member of the Academy of Science, who brought together all the reasons that inspired the Soviet people to heroic resistance and victory in the Great Patriotic War. Here is what Prof Polyakov had to say:

The workers and peasants were fighting for their socialist state. A Kazakh or Kyrgyz, who under the Soviet empire got for the first time in their history his own statehood, was fighting for his motherland, Kazakhstan or Krygyzia.

The German invasion brought with it a very strong sense of danger to the Soviet Union. Everyone understood that the union would be destroyed under German occupation. But ideology also played its

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part . . . The generals and officer class came from simple people who believed in the justice of the struggle and the state they were defending. In great measure this belief was linked to the belief in Soviet power, as the power that had brought economic development to the whole Union.*

And these are the words of a Professor in Yeltsin's fiercely anti-communist Russia, where 'historians' were given large bribes to write 'histories' that painted the former Soviet Union and its leadership in the darkest colours, where, let alone poor Stalin, biographies of the great Lenin were brought out that described him in these flattering tones: 'Lenin was the anti-Christ . . . All Russia's great troubles stemmed from him.'

Have we not always maintained that anti-Stalinism was only a cover for anti-Leninism? Since the Soviet state has been destroyed and capitalism restored, Khrushchev's successors no longer have to speak in coded Aesopian language.

Having quoted Prof Polyakov, David Hearst concluded his article with this pertinent observation:

If this explanation is correct, the motives behind the immense effort and huge cost of pushing the Germans back have disquieting resonances for today's post-communist leadership: the Great Patriotic War is a monument to the three institutions that Yeltsin has destroyed – the communist party as an organising body, socialism as a state ideology, and the Soviet Union as a working collective entity.

Even the decision to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day with a grandiose state occasion is a change of policy. Four years ago not one state leader attended the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Moscow. Last year it was the humble city of

* Cited in *The Guardian*, *ibid*

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Novgorod's turn: a relatively minor liberation compared to the massive losses at Moscow, but Yeltsin was careful to send his greetings to the inhabitants. The 1995 campaign to reclaim the Great Patriotic War for Russia's, rather than the Soviet Union's history, had begun.

Today's debate is, as all these debates are, more about the present than the past . . . the events of fifty years ago are still being lived through today. Russia's industrial decline under its painful transition to a market economy is being likened to the effect on industry of the German invasion. To Yeltsin's opponents the war effort creates an inverted image of Russia today. 'If we could do it then, we can do it again today', is the constant assumption of any war nostalgia.

There are too many parallels, too much undigested matter, and the state of Russia, shorn of its fraternal republics and its international influence is too young a state. The veterans are still an important electoral block: with their families they can muster about twenty million votes. They are disciplined voters, and highly politicised. So when Yeltsin mounts the podium in Red Square to take the official salute of the Veterans' Parade on 9 May, he is not just thinking of the past but this year's parliamentary elections, and possibly next year's presidential elections. Like all his predecessors, Yeltsin has good reason today to be cautious about the past.

It is unquestionably true that the present-day peoples of the former Soviet Union, in marking the sixtieth anniversary, as indeed ten years ago on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary, of their victory in the Great Patriotic War, in paying tribute to the valour, heroism, sacrifice, steadfastness and single-minded sense of purpose of their Soviet fathers and grandfathers (tens of millions remembering their own part in it) in that titanic struggle, cannot but be haunted by the memories of their socialist motherland and cannot help comparing their present-day misery (courtesy of the wonders of capitalist restoration with its mafia economy, prostitution, drug trafficking, street crime, killing of old people to get hold of their apartments, un-

employment, homelessness and subservience to foreign imperialism) with the life under the former glorious Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

All this cannot augur well for the present-day tsars of Russia.

INITIAL SOVIET REVERSES

The fascist German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 was followed by considerable Soviet reverses and the loss of great chunks of Soviet territory. How are those reverses to be explained?

The bourgeois-Trotskyist explanation of these reverses amounts to a shameless falsification of history characteristic of this gentry. It runs variously something like this: that Stalin trusted Hitler not to attack the USSR, and hence, they argue, the Soviet-German 'non-aggression pact' was signed; that Stalin had 'decimated the army corps, executing, among others, Marshal Tukhachevsky, 'possibly the most brilliant Russian soldier of this century'; that there was no experienced communist leadership, since Stalin had 'either killed or imprisoned' them all; that Stalin had neglected military preparations; that he had alienated the peasantry through 'forced collectivisation'; and so on and so forth *ad nauseam* and *ad absurdum*.

We have dealt with these important questions elsewhere, but shall merely note in passing that the very people who attribute Soviet reverses to a lack of leadership are the self-same gentry who attribute subsequent Soviet successes to a leaderless Soviet people!! No, these hysterical bourgeois Trotskyist fairytales and slanders masquerading as historical explanations will not bear any serious scrutiny.

Here, then, are the real reasons for the initial Soviet reverses.

1. Surprise attack

First and foremost the Hitlerites had the advantage of a surprise attack. Surprise can by no means be given the meaning given it in this context by the Trotskyites and other bourgeois ideologues, namely, that Stalin did not expect Hitler to attack the Soviet Union. What jokers these gentry are! Of course he knew that the Hitlerite fascists hated the socialist Soviet Union more than any other country and they were out to destroy communism. Any fool, even of the Trotskyist variety, was well-acquainted with this fact. So, while the fascist intentions were clear as clear can be, the *actual date* of the attack could still be a surprise – and indeed was so.

If the Bolshevik party, and above all Stalin, entertained such illusions in Hitler, it would be impossible to explain the tempo of Soviet industrialisation, the Russo-Finnish war, the incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR, the wresting of Bessarabia from the then monarchical-fascist Romanian regime, and the reincorporation of the former Soviet territories in western Poland when the Polish state collapsed in the face of the Nazi attack.

It was precisely because Stalin and the Bolshevik party knew only too well of the intentions of German fascism and its appetite for destroying the socialist Soviet Union, that Stalin concluded the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, which secured for the Soviet Union nearly two years of peace and a valuable opportunity for preparing her forces to repulse Nazi Germany as and when she should risk attacking the USSR despite the pact, and also frustrated the attempts of Anglo-American imperialism to direct Hitler in the eastern direction, towards the Soviet Union. This was the meaning and the essence of the Munich surrender by the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, to Hitler.

The Bolshevik party, under the leadership of Stalin, turned the tables on Anglo-American imperialist ruling circles by concluding

the non-aggression pact with Germany, which proved so advantageous to the Soviet Union and to socialism, and so harmful to world imperialism. By its brilliant tactics, the Bolshevik party caused its two deadly enemies – German fascism on the one hand and Anglo-French-American imperialism on the other hand – to fight against each other rather than against the Soviet Union, and finally to compel one of these enemies, namely Anglo-American imperialism, to fight on the Soviet side against German fascism.

As a consequence, the end of the war resulted in the further weakening of imperialism, giving a tremendous boost to the world proletarian and national liberation movements all over the globe, bringing in its wake people's democracies in eastern Europe, the earthshaking successes of the Chinese Revolution and the loosening and freeing from colonial grip of countless countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In view of these results, which changed the political and economic geography of the entire globe, it is understandable, and not in the least surprising, that imperialists and their ideologues – Trotskyites and ordinary ideologues – should concentrate their attack with such venom on Stalin.

These venomous attacks alone are proof enough of the correctness of the brilliant tactics of Stalin.

2. Earlier Nazi mobilisation

Second, the Soviet reverses can be explained by the earlier mobilisation of the Germans and the fact that they had become seasoned through two years of experience in modern warfare. The 176 German divisions brought up to the Soviet frontiers and hurled by Germany against the USSR were in a state of complete readiness, only awaiting a signal to move into action, whereas the Soviet troops still had to effect mobilisation and move up to the frontier.

But let no one conclude from this that there were not Soviet troops

on the frontier and the Germans simply walked in unhindered. The German army had met with no serious resistance on the continent of Europe. Only on Soviet territory did it meet with such resistance, which destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the Hitlerite fascist troops. As a result of this resistance, the finest divisions of Hitler's German-fascist army were destroyed by the Red Army.

Thus, in the first four months, the losses of the two sides stood as follows:

Soviet losses: 350,000 killed, 378,000 missing, 1,020,000 wounded. A total of 1.728 million.

German losses: killed, wounded and prisoners combined were a total of 4.5 million.

By the winter of 1942-3, the initiative had already passed to the Red Army. In the three months of the Red Army's winter offensive, the Germans lost seven thousand tanks, four thousand planes, seventeen thousand guns and large quantities of other weapons. In the first twenty months of the war against Germany, in its defensive operations, the Red Army put out of action nine million German fascist troops, of which no less than four million were killed on the battlefield.

In the three months of that winter offensive alone, the Red Army routed 112 enemy divisions, killing more than seven hundred thousand and taking over three hundred thousand prisoners.

The outstanding encirclement and annihilation at Stalingrad of an enormous picked army of Germans, numbering 330,000, shall always remain an eloquent tribute to the fearless fighting spirit of the Red Army – and to its brilliant tactics.

3. The absence of a second front

Last, but not least, the Soviet Union's initial reverses can be attributed to the absence of a second front in Europe against fascist troops. In the absence of such a front, the German fascists were not

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compelled to dissipate their forces and to wage war on two fronts, in the west and in the east.

Thus the German rear in the west was secured and this enabled Germany to move all its troops against the USSR, which single-handedly fought against the forces of Germany and her Finnish, Romanian, Italian and Hungarian allies.

In the first world war there were two fronts, and therefore Germany was able to station only eighty-five of its 220 divisions on the Russian front. If one takes into account the forces of Germany's allies during the first world war, there were 127 German divisions stationed on the Russian front.

In stark contrast, there was no second front during the second world war, with the result that of the 256 German fascist divisions, 176 were stationed on the Soviet front. If we add to these twenty-two Romanian, fourteen Finnish, ten Italian, one Slovak, one Spanish and thirteen Hungarian divisions, this brings the number of fascist divisions on the eastern front close to 240.

The remaining divisions of Germany and her allies performed garrison service in occupied countries such as France, Belgium, Norway, Holland, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia etc, while a few fought in Libya for Egypt against Britain.

Because of the absence of a second front, Germany was able to keep as little as twenty percent of its armed forces on other fronts and in occupied countries.*

Thus eighty percent of the Nazi armed forces were concentrated in the east, along the entire front from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea.

As early as May 1942, Soviet foreign minister Molotov reached a complete agreement with Britain and the United States that a sec-

* Zhukov, *ibid*, p115

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ond front would be opened in Europe in 1942. This agreement was confirmed the following month.

However, within a month of this confirmation, it had been put on the back burner, causing Stalin to send a message, in which he hardly bothered to disguise his anger, to Churchill:

As to . . . opening a second front in Europe, I fear the matter is taking an improper turn.

In view of the situation of the Soviet-German front, I state most emphatically that the Soviet government cannot tolerate the second front in Europe being postponed till 1943.

On 12 August 1942, Stalin met Churchill and US presidential envoy Harriman in Moscow. During this meeting, Churchill, fully supported by Harriman, refused to honour their earlier promise concerning the second front.

A day later, in his memorandum of 13 August 1942, Stalin conveyed the Soviet anger at the Anglo-American betrayal of an agreement solemnly reached barely three months earlier in these blunt terms:

It will be recalled that the decision to open a second front in Europe in 1942 was reached at the time of Molotov's visit to London, and found expression in the agreed Anglo-Soviet communiqué released on 12 June last.

It will be recalled further that the opening of a second front in Europe was designed to divert German forces from the eastern front to the west, to set up in the west a major centre of resistance to the German fascist forces and thereby ease the position of the Soviet troops on the Soviet-German front in 1942.

Needless to say, the Soviet high command, in planning its summer and autumn operations, counted on a second front being opened in Europe in 1942.

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It will be readily understood that the British government's refusal to open a second front in Europe in 1942 delivers a mortal blow to Soviet public opinion, which had hoped that the second front would be opened, complicates the position of the Red Army at the front and injures the plans of the Soviet high command.

I say nothing of the fact that the difficulties in which the Red Army is involved through the refusal to open a second front in 1942 are bound to impair the military position of Britain and the other allies.

I and my colleagues believe that the year 1942 offers the most favourable conditions for a second front in Europe, seeing that nearly all the German forces – and their crack troops, too – are tied down on the eastern front, while only negligible forces, and the poorest, too, are left in Europe.

It is hard to say whether 1943 will offer as favourable for opening a second front as 1942. For this reason we think that it is possible and necessary to open a second front in Europe in 1942.

Unfortunately, I did not succeed in convincing the British prime minister of this, while Mr Harriman, the US president's representative at the Moscow talks, fully supported the prime minister.

At the time when Stalin sent the above memorandum, although the Battle of Moscow had been won, the USSR, approaching as she was the Battle of Stalingrad, which was to test her strength to the utmost, could hardly be said to have emerged from the woods. These were singularly difficult times for her and the USSR was literally fighting for her life, for it would be another five months before the turning point of the war, the Soviet victory and Nazi rout at Stalingrad, would be achieved. Churchill could not but have been aware of all this. And yet his response was to deny that Britain and the US had ever given any undertaking for opening a second front in Europe in 1942.

A month after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, Churchill sent a

message to Stalin stating that preparations were under way for a 'cross-channel operation in August, in which British and United States units would participate'.

Stalin, quite correctly regarding this as yet another dilatory ploy, wrote back asking for 'shortening these limits to the utmost for the opening of a second front in the west', stressing 'so that the enemy should not be given a chance to recover, it is very important, to my mind, that the blow from the west, instead of being put off till the second half of the year, be delivered in spring or early summer'.

But to no avail.

WHY NO SECOND FRONT?

Why was there no second front in the west?

There was no second front because, almost right up to the end of the war, Britain and America never gave up their duplicitous desire to come to an understanding with Hitler and leave him free to concentrate his forces on the Soviet frontier, or, if the possibility should present itself, to march hand-in-hand with Nazi Germany on Moscow.

Nothing came of those desires for a variety of reasons.

1. Imperialist hopes for a Soviet defeat

That Anglo-American imperialism harboured such designs and ambitions, is clear from the following testimony.

While being compelled by the force of circumstances to be on the same side as the USSR during the second world war, while being obliged to pay hypocritical public tributes to the resistance and he-

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roic fighting spirit displayed by the Red Army, the western imperialist leaders, in particular Churchill, imbued as they were with a burning hatred of communism, never gave up their anti-Soviet plots. Way back in October 1942, at the height of the battle of Stalingrad, realising the impossibility of the Soviet Union being crushed by Nazi Germany, Churchill commenced his anti-Soviet planning.

Churchill's real policy aims in the war were revealed in a secret memorandum he dictated as early as October 1942, but whose contents were not made public until Harold Macmillan revealed them to a meeting of the European Community in Strasbourg in September 1949. Realising the real possibility of the Nazis being destroyed by the Red Army, Churchill stated in this memorandum that instead of carrying forward the policy of genuine coalition with the Soviet Union, he believed 'it would be a measureless disaster if this Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe'.

In view of this, he blocked the opening of the second front.

In a speech that he made in Woodford, England on 23 November 1954, Churchill boasted in these terms:

Even before the war had ended and while the Germans were still surrendering by hundreds of thousands, I telegraphed Lord Montgomery, directing him to stack German arms so that they could be easily issued again to the German soldiers, with whom we should have to work if the Soviet advance continued.

Churchill's boast, made fully nine years after the end of the second world war, proved so embarrassing in imperialist circles, then busy orchestrating the cold war crusade against the USSR by putting out the lie that they had been forced into this position by Soviet belligerence and malevolent designs towards a peace-loving west, that the *Times* was prompted to comment:

What purpose or good can it serve at this time . . . it certainly

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will not help to convince the Russians that the western powers are straightforward in their declarations of peace.

Nor by suggesting that we were ready to use Nazi-indoctrinated troops in 1945, will it help the cause of West German rearmament now.

One wonders what the reaction of the ordinary British people and soldiers would have been had they but been privy to Churchill's thinking during the war, and if they had known too that in his rabidly anti-Soviet plots he had the full agreement and backing, not only of Bevin, but also of Atlee, the darling of the Bennite left and other prettifiers of the post-war imperialist Labour administration.

At the Yalta conference in 1945, with the imminent fall of Germany in mind, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill reached accord on the future of Germany, which included its de-Nazification, destruction of German militarism and war potential, trial and punishment of Nazi war criminals, war reparations, and the creation of a democratic and peaceful Germany.

Further, Germany was temporarily to be divided into four occupation zones: the eastern zone to be occupied by Soviet troops; the northwestern zone by British; the southwestern by US and a French zone in the west between the British and US zones. Berlin was to be under the control of the four allied powers.

On learning of the decisions of the Yalta conference, Hitler's propaganda chief, Goebbels, was so infuriated that he wrote an editorial on 25 February in the fascist weekly, *Das Reich*, in which he stated:

If the German people lay down their arms, the Soviets – even after the agreements between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin – would immediately occupy all of east and southeast Europe, including large parts of the Reich. Before this vast territory, including the entire Soviet Union an iron curtain would descend.

The *Sunday Times* of 7 May 1995, reporting the above-quoted

remark of Goebbels, made this revealing and apposite observation:

One of the war's great rhetoricians had coined another memorable phrase.

Churchill, with his expert eye for a good line, was to make it his own later. But in the fatal spring of 1945, the 'iron curtain' was a keynote phrase in German diplomacy.

Even with Hitler dead and Germany in ruins it resurfaced when Count Schwerin von Krosigk, the rump Reich government's new foreign minister, made a broadcast to the nation for the ears of western leaders on 2 May:

'In the east the iron curtain, behind which, unseen by the eyes of the world, the work of destruction goes on, is moving steadily forward.' Insisting that Germany, too, wanted a new 'world order' free from war, he added: 'But one cannot create such an order by making the wolf into a shepherd.'⁸

2. Plots for a new anti-Soviet alliance

By the end of March 1945, the Nazi leadership, fully aware that the game was up and the days of Nazi Germany strictly limited, tried to turn the tide by a reversal of alliances, hoping to convince Britain and the US that the real threat was the 'red menace' of 'imperialist bolshevism'.

In pursuit of precisely such a reversal of alliances, the German armies, while in headlong retreat everywhere on the western front, offered very stiff resistance on the eastern front. In reply to Churchill's communication dated 5 April 1945 that 'the German armies in the

* 'After Berlin next stop Moscow?' by Peter Millar, *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1995

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west have been broken', Stalin expressed himself in the following terms on 7 April:

The Germans have 147 divisions on the eastern front. They could safely withdraw from fifteen to twenty divisions from the eastern front to aid their forces on the western front.

Yet they have not done so, nor are they doing so. They are fighting desperately for Zemlenice, an obscure station in Czechoslovakia, which they need as much as a dead man needs a poultice, but they surrender without any resistance such important towns in the heart of Germany as Osnabrück, Mannheim and Kassel.

You will admit that this behaviour on the part of the Germans is more than strange and unaccountable.

Not so strange, considering that on the night of 23 April 1945, a mere two weeks after Stalin's above communication to Churchill, in a cellar of the Swedish consulate in the old Hanseatic port of Lübeck, Count Folke Bernadotte, envoy from allegedly neutral Sweden to Nazi Germany, and Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, held a secret meeting at which Himmler signed a document of surrender to Britain and the US on the assumption that the latter two countries would now take over the eastern front and march on Moscow, hand in hand with Germany.

Hearing of the death on 12 April 1945 of 'jewish' Roosevelt, Goebbels really believed that the 'miracle' was in the making. That this was not the case is solely to be explained by the fact that, by the time of Himmler's secret meeting with Count Bernadotte,

Hitler's fate in the bunker was sealed by the Red Army advance. None the less, the Nazi leadership knew that Churchill had grave doubts about the fate of eastern Europe if the Soviets established hegemony. *In the closing days of the war the analyses in London and Berlin were uncannily identical.**

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Earlier still, in the autumn of 1944, when on the surface it appeared that the allies were working singlemindedly in their final drive to victory, Churchill, with the knowledge of the Americans, entered into negotiations with Kesselring, the German commander in Italy, for a separate peace. The Soviet Union came to know of it and Stalin, in a telegram, questioned Churchill. The latter was obliged to tender an abject apology, which was accepted by Stalin.

So much, then, for the rubbish concerning British imperialism's fight against fascism.

The Soviet Union had good reason to be suspicious. The virtually unopposed crossing of the Rhine at Remagen was part of a deal to get Anglo-American imperialist troops to the eastern front, particularly as the advance by the latter was spearheaded by the US military's most rabid anti-communist, General Patton. The Soviet Union was also fully aware of Operation Sunrise, conducted by Allen Dullet, head of American special operations and future chief of the CIA, 'who had repeated face-to-face talks with a senior SS general about a "separate" surrender of German troops. Moscow was furious. The six-year hot war in Europe was over and the forty-five-year cold war had just begun'.*

On 28 March, General Eisenhower had informed Stalin in a telegram that after reaching the Elbe his forces would advance along the Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden axis, thus cutting the remaining German forces in two. Not liking the sound of this proposition, on 31 March Churchill sent a telegram to Eisenhower asking: 'Why should we not cross the Elbe and advance as far eastward as possible?' Churchill elaborated on this theme in a letter to Roosevelt on 1 April thus:

The Russian armies will no doubt overrun all Austria and enter Vienna. If they do, and also take Berlin, will not the impression that they have been the overwhelming contributor to a common victory

* *Sunday Times, ibid* (also note on previous page)

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be unduly imprinted on their minds, and may not this lead them into a mood which will raise grave doubts and formidable difficulties in the future?

I therefore consider that from a political standpoint we should march as far east into Germany as possible and that should Berlin be within our grasp we should certainly take it.

As Roosevelt died suddenly on 12 April, Churchill never received a reply to his letter of 1 April. But Churchill persisted. With the defeat of Germany imminent, Churchill's plan was to create a new front in Europe against the sweeping advance of the Soviet Union, which, according to him, represented mortal danger to the 'free' world. Under this plan, Berlin had at any cost to be occupied by Anglo-American forces, and, if possible, Prague too. As the US Joint Chiefs of Staff supported Eisenhower's plan, Churchill lost the argument over Berlin.

This, however, in no way dampened his anti-Sovietism. On 19 April, in a telegram to Anthony Eden, then visiting Washington, he regretted that Anglo-American forces were 'not immediately in a position to force their way into Berlin' and emphasised the importance of Montgomery taking Lübeck as a matter of urgency – the sole purpose of this move being to cut the Red Army off from Denmark. Churchill concluded his telegram with the following words:

Thereafter, but partly concurrent, it is thought well to push on to Linz to meet the Russians there; and also by an American encircling movement to gain the region south of Stuttgart.

In this region are the main German installations connected with their atomic research, and we had better get hold of these in the interests of the special secrecy attaching to this topic.

In his reply, Eden expressed full agreement with Churchill's plan, only adding, by way of a reminder:

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I am sure you still have Prague in mind. It might do the Russians much good if the Americans were to occupy the Czech capital.

But the Red Army's inexorable march made certain that as with Berlin, so with Prague, history would write the closing chapter of the second world war in a manner very different from that which would have met with Churchill's approval.

Churchill, this supposedly irreconcilable warrior against nazism, was so impressed by Goebbel's thinking and turn of phrase, that he returned to it repeatedly in his private communications with Harry Truman, who succeeded Roosevelt as US President. In his telegram of 12 May to Truman, Churchill expressed his foreboding at the turn of events in Europe in truly Goebbelsian terms:

What will be the position in a year a year or two when the British and American armies have melted and the French have not yet been formed on any major scale, when we may have a handful of divisions, mostly French, and when Russia may choose to keep two or three hundred on active service?

An Iron Curtain is drawn down upon their front. We do not know what is going on behind.

There seems little doubt that the whole of the regions east of the line Lübeck-Trieste-Corfu will be in their hands.

To this must be added the further enormous area conquered by American armies between Eisenach and the Elbe, which will, I suppose, in a few weeks time be occupied, when the Americans retreat, by the Russian power.

All kinds of arrangements will have to be made by General Eisenhower to prevent another immense flight of the German population westward as this enormous Muscovite advance into the centre of Europe takes place.

And then the curtain will descend again to a very large extent, if not

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entirely. Thus a broad band of many hundreds of miles of Russian-occupied territory will isolate us from Poland.

Barely a month before the Potsdam conference, in a last-ditch effort to postpone the retirement, as agreed under the tripartite accord reached at Yalta in February, of the American forces from the areas occupied by them to their prescribed occupation zone, Churchill returned to his Goebbelsian obsession with the Soviet Union and the descent of the iron curtain in his letter of 4 June:

I view with profound misgivings the retreat of the American army to our line of occupation in the central sector, thus bringing Soviet power into the heart of western Europe and the descent of an iron curtain between us and everything to the eastward.

I had hoped that this retreat, if it had to be made, would be accompanied by the settlement of many great things which would be the true foundation of world peace.

Again, facts on the ground made certain that Truman had no choice but to comply with the tripartite accord. This was especially so as the US still badly needed Soviet armed might for the war in the east against Japan. The successful testing of the atom bomb by the US was shortly to change all this.

Within a few weeks of the defeat of Nazi Germany, Churchill instructed the war cabinet to draw up a contingency plan for a massive attack against the Red Army resulting in the 'elimination of Russia'. This was revealed by documents released by the Public Record Office in the autumn of 1998.

Churchill's plan, codenamed Operation Unthinkable was detailed in a top secret file entitled 'Russia: Threat to Western Civilisation'. It envisaged tens of thousands of British and US troops, supported by one hundred thousand defeated German Nazi soldiers, turning on their wartime ally in a surprise attack stretching from the Baltic to Dresden.

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The plan was based on the assumption that the third world war would begin on 1 July 1945 – that is, less than two months after VE Day celebrations of the ‘allied’ victory in Europe. However, the plan was quickly squashed by the chiefs of staff who believed that it would involve Britain in a protracted and costly war with no certainty of victory.

General Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the imperial general staff, pointed out to Churchill that the Japanese had sunk two battleships that he had sent, unprotected to Malayan waters with just a dozen or two planes. The Red Army, he pointed out, had seven thousand much superior attack bombers. Any attempt to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Red Army through the northern corridor, the Baltic states, as envisaged by the Churchill plan, with the support of the Royal Navy, would simply mean that the latter (the navy) would end up as iron coffins on the sea bed.

The plan was dropped. Fifty years later it became public knowledge with the release of the aforementioned file.

As for the other ‘anti-fascist’ fighter, Truman, in 1941, before the US entry into the war, this is how he expressed himself in the *New York Times*:

If we see that Germany is winning the war, we ought to help Russia; and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and in that way let them kill as many of each other as possible.*

General Leslie Groves, who was in charge of the Manhattan Project that produced the atomic weapons dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, frankly stated the anti-Soviet aims of this weapons project in these terms:

There was never any illusion on my part from about two weeks from

* *New York Times*, 24 July 1941

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when I took charge, that Russia was the enemy and the project was conducted on that basis.[†]

The absence of a second front reveals clearly that Britain and America had gone to war against Germany not to fight against fascism, which both of them had done much to bolster up, prior to the war, in the hope of hurling it against the USSR; that they had gone to war not in the interests of liberty and the self-determination of nations, but, on the contrary, to preserve their colonial and imperialist interests against the encroachment of rapacious German imperialism.

Of all the allied powers, the Soviet Union alone entered the war and continued it until victory in the interests of socialism, liberty and the right of the oppressed and colonial peoples to self-determination.

3. D-Day: the long-delayed second front

Eventually, at the Tehran conference of the 'big three', which took place in December 1943, the date for the opening of the second front was set for 5 June 1944 – in the event, this was postponed until 6 June because of unfavourable weather.

By the time of the Tehran conference, however, not only had the Soviet army been victorious at Stalingrad but also at Kursk, which had witnessed the biggest tank battle in history. After this, the Red Army's inexorable march to Berlin had begun. No force on earth could stop it.

Such a prospect could not but alarm and terrify Anglo-American imperialism. If the Red Army were to liberate the continent of Europe from Nazi occupation and tyranny all by herself, as she certainly had then the capacity to do, surely that would doom the rule of capital.

* 'In the matter of J Robert Oppenheimer', Transcript of hearing before Personnel Security Board, 12 April 1954 to 6 May 1954, Washington DC, 1954, p173

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The D-Day landings, of which we hear so much nonsense every year, were launched not to free Europe and to defeat the Nazi armed forces; for the Nazi army had been smashed single-handedly in the previous three years by the Red Army, which had fought the Nazi war machine and 'tore its guts', to use Churchill's apt expression.

In one of his last messages to Stalin, Churchill made a frank admission that the honour of sealing 'the doom of German militarism' belonged to the Red Army and the Soviet Union, adding that 'future generations will acknowledge their debt to the Red Army'.

It was thus with the object of saving as much for imperialism as possible that the invasion of Normandy was finally launched by the western allies of the Soviet Union on 6 June 1944, in which two hundred thousand men and nearly five thousand ships took part, and on which day western bombers flew fourteen thousand sorties.

All the same, the Red Army was the first to reach Berlin and hoist the red flag on the Reichstag building. In the process, it had liberated eastern Europe, helped to de-Nazify it, and helped establish people's democracies, which were moving stridently along the road of socialism before having their development reversed by the triumph of Khrushchevite revisionism within the USSR itself.

ATTEMPTS TO BELITTLE THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION

1. The diversionary tactics of bourgeois historians

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against fascism, the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power

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to simply belittle or ignore altogether the decisive contribution of the Soviet Union in defeating Hitler's fascist army. They concentrate on minor events of the war such as the battle of the Bulge, which began on 16 December 1944 and ended with an allied victory in mid-1945, thanks to the Russian offensive, which saved the British and Americans from a crushing defeat.

In the battle of the Bulge, Hitler, by making a thrust towards Antwerp, had hoped to cut off the British and American armies from the Channel, producing a 'second Dunkirk', thus compelling them to make a separate peace with Germany and leaving him free to concentrate on the USSR. The Soviet offensive in the east, which took the Red Army all the way to Berlin, not only frustrated Hitler's plans for a separate peace, but also saved the British and American armies from an ignominious defeat.

The relatively minor significance of the battle of the Bulge, as well as the decisive Soviet help in making an allied victory possible in this battle – both these facts are recognised by the most impeccable of bourgeois authorities.

The battle of the Bulge was the biggest battle on the western front, but it was relatively minor compared with those in the east.

So said John Pimlott, a senior lecturer at Sandhurst, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

And no less a person than Winston Churchill in his book, *The Second World War*, acknowledges the help the Soviet Union gave to the allied armies by advancing the date of the Soviet offensive in the east:

It was a fine deed of the Russians and their chief to hasten their vast offensive, no doubt at a heavy cost of life.

John Pimlott again:

The Russian offensive caused Hitler to transfer what remained of

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the sixth panzer army to the eastern front and this relieved the pressure significantly in the Ardennes.

Thus is it clear that on the western front, the biggest battle, the Battle of the Bulge, which in turn was a 'relatively minor affair' compared with the battles in the east, was only won with enormous Soviet help, whereas on the eastern front, the Soviet Union fought single-handedly for three and a half years, confronting and successfully beating the 240 divisions hurled by Hitler against the USSR.

Anyone with knowledge of the history of the second world war cannot fail to notice that all the main events of that war took place on the Soviet-German front; that it was the Soviet Union and the Red Army that in the course of three and a half long and grim years fought one-to-one against the gigantic military machine of the fascist bloc, bled it white, and then finally crushed Hitler's Germany.

The Soviet people were the principal creators of this great victory.

2. Incurable counter-revolutionary Trots

Before the war, as noted earlier, Trotsky had gleefully predicted the collapse of the USSR as a result of the war with imperialism. Through the kind act of one of his own followers, Jackson, who assassinated Trotsky, the latter was spared the humiliation and pain that undoubtedly would have been his lot of having to witness, and live with, the brilliant exploits of the armed forces and the peoples of the USSR.

His followers, the present-day Trotskyites, while not daring to deny the Soviet Union's heroic successes in the war against fascism, attribute these successes to the allegedly leaderless 'Soviet people'.

Far from recognising that the organiser and inspirer of these victories was none other than the Bolshevik party under the brilliant leadership of Joseph Stalin, these Trotskyist hens on bourgeois dungheaps cackle *ad nauseam* about 'Stalinist bureaucracy', which

had allegedly killed god knows how many tens of millions of peasants in 'forced collectivisation', had 'decimated' the Red Army by executing high-ranking officers before the war, and which had killed and imprisoned the 'truly Bolshevik' leaders and 'most experienced communists'.

These lies and filth are the daily (sorry, weekly) diet of the various Trotskyist anti-working class scandal sheets.

Here is an example of the counter-revolutionary trickery and deception, typical of all Trotskyist outfits, taken from one such scandal sheet, *Workers Power*, in its editorial, entitled 'VE Day: what is there to celebrate?'

First comes the assertion of the counter-revolutionary ignoramus who wrote this leading article that, in 1934,

Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Mail* greeted Mosley's British Union with the immoral headline 'Hurrah for the Blackshirt!' . . . the same Lord Beaverbrook was minister in charge of aircraft production in the 'anti-fascist' war.*

Surely something wrong editor, as *Private Eye* would say. Actually, to put the record straight, it was Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* that came out with the headline greeting the Blackshirts. Lord Beaverbrook owned the Express group of newspapers, the same group with which Trotsky had such a close relationship, and in return for whose gold Trotsky wrote such a lot of anti-Soviet reactionary filth.

But this is by the by. Now to the more important point at issue.

The editorial, having stated that British imperialism was fighting for its imperialist interests throughout the war, continues with the following counter-revolutionary hotchpotch:

That is why revolutionary socialists said then that British workers

* *Workers Power* No 189, May 1995

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should not support their bosses' war. Of course it was not a question of supporting Hitler either, but of saying 'No truce with the British bosses, the main enemy is at home'.

For four out of the war's five years the real conflict was fought on the eastern front. Twenty million soldiers and civilians were killed. Six million jews were exterminated. Hitler had to crush the Soviet workers' state in order to survive – even though power there had been usurped by a totalitarian bureaucracy. In that conflict the Trotskyists everywhere were at the forefront of the fight for solidarity with the USSR, even though they had been the first victims of Stalin's purges.

That is why . . . socialists can and should celebrate the Red Army's victory over fascism.

But only with two cheers. Because what the Soviets on the Volga had in common with the Anglo-US armies on the Rhine was their political purpose: the imposition of a stable capitalist order in Europe and the crushing of working-class independence.'

And further:

Across eastern Europe workers rose against the Nazis as the Red Army approached. Time and again they seized factories only for the Stalinists chiefs to move in and hand them back to what was left of the ruling class.

All across Europe, east and west, the real anti-fascist fighters – the partisans – found themselves disarmed and, in some cases, liquidated by the combined forces of Stalinism and imperialism.

. . . Stalinism and imperialism crushed [the revolutionary] spirit. Their victory laid the foundations of a 'world order' of wars, oppression and famine, haunted by the mushroom cloud.

That is the victory our rulers are celebrating this month – the post-

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war counter-revolution. That is why no worker should be waving the red-white-and-blue on 8 May.

Let us try and unravel the real counter-revolutionary essence contained in the above contradictory and self-annihilatory mumbo jumbo.

First, we are correctly told that while the real conflict was for four years fought on the eastern front, British imperialism was largely fighting the Germans in North Africa in the interests of safeguarding her colonial possessions and oil wealth.

From this, not only the real revolutionary socialists of the day, but also millions of ordinary decent working people drew the conclusion, and put forward the demand, that Britain must open a second front in the west so as to help the Red Army, which was having to face the entire strength of the German fascist armed forces alone.

At such a time to say 'No truce with the British bosses, the real enemy is at home', is only a subterfuge for covering a counter-revolutionary line with 'revolutionary' phraseology – an expertise in which Trotskyism is at its par excellence, for in essence, it is tantamount to saying 'Let the Red Army go to hell, our fight is at home and the fate of the socialist Soviet Union is no concern of ours.'

And yet we are told that the 'Trotskyists everywhere were at the forefront of the fight for solidarity with the USSR'.

Devoid of the demand for the opening of a second front in Europe to ease the position of the Soviet Union, this Trotskyist solidarity was not merely meaningless, but a counter-revolutionary activity aimed at sabotaging the mobilisation of public opinion in Britain for the opening of the second front.

Secondly, we are told that Hitler had to crush the Soviet workers' state and that we should celebrate the Red Army's victory over fascism. But what is there to celebrate, when in the very next sentence we are informed that the Red Army, in common with the Anglo-US armies, had but one political purpose, *viz*, 'The imposition of a stable capitalist order in Europe and the crushing of working-class inde-

pendence’?

What is there to celebrate if, as we are told by this Trotskyist leader writer, the real anti-fascist fighters were ‘liquidated by the combined forces of Stalinism and imperialism’? What is there to celebrate if, as we are told, ‘Stalinism and imperialism crushed’ the revolutionary spirit of the working class and if, as we are told, ‘their victory laid the foundations of a ‘world order’ of wars, oppression and famine, haunted by the cloud’?

What is there to celebrate, even with two cheers, if, as we are told, the Red Army was instrumental in securing a victory whose political purpose was ‘the imposition of a stable capitalist order in Europe’ and to crush ‘working-class independence’?

If all this is true, then not only should we not be waving the Union Jack in the celebrations of our rulers this month, we ought not to be waving the Red Flag in celebrating the victory of the Red Army either – if, as we are told, it was as instrumental as the Anglo-US armies in imposing a ‘world order’ of ‘wars, oppression and famine’.

That being so, would it not have been better to have cut out all the guff and stated from the beginning that the Red Army, being an instrument of ‘Stalinist bureaucracy’ was indistinguishable from the Anglo-US armies; that the Soviet regime differed not a whit from the regimes in France, Britain, the USA and Germany; that the war was an imperialist war on all sides; that the enemy of the workers everywhere, including the USSR, was at home; and so on and so forth?

That is what the counter-revolutionary writer of this editorial wanted to say, and that is what he should have said.

Had he, however, done that in an honest and straightforward manner, he would have exposed his counter-revolutionary line and the absurdity of his arguments at once for all to see. He could have fooled no one.

So he had to speak in coded language, to clothe his arguments in ‘revolutionary’ phraseology, in an effort to hide his counter-revolutionary Trotskyist line from the honest but ignorant youngsters

who, seduced by fashionable Trotskyist catchphrases, have the misfortune to be members of organisations that pretend to be socialist, but which in essence are anti-proletarian and anti-communist to the core.

ANTI-SOVIET PLOTS SMASHED

The Soviet Union of those days dashed the hopes of democratic as well as Nazi imperialists, who had longed to overwhelm her. In the face of the strength of Soviet socialism, the unbreakable unity of the peoples of the USSR, the might of the Red Army, the heroism of the Soviet masses, and the brilliance of her diplomacy, all imperialist anti-Soviet plots ended up in smoke.

1. German miscalculations

The Hitlerites had hoped to 'finish off' the Soviet Union in six to eight weeks in a 'lightening war' of the kind that had succeeded in western Europe. These hopes were based on a number of miscalculations.

First, they had counted on the instability of the Soviet system, believing that after the first serious blow and the first setbacks of the Red Army, uprisings would break out and the Soviet Union would disintegrate into its component parts, thus facilitating the advance of the German fascist hordes right up to the Urals.

Instead, these setbacks strengthened the alliance of the Soviet working class and peasantry, as well as the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, converting this family of peoples of the Soviet Union into a single and unshakeable military camp, selflessly supplying its Red Army.

As Stalin put it:

It is quite probable that any other state, having suffered such territorial losses as we have now, would not have withstood the test and would have fallen into decline. If the Soviet system has so successfully passed through this trial and even strengthened its rear, then this means that the Soviet system is now the most stable one.*

Secondly, the Hitlerite fascists had counted on the lack of fighting experience of the Red Army, but they miscalculated here too, for the morale of the Red Army proved higher than that of the Germans, because the Red Army was defending its native socialist motherland against alien invaders and, correctly believing in the justice of its cause, performed heroic and miraculous deeds of chivalry.

The German army, on the other hand, was waging an aggressive war and plundering a foreign country. Having no possibility of believing even for a moment in the justice of its vile cause, it degenerated into corrupt hordes of professional plunderers devoid of all moral principles and conscience.

Hitler's '*Blitzkrieg*' failed because in the defence of the socialist motherland, in the fire of this Great Patriotic War, were forged new fighters, who became a deadly menace to the German army.

The Soviet people came to death grips with their bitterest and most cunning enemy, German fascism; overcoming numerous difficulties, Soviet troops fought with valour and heroism against an enemy armed to the teeth with tanks and aircraft; the Red Army, the Red Airforce and the Red Navy self-sacrificingly fought for every inch of Soviet soil, displaying unexampled bravery; side by side with the Red Army, the entire Soviet people rose in defence of their socialist motherland.

This explains why Hitler's '*Blitzkrieg*' came to such a sorry pass.

* 'Speech to the Moscow Soviet' by J V Stalin, 6 November 1941

Once he had embarked on the conquest of the USSR, Hitler's defeat became inevitable, not only because of the moral degradation of the German fascist invaders, who had lost human semblance long ago and sunk to the level of wild beasts, but also because of their European and German rear, and, most important, because of the might of the Soviet Union, which delivered ceaseless death blows at the fascist invaders till they could take it no more and collapsed.

Whereas the German army became demoralised as a result of plunder and outrages against the civilian population, the heroic fight that the people of the USSR were waging for their freedom, honour and independence evoked the admiration of all progressive humanity.

2. The strength of the Soviet anti-fascist fight

Even in the midst of this grim life and death struggle, the Soviet people, the Bolshevik party and its leader, Joseph Stalin, never for a moment forgot the proletarian internationalist aspect of the Soviet people's war of liberation against the German fascist invaders. Right at the beginning of the war, in his radio broadcast of 3 July 1941, Stalin said:

The aim of this national patriotic war in defence of our country against the fascist oppressors is not only to eliminate the danger hanging over our country, but also to aid all the European peoples groaning under the yoke of German fascism. In this war of liberation we shall not be alone. In this great war we shall have true allies in the peoples of Europe and America, including the German people which is enslaved by the Hitlerite misrulers.

This was a theme Stalin and the Bolshevik party were to stress again and again. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin, in his speech at a celebration meet-

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ing of the Moscow Soviet on 6 November 1942, returned to the theme and contrasted the German and Soviet war aims in the following terms.

The German programme, he said, may be summed up as:

Racial hatred, domination of 'chosen' nations; subjugation of other nations and seizure of their territories, economic enslavement of subjugated nations and plunder of their national wealth; destruction of democratic liberties; the institution of Hitlerite regimes everywhere.

In contrast, the Soviet aim was:

The abolition of racial exclusiveness; the equality of nations and the inviolability of their territories; the liberation of the enslaved nations and the restoration of their sovereign rights; the right of every nation to arrange its affairs as it wishes; economic aid to the nations that have suffered and assistance to them in achieving their material welfare; restoration of democratic liberties; the destruction of the Hitlerite regime.

STALIN AND THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

It is impossible to write anything like a serious and meaningful account of the Soviet war effort and its contribution in smashing German fascism and militarism while refusing to recognise the supremely important role played by Stalin. Yet precisely this is being attempted by the bourgeoisie everywhere.

There is a kind of division of labour between the imperialist bour-

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geoisie of the west and the new bourgeoisie of Russia. Whereas the former attempt to malign Stalin by attributing to him all kinds of imaginary blunders, the latter are trying to do the same by a conspiracy of silence.

On 8 May 1995, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the victory against fascism, Boris Yeltsin unveiled a giant bronze statue to General Zhukov beside the Kremlin. Zhukov certainly deserves, as do several other Soviet generals of that period, a statue to honour his services. But the desire to honour Zhukov is not what caused the Yeltsin clique to install his statue, for, as Jonathan Steele of the *Guardian* rightly remarked at the time:

The homage to Zhukov saves the authorities from the need to mention Stalin, which always arouses controversy. His name did not come up in any of the four speeches yesterday.*

Those who attempt to spit at the moon, end up spitting at their own faces, runs an old saying. Attempts to belittle the role of Stalin and to malign him will fare no better, for history has already passed judgement in the form of the glorious achievements of the former USSR, under his leadership, in every field – including, of course, the victory of the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War. Zhukov himself would have agreed with this statement.

Stalin's leadership during the war was nothing short of inspirational. When Moscow was under the shadow of the enemy guns, Stalin refused to leave Moscow. The traditional Red Army parade to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution took place, as usual, in Red Square on 7 November 1941. These are the words with which Stalin inspired the Red Army soldiers:

Comrades, men of the Red Army and Red Navy, commanders and political instructors, men and women guerrillas, the whole world is

* *Guardian*, 9 May 1995

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looking to you as the forces capable of destroying the plundering hordes of German invaders. *The enslaved peoples of Europe who have fallen under the yoke of the German invaders look to you as their liberators.*

A great liberating mission has fallen to your lot. Be worthy of this mission! *The war you are waging is a war of liberation. A just war.* Let the manly images of our great ancestors – Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kazuma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutsov – inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin be your lodestar! (Our emphasis)

Although the credit for the victory must correctly be given to the Soviet armed forces and the heroic efforts of the Soviet people, no narrative of these fateful years is complete without a reference, indeed a fulsome tribute, to the undisputed leader of the CPSU(B), the Soviet people, and the supreme commander of the Soviet forces – Joseph Stalin. Even a renegade like Gorbachev was obliged, apropos the Soviet victory in the second world war, to admit:

A factor in the achievement of victory was the tremendous political will, purposefulness and persistence, ability to organise and discipline people, displayed in the war years by Joseph Stalin.*

Ian Grey, who is a bourgeois but honest writer, has this to say:

The massive setbacks and the immediate threat to Moscow would have unnerved most men, but the impact on Stalin was to strengthen his grim determination to fight. No single factor was more important in holding the nation from disintegration at this time.†

* 'Report at the festive meeting on the seventieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution' held in Moscow on 2 November 1987, p25

† Ian Grey, *ibid*, p335

Further:

It was in a real sense his [Stalin's] victory. It could not have been won without his industrialisation campaign and especially the intensive development of industry beyond the Volga.

Collectivisation had contributed to the victory by enabling the government to stockpile food and raw materials to prevent paralysis in industry and famine in the towns. But also collectivisation, with its machine-tractor stations, had given the peasants their first training in the use of tractors and other machines.*

Quoting Isaac Deutscher, who is far from friendly to Stalin, approvingly, Ian Grey continues:

Collectivised farming had been 'the peasants' preparatory school for mechanised warfare' . . .

It was his victory, too, because he had directed and controlled every branch of Russian operations throughout the war. The range and burden of his responsibilities were extraordinary, but day by day without a break for the four years of the war he exercised direct command of the Russian forces and control over supplies, war industries, and government policy, including foreign policy.†

Finally, Grey says:

It was his victory, above all, because it had been won by his genius and labours, heroic in scale. The Russian people had looked to him for leadership, and he had not failed them. His speeches of 3 July and 6 November 1941, which had steeled them for the trials of war, and his presence in Moscow during the great battle of the city, had

* *Ibid*, p419

† *Ibid*, p419-420

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demonstrated his will to victory.

He . . . inspired them and gave them positive direction. He had the capacity of attending to detail and keeping in mind the broad picture, and, while remembering the past and immersed in the present, he was constantly looking ahead to the future.*

Innately hostile as he is to Stalin, Deutscher is nevertheless obliged to paint this picture of Stalin's role during the war:

Many allied visitors who called at the Kremlin during the war were astonished to see on how many issues, great and small, military, political or diplomatic, Stalin personally took the final decision. He was in effect his own commander-in-chief, his own minister of defence, his own quartermaster, his own minister of supply, his own foreign minister, and even his own chef de protocol.

The *stavka*, the Red Army's GHQ, was in his offices in the Kremlin. From his office desk, in constant and direct touch with the commands of the various fronts, he watched and directed the campaigns in the field. From his office desk, too, he managed another stupendous operation, the evacuation of 1,360 plants and factories from western Russia and the Ukraine to the Volga, the Urals and Siberia, an evacuation that involved not only machines and installations but millions of workmen and their families.

Between one function and the other he bargained with, say, Beaverbrook and Harriman over the quantities of aluminium or the calibre of rifles and anti-aircraft guns to be delivered to Russia by the western allies; or he received leaders of the guerrillas . . . from German occupied territory and discussed with them raids to be carried out hundreds of miles behind the enemy's lines.

At the height of the battle of Moscow, in December 1941, when

* *Ibid*, p424

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the thunder of Hitler's guns hovered ominously over the streets of Moscow, he found time enough to start a subtle diplomatic game with the Polish General Sikorski, who had come to conclude a Russo-Polish treaty . . .

He entertained them [foreign envoys and visitors] usually late at night and in the small hours of the morning. After a day filled with military reports, operational decisions, economic instructions and diplomatic haggling, he would at dawn pore over the latest dispatches from the commissariat of home affairs, the NKVD . . .

Thus he went on, day after day, throughout four years of hostilities – a prodigy of patience, tenacity, and vigilance, almost omnipresent, almost omniscient.*

And further:

There is no doubt that he was their [the Soviet troops'] real commander-in-chief. His leadership was by no means confined to the taking of abstract strategic decisions, at which civilian politicians may excel. The avid interest with which he studied the technical aspects of modern warfare, down to the minute detail, shows him to have been anything but a dilettante.

He viewed the war primarily from the angle of logistics . . . To secure reserves of manpower and supplies of weapons, in the right quantities and proportions, to allocate them and transport them to the right points at the right time, to amass a decisive strategic reserve and to have it ready for intervention at decisive moments – these operations made up nine-tenths of his task.†

This is how Deutscher captures the victory parade in Red Square at the end of the war:

* Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, pp456-57

† *Ibid*, p459

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On 24 June 1945 Stalin stood at the top of the Lenin Mausoleum and reviewed a great victory parade of the Red Army which marked the fourth anniversary of Hitler's attack. By Stalin's side stood Marshall Zhukov, his deputy, the victor of Moscow, Stalingrad and Berlin. The troops that marched past him were led by Marshall Rokossovsky.

As they marched, rode, and galloped across Red Square, regiments of infantry, cavalry, and tanks swept the mud of its pavement – it was a day of torrential rain – with innumerable banners and standards of Hitler's army. At the mausoleum they threw the banners at Stalin's feet. The allegorical scene was strangely imaginative . . .

The next day Stalin received the tribute of Moscow for the defence of the city in 1941. The day after he was acclaimed as 'Hero of the Soviet Union' and given the title of Generalissimo . . .

In these days of undreamt-of triumph and glory, Stalin stood in the full blaze of popular recognition and gratitude. These feelings were spontaneous, genuine, not engineered by official propagandists. Overworked slogans about the 'achievements of the Stalinist era' now conveyed fresh meaning not only to young people, but to sceptics and malcontents of the older generation.*

* *Ibid*, p534

CONCLUSION

The victory of the USSR was also a victory for the whole of progressive humanity. That is why the sixtieth anniversary must be marked as a festival by progressive humanity everywhere. At the same time, we must never forget the sacrifices made by the people of the world, especially the people of the Soviet Union, in order to free humanity from the plague of Hitlerite fascism.

We must also never forget to fight in defence of the hard-won rights and democratic liberties of the working class and the oppressed people, for any complacency on this score can only be at the cost of much greater sacrifices in the future – as the German people, and with them the rest of humanity, discovered in the thirties and forties.

This is especially important at a moment when the dark clouds of racism, national oppression and the wars unleashed by imperialism, not to mention millions starved to death each week, are a daily reality for hundreds of millions of people all over the world.

The second world war was a product of imperialism, as was the first. It started as an interimperialist war to decide which group of bandits – the Anglo-French-American or the German-Italian-Japanese – were to have what share of the loot, colonies, markets and avenues for export of capital. Only the Soviet Union and the broad masses of humanity everywhere fought against fascism and for human advance.

Almost sixty million were killed in this war, of which twelve million were done to death in fascist concentration camps; another ninety-five million were left invalid. The losses of the Soviet Union alone were simply colossal.

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Soviet victory came at a terrible cost. Twenty-seven million Soviet citizens, including 7.5 million Soviet soldiers, lost their lives. In comparison, the US lost just under three hundred thousand soldiers and the British empire's losses amounted to 353,652, of which Britain's losses totalled no more than 224,723. To this must be added sixty thousand British civilian deaths.

In addition, a third of Soviet territory and economic resources were devastated: 1,710 towns and seventy thousand villages were completely destroyed; six million homes and buildings were demolished; 31,800 industrial plants were stripped bare; and ninety-eight thousand collective or state farms were broken up and their livestock, totalling sixty-four million animals, was destroyed or taken to Germany.

This is the cost the socialist Soviet Union had to pay. This is the cost the Soviet Union, and the Soviet people, had to pay for the attempt by imperialism to prolong its outmoded life and for the betrayal of socialism by social democracy, especially German social democracy, which crushed the German revolution in 1918, restored the power of the bourgeoisie, and facilitated the rise of nazism, thus creating a monster, which eventually had to be faced, and defeated, by the Soviet Union.

And it is a measure of the resilience of the socialist system, the heroism of the Soviet people, and the leadership of the CPSU(B) with Stalin at its head, that without any reparations and outside economic help, within three years from the end of the war, the Soviet economy had been built to its pre-war level. And, in the following three years it had doubled in size – an achievement which baffled friend and foe alike.

At a time when the imperialist bourgeoisie in the west, along with the new bourgeoisie in Russia, are trying to belittle the Soviet contribution, the role of the Soviet people, the CPSU(B) and its undisputed leader, it is worth remembering the titanic battles and the scale of effort involved in defeating Hitlerite Germany.

The Soviet armed forces, in the course of the Great Patriotic War,

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managed to destroy 506 German divisions and one hundred divisions belonging to German satellites. In comparison, British and American imperialism combined destroyed no more than 176 German divisions.

In the war against the USSR, Germany lost ten million men, accounting for three quarters of its total losses in the second world war.

The victories of the Red Army in the historic battles of Moscow (October 1941-January 1942), Stalingrad (August 1942-February 1943), Kursk (Spring/Summer 1943) and Berlin (Spring 1945) shall forever remain an eloquent tribute to the Soviet people, to the socialist system, to the CPSU(B) and to Joseph Stalin.

Humanity at large shall never fail to express its gratitude for the contribution of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

To get an idea of the dedication of the Soviet soldier, his love of the socialist motherland and of the communist party, we cannot help quoting the following letter from Reuben Ibarriera on the eastern front to his mother:

I am taking advantage of a spare moment to write these few lines. You mustn't worry about me, I am getting on OK.

Mama, when I said goodbye to you, you told me not to be afraid. I thought that was almost an insult, and I must tell you that my hands won't tremble when I kill those dogs.

Once again, Mama, I must tell you that I consider it an honour and a source of pride that I have the chance to fight in the ranks of the great and invincible Red Army against the tyrant of humankind. I am sure that here we will smash his teeth in, for, as I told you, here in every woman and in every man there lives a hero, a Bolshevik.

These people are really amazing. I can tell you that sometimes I am moved to the depths of my soul. Such people just cannot be beaten.

That's all for today. Much love from your loving son, whose wish is

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that you should keep on working harder and harder for the sake of our cause.*

Millions of Soviet soldiers cheerfully went to their death in the fight against fascism with the following words on their lips: 'For the motherland and for comrade Stalin.'

At the time, everyone, including Churchill, recognised the colossal Soviet contribution towards the defeat of Nazi Germany. On 4 February 1945, on the occasion of Soviet Army Day, Churchill, while plotting against the Soviet Union, was nevertheless obliged to send this message:

The Red Army celebrates its twenty-seventh anniversary amid a triumph which has won the unstinted applause of their allies and has sealed the doom of German militarism. Future generations will acknowledge their debt to the Red Army as unreservedly as do we who have lived to witness their proud achievements.

Soviet Union no more

Thanks to the treachery of Khrushchevite revisionism, the great and glorious Soviet Union, which gave so much to save the world from the scourge of fascism, is no more. Thanks to the same treachery, socialism is no more in the land of Lenin and Stalin.

What the Nazis, with millions of soldiers, thousands of tanks and aircraft, could not achieve through four years of a most devastating war against the land of the Soviets, the revisionists achieved almost without firing any shots. From this the most important lesson to be drawn by the international proletariat is that revisionism is its most deadly enemy.

* Quoted in *The Russian Version of the Second World War*, London, 1976

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Since the collapse of the Soviet regime and the disintegration of the USSR, the imperialist bourgeoisie and all manner of reactionaries have triumphantly asserted that 'Marxism is destroyed'. There is nothing new in these assertions, which are as old as Marxism itself.

We conclude this article by answering these assertions in the following, never to be forgotten words of Stalin:

It is said that in some countries in the west, Marxism has already been destroyed. It is said that it has been destroyed by the bourgeois-nationalist trend known as fascism. That, of course, is nonsense.

Only people who are ignorant of history can talk like that. Marxism is the scientific expression of the fundamental interests of the working class. To destroy Marxism, the working class must be destroyed.

But it is impossible to destroy the working class. More than eighty years have passed since Marxism came into the arena. During this time scores and hundreds of bourgeois governments have tried to destroy Marxism.

And what has happened? Bourgeois governments have come and gone, but Marxism has remained.

Moreover, Marxism has achieved complete victory on one-sixth of the globe; moreover, it has achieved it in the very country in which Marxism was considered to have been utterly destroyed.

It cannot be regarded as an accident that the country in which Marxism has achieved complete victory is now the only country in the world which knows no crises and unemployment, whereas in all other countries, including the fascist countries, crisis and unemployment have been reigning for four years now.

No, comrades, that is no accident.

Yes, comrades, our successes are due to the fact that we have worked and fought under the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin.

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Hence, the second conclusion: We must remain true to the end to the great banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin.*

Eternal glory to all those heroes who fell in the fight against fascism!

Eternal glory to the great and glorious USSR!

Eternal glory to J V Stalin!

Down with imperialism and its variant, fascism!

Harpal Brar

London, April 2005

* J V Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vol 13, pp386-7

Stalingrad by Antony Beevor: a piece of Nazi war propaganda²

Antony Beevor's book *Stalingrad* has been highly praised in the western media. The author, a former officer in the British army, has now been presented as a writer of war history. This astonished me and awakened my curiosity. According to right-wing critics, the book is 'brilliant and very well written'^{*} and '*Stalingrad* beats most of what has been written on the second world war'[†].

Remarkable, I thought! They cried when the Nazis had been defeated and destroyed at Stalingrad! And now they admire Antony Beevor's *Stalingrad*?! Perhaps they had sobered up after all these years? After all, it was a fight against nazism. Perhaps they wanted to do a little justice to the Soviet victory after all these years? With these thoughts in my mind, I began to read Beevor's *Stalingrad*.

I had initially thought of writing only a short review, but it was not that easy. It soon became obvious that Beevor's *Stalingrad* is a book of propaganda against the Soviet Union, with page after page

* *Svenska Dagbladet* (A Swedish daily newspaper)

† *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning* (Another Swedish paper)

full of lies; a total falsification of history. To refute all these lies, one would have to write several books. A review dealing with only a few of the coarsest lies would still fill many columns of a newspaper. And although the present review has been reduced to a minimum, it is still twice as long as I had envisaged.

On the very first page of the introduction, I began to ask myself if there wasn't something wrong. Beevor ruthlessly assails the Soviet army, not the Nazis, who invaded the Soviet Union and carried out a war of extermination and genocide, killing more than twenty-five million people in four years! On page one, Beevor points out that the Soviet army executed deserters, but says nothing about the Germans doing the same!

Why does Beevor criticise only the Soviet army? It is well known that the German military police executed several thousand German deserters without trial. It's equally well known that when the sixth German army was encircled at Stalingrad, the German military police executed several thousand German soldiers who tried to steal something to eat from packages of food thrown down by German military aircraft. These packages of food were primarily intended for officers and military police.*

Millions of Soviet people executed by the German army

Why doesn't Beevor speak about that? But, first of all, why doesn't Beevor speak about the millions of Soviet people who were executed by the Nazi army? And about all the communists and jews; about whole families in the conquered villages and cities who were separated from the rest of the population and then executed by the German army?

* Theodor Plievier, *Stalingrad*, Time Life Books, New York, 1966, p271

Why doesn't Beevor speak about the millions of people who were driven out of their houses with only the clothes they were wearing, left to freeze to death in minus twenty degree temperatures?

Why doesn't he write about the millions of Soviet citizens who were made prisoners by the German army and sent to Germany to be sold as slaves? Why doesn't Beevor write about the hundreds of thousands of Soviet girls sold as sex slaves in Germany? Why doesn't he write about the slave markets all over Nazi Germany where these persons were sold?

This is the real face of the German army and the German invasion. But Beevor does not have anything to say about all this. He wants to hide the Nazi crimes.

Moreover, Beevor writes that there were 'fifty thousand Soviet citizens in German uniform'.* All through the book, he mentions these 'hiwis', as he calls them. He tries to make us believe that the Soviet population welcomed the Nazis. Beevor writes that in Stalingrad there were fifty thousand Russians in the front divisions and seventy thousand in the other divisions!† The Russians would thus have constituted almost half of the German army at Stalingrad!

A completely idiotic and untruthful statement, which does not find any support in any book of war history, including German books. Beevor wants to make people believe that a massive Soviet desertion had taken place to the Nazi lines. That is not true.

It is true that, during the war, there were some Soviet citizens on the Nazi side, even at Stalingrad. But Beevor does not say from where these 'Russians in German uniform' came. There were people who, for various reasons, volunteered on the Nazi side during the war. But those were very few.

* Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad*, Penguin Books, 1999, pxiv

† *Ibid*, p184

Obliged to work for the Nazis as slaves

Most 'Soviet citizens in German uniform' were actually people who were forced to work for the Germans as slaves. They had been made prisoners in the conquered villages and cities and forced to carry equipment for the Germans and to carry out all the heavy and dirty work. They were very badly treated and suffered from starvation. Many of them died, and were replaced by new slaves.

Together with Jews and other people from extermination camps in Poland, these prisoners were also used to clear minefields, facing certain death. These mine-clearing teams were topped up every day with more Jews and 'Soviet citizens in German uniform'. Some of the Soviet women prisoners had to work in the kitchens and clean the lodgings of the German soldiers in the daytime. In the night, they were used as sex slaves.

When the sixth German army was encircled at Stalingrad and the Germans fled inside the encircled area, these Soviet women were forced to go with them on the overcrowded trucks. Thousands of wounded German soldiers were left to die of hunger or cold.*

Beevor's 'Soviet citizens in German uniform' were mainly prisoners and enslaved Soviet citizens. Beevor's insinuations about massive Soviet desertions is only a way of luring the reader into his tale.

It might be added that a part of the 'Soviet citizens in German uniform' had actually been taken to Russia from France by the Germans! During the 1930s, the French general Weygand – the general who surrendered to the Germans – had set up a legion of right-wing Russians as a part of the French army. They were supposed to take part in the 'war of the west' that France and Britain were preparing

* Theodor Plievier, *ibid*, p192

† Antony Beevor, *ibid*, p23

against the Soviet Union. These troops were taken over by the Nazis after the French capitulation.

In the German army there were also troops of Ukrainian nazis. Beevor calls them 'Ukrainian nationalists'.[†] He wants to give a positive image of these Nazi-supporting troops, even though the Ukrainian nazis were among the worst murderers during the war. They persecuted all their opponents in occupied Ukraine and were the most enthusiastic murderers in the German death camps, where Jewish and anti-fascist Ukrainians disappeared along with millions of Soviet prisoners of war.

Nazi falsification of history

Beevor's *Stalingrad* reproduces the version of events given by the Nazi officers at Stalingrad. Only rarely does the author let 'Russians' have their say. Soviet officers are mentioned only when Beevor really can't avoid it.

He isn't interested, for example, in what the strategists behind the Soviet victory at Stalingrad might have to say – for example General Zhukov or Generals Rokossovskij or Tjukov, or any of the other Soviet generals who destroyed the Nazi armies at Stalingrad. To Beevor, himself an 'officer and a gentleman' in the British army, the 'nobility' of the German officers is what counts. The fact that this vermin started a war in which nearly sixty million people perished does not upset Beevor.

However, it is the Soviet soldiers that we in the western world should thank for our freedom. Soldiers from the Soviet Union, a country that in ten years won the struggle against illiteracy and underdevelopment, built factories and steelworks, produced the most sophisticated machines and the most advanced weapons. It was the USSR that crushed Nazi Germany and saved the world from nazism.

Even with regard to war crimes and genocide, Beevor's history is the history of the Nazi generals. According to Beevor, Hitler was

the only culprit and the German army command was against him. But this is not true. The origins of the German army command are the 'free brigades' that quelled the workers' revolt in Germany after the first world war and contributed to putting Hitler into power in January 1933.

It was with the support of the army command that Hitler was elected as Reich president and Reich chancellor by the German parliament in 1934 and became supreme commander of the German army with the title of führer. The officers and the soldiers had to swear a personal oath of allegiance to Hitler. The Nazi dictatorship was accomplished with the support of the army command.

Beevor asserts that 'A number of commanders refused to acknowledge or pass on' the instructions on the Nazi murders, the 'special orders' in the Soviet Union concerning 'the collective measures of force against villages in areas of partisan activity' and the 'commisar order' and were against 'race war' and 'starvation' as a means of crushing the people of the Soviet Union.*

Beevor does not give any evidence to support these assertions, however. If any such officers existed in the German army, they were few. Twenty-seven million people were exterminated in just four years in the Soviet Union; to carry out this mass slaughter, all the forces of the occupying German army and its allies must have taken part.

Lies about the Soviet Union

The first third of Beevor's book deals with the war before Stalingrad and, like the rest of the book, it is a dirty and slanderous attack on the Soviet Union and its leaders.

Beevor's story of the first months of the war is the same as that

* *Ibid*, pp14-15

which was sent out to the world in 1941 by the Nazi propaganda machine, and which was later adopted by post-war capitalist propagandists. It is the story of a Soviet army on the verge of total collapse, and of a 'tyrant' (Stalin) who had made the army incapable of waging the war and who prohibited his generals from retaliating against the enemy. Beevor does not mince his words. Even the Soviet embassy in Berlin gets its share.

According to the Nazis, and now also according to Beevor, the Soviet ambassador was known as a 'hangman', who measured 'barely five feet tall, with a small beak nose and a few strands of black hair plastered across a bald pate'. Is that history? In the embassy, the ambassador, we are told, had

a torture and execution chamber constructed in the basement to deal with suspected traitors.*

This story originated in Nazi war propaganda; it is now bourgeois 'history'. The attacks against Stalin, meanwhile, are in a class of their own. Throughout the book, there are constant references to 'Stalin's convoluted mind', 'Stalin, the totalitarian dictator', Stalin's 'succession of obsessive miscalculations', 'Stalin, whose bullying nature contained a strong streak of cowardice', Stalin's 'inimitable mixture of paranoia, sadistic megalomania and a vindictiveness for old slights', 'Stalin even disowned his own son', Stalin's 'lack of concern for the starving population was as callous as that of Hitler', and so on.† It is not hard to see why Beevor is so beloved by the capitalist-owned newspapers and by reactionaries generally.

Beevor writes that Stalin, Beria and Molotov thought of giving up 'the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Baltic states' to the Nazis in the hope of peace, until the Bulgarian ambassador declared that 'Even

* *Ibid*, p7

† *Ibid*, pp4, 6, 9, 23, 26, 37

if you retreat to the Urals, you'll still win in the end.* According to Beevor, the question was then settled and the Soviet Union resolved to go to war with Nazi Germany!

One must be very stupid to believe that any thinking individual would swallow such a story. Who would believe that the leaders of such a big and powerful country as the USSR would let such an important decision concerning the future of their country depend on a few words uttered by the ambassador of a militarily insignificant country and, moreover, a vassal state of Hitler?!

The firm defence of Soviet territory

Contrary to Beevor's assertions, the Soviet leadership decided firmly to defend every inch of Soviet territory. The large steelworks that had been built in the 1930s beyond the mountains of the Ural, at a safe distance from any invasion from the west, are evidence enough. There it would be possible to keep up the production of weapons and other military equipment, even during a long war. All other large-scale industries were also moved once the German invasion was launched.

The first chapter of the book ends with Molotov's radio message to the Soviet people. This, too, leaves Beevor dissatisfied. According to him: 'Molotov's choice of words was uninspired and his delivery awkward.' However, Beevor is obliged to admit that this 'announcement created a powerful reaction throughout the Soviet Union'.

Reservists did not wait for mobilisation orders. They reported at once.*

How strange! Were there no massive desertions to the Germans? Or a 'warm welcome from civilians'?

* *Ibid*, pp9, 10, 26

Beevor also borrows material from the CIA. The old lie, according to which '36,671 officers were executed, imprisoned or dismissed'* from the Soviet army in 1937, pops up again here. This story was spread by the British police agent, later CIA agent, Robert Conquest.†

According to Beevor, Soviet casualties at the beginning of the war were due to a scarcity of officers, but Beevor speaks against his better judgement. The officers dismissed in 1937-39 were about twenty-two thousand (out of seventy-five thousand). Their dismissal was decided at general meetings in the army units; they did not have the soldiers' confidence. However, the number of Soviet officers in 1941 was already more than three hundred thousand!‡

The Soviet Union had made tremendous preparations for the defence against Nazi Germany and the number of expelled officers could only have had a very slight effect on the course of the war during the first months. The real reason for the withdrawal of Soviet forces during the first months of the war is to be found in the dimension of the armies. Beevor writes that the Nazi invasion forces were

Some 3,050,000 German troops, with other pro-axis armies bringing the total to four million men.°

But the invasion army against the Soviet Union was indeed of more than five million men, the greatest invasion army in the history of mankind, against which the Soviet Union in 1941 had only 2.9 million men at its western borders. The Soviet Union had not been able to build a larger army than that during the ten years of preparation.

Moreover, the Nazis had been able to concentrate their attacks on certain places where their numerical superiority was more than

* *Ibid*, p 23

† *Lies Concerning the History of the USSR*, Mário Sousa, stalinsociety.org.uk

‡ Roger R Reese, *The Red Army and the Great Purges, Stalinist Terror – New Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p198

° Antony Beevor, *ibid*, p12

five to one. In these places, the Nazis sent forward large armoured units that were very difficult to stop. That is what mainly explains the German victories during the first months of the war. But these victories were hard-earned; it was no bed of roses, as Beevor would have us believe, with sunburnt German boys going on a holiday trip through the Soviet Union enjoying the 'warm welcome from civilians'.

Beevor's stories vs Franz Halder

It is interesting to compare Beevor's lies with information from the chief of the German general staff, General Franz Halder. Halder was Hitler's chief of staff from August 1938 until 24 September 1942, directing all Nazi wars, on all fronts. He kept a secret diary during this period, which contained his personal notes on the war, written in Gabelsberg shorthand, an old shorthand language that few people could read.

This diary was never intended to be made public, but it was published after the war under the title *The Halder War Diary, 1939-1942*. It is a very interesting book, containing many truths that Halder and the Nazi potentates did not want revealed.

Beevor speaks of hysterics, general panic and 'chaos on the Soviet side'.* But already, on the first day of the invasion, 22 June 1941, Halder wrote in the evening:

There are no indications of an attempted operational disengagement. Such a possibility can moreover be discounted.†

The Soviet soldiers did not intend to flee; they fought back.

* *Ibid*, p73

† *The Halder War Diary 1939-1942*, Greenhill Books, London, 1988, p412-3

Two days later, on 24 June, Halder wrote:

The stubborn resistance of individual Russian units is remarkable . . . it is now clear that the Russians are not thinking of withdrawal, but are throwing in everything they have to stem the German invasion.*

One week after the beginning of the invasion, on 29 June, Halder wrote:

Reports from all fronts confirm previous indications that the Russians are fighting to the last man.*

General Halder, along with Hitler and the rest of the German command, had convinced himself that the German invasion was going to force the Soviet soldiers to run away and that the Soviet army would be easily destroyed. That is what had happened in France, after all, which had been a great military power. But, contrary to all the invaders' hopes, the war against the Soviet Union became more and more bitter.

The Nazis inflicted heavy losses on the Soviet army and forced it to retreat, but in the process, the Nazi forces also suffered heavy losses. According to Halder, after ten days, on 3 July, the Germans had 'Total losses about fifty-four thousand' and a 'large number of medical casualties (almost fifty-four thousand)'. On 4 July, Halder noted high losses on the attacking tanks, amounting to as much as fifty percent in certain armoured units.*

The real war was completely different from the one described in Beevor's book.

* *Ibid*, pp419, 433, 453-4, 449

Beevor's 'legendary' generals coming from the 'best military families'

One of Beevor's theses in his book is that there was a controversy over the strategy between Hitler and the German generals. To Beevor, the command of the German army, with all its 'legendary' and 'brilliant' generals coming from the 'best military families' of Germany, was very capable, and would certainly have won the war had the 'irresponsible' and 'ignoramus' Hitler not imposed his ideas on strategy.*

But there is nothing to support this thesis in *The Halder War Diary*. The commanders of the German army, precisely like Hitler, had a completely false idea of the Soviet Union. Just like Hitler, the German command had estimated that the Soviet Union was easy to defeat and that the war would be finished within a few weeks. Analysing the situation on the eleventh day of the invasion, 3 July, Halder wrote in his diary:

It is thus probably no overstatement to say that the Russian campaign has been won in the space of two weeks.†

The German command expected the defeat of the Soviet Union to be completed on 3 July 1941!

On 4 July, Halder wrote:

As our armies advance, any attempt at further resistance probably will soon collapse and we shall be confronted with the question of reducing Leningrad and Moscow.†

* Antony Beevor, *ibid*, pp66, 16, 15

† Halder, *ibid*, pp446, 450

Hitler and the generals shared the same foolish idea about the probable course of the war, and the same illusions about victory. More than that; they also agreed on the war crimes – not only on the extermination of the Soviet population, but also on the total destruction of the Soviet cities.

On 8 July 1941, Halder described a meeting with Hitler, during which the war situation was analysed and important decisions were taken. Hitler was firmly resolved

. . . to level Moscow and Leningrad, and make them uninhabitable, so as to relieve us of the necessity of having to feed the population through the winter. The cities will be razed by airforces. Tanks must not be used for the purpose. A national catastrophe which will deprive not only bolshevism, but also Muscovite nationalism, of their centres.*

Nobody within the army command opposed Hitler's plan; it would have been carried out if the Soviet Union had not defeated the Nazis. In the same entry, Halder writes about the winter quarters:

Our troops must not be quartered in villages and towns, because we want to be able to bomb them at any time in the event of uprisings.*

Here we can see the true face of the Nazi generals. Beevor's 'legendary' generals from the best 'military families' were as much war criminals as Hitler.

At the same meeting with Hitler, on 8 July, the attack against Smolensk was decided. This city, located on the main road to Moscow, would have to be taken together with Yelnya and Roslavl before the attack against Moscow itself could begin. Chief of Staff Halder wrote in his diary:

* *Ibid*, pp458, 459

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After destroying the Russian armies in a battle at Smolensk, we shall block the railroads across the Volga, occupy the country as far as that river, and, after that, proceed to destroy the remaining Russian industry centres by armoured expeditions and air operations.*

Remember that the Nazi troops at this point were still a hundred kilometres from Smolensk. From there, it is another five hundred kilometres to Moscow and as far again to the Volga. Everything was going to be so easy! But it didn't turn out that way.

The battle of Smolensk was, according to Beevor, a game for the Nazis and a 'disaster' for the Soviet Union 'in which several Soviet armies were trapped' and where 'many more Soviet divisions were then sacrificed'. So the road to Moscow must surely have been open! Why, then, did the offensive against Moscow not continue?

Beevor 'explains' that Hitler ordered a halt at the end of July. His 'instinct to avoid the road to Moscow was partly a superstitious avoidance of Napoleon's footsteps'.†

So Hitler became suddenly 'superstitious' once victory was within his grasp and ordered the army to halt! Should this be called history?

Smolensk is defended

Contrary to Beevor's affirmations, the battle of Smolensk was extremely costly for the Nazis. The defenders of Smolensk fought stubbornly, with no thought of surrendering, and the Soviet army made strong counterattacks. It was a fight for each suburb, each street and each house. The Nazis were compelled to halt for new

* *Ibid*, p459

† Antony Beevor, *ibid*, pp28-9, 32

supplies of men and equipment. General Halder wrote on 11 July of the Soviet armoured troops at the battle of Smolensk:

In every instance, large bodies, if not all, manage to escape encirclement.*

As early as 13 July, Halder and the army command suggested to Hitler that they should 'temporarily halt the dash toward Moscow'. It was simply impossible to advance.*

On 15 July, Halder reported:

The Russian troops now, as ever, are fighting with a savage determination.*

During the following week, the Soviet army succeeded in penetrating the German lines in several places. On 26 July, Halder wrote:

Overall picture: enemy defence is becoming more aggressive; more tanks, more planes. In addition to ten new divisions previously listed, fifteen more new divisions have been reported.*

On the same day, a great section of the encircled Soviet troops managed to break out and, with the main Soviet forces, they set up a new line of defence in front of Moscow. The Nazi troops heading for Moscow were considerably exhausted and weakened. The Nazi losses became too heavy and the Nazi army did not succeed in supplying new men and equipment.

On 30 July, Hitler decided to grant the request made by the general command two weeks earlier and ordered the troops to stand on the defensive. Halder commented on this decision in his diary in these terms:

* Halder, *ibid*, pp465, 470, 474, 485

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Higher command of the army has signed new 'directive', which adopts our proposals! This decision frees every thinking soldier of the horrible vision obsessing us these last few days, since the führer's obstinacy made the final bogging down of the eastern campaign appear imminent. At long last we get a break!*

The general command had finally got its pause. Hitler had not decided to stop the offensive because he was 'superstitious' and in contradiction with the general command; he had ordered a halt because the general command had requested it and the situation within the army demanded it. Beevor's lie concerning the superstitious Hitler is laid bare.

At Smolensk, the Nazis had to halt for the first time during the second world war, bringing to an end the seemingly unstoppable Nazi '*blitzkrieg*'. On 11 August, Halder wrote:

The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian colossus.*

After six weeks of war he wrote:

Total casualties for period 22 June–13 August 1941: 389,924.*

And on 28 August:

Tank situation:

Armd Gp 1: Average 50 percent

Armd Gp 2: Average 45 percent

Armd Gp 3: Average 45 percent

Armd Gp 4: Best (Czech material!), on an average between 50 and 75 percent*

* *Ibid*, pp490, 506, 521, 518-20

The Nazis needed time to get new troops and materiel to the front. It was not until October that they were able to resume their offensive towards Moscow with new weapons and new divisions.

Beevor 'explains' this new offensive by saying that Hitler 'changed his mind again'.[†] According to Beevor, Hitler was no longer 'superstitious' . . .

For the Soviet Union, the battle of Smolensk was a strategic success. The defence of Moscow could be secured.

Tula stopped the Nazis

Beevor twists the truth and denies historical facts on every page of his book. Let us examine one small detail concerning the town of Tula. The road from the south to Moscow passes through Tula.

Beevor writes:

On the southern flank, Guderian's panzers swung up past Tula to threaten the Soviet capital from below.*

This gives us the impression that Tula had already been conquered, but the truth is that the Germans never took Tula.

The defenders of this city fought without a thought of giving up and, after very hard fighting, the Nazi general Guderian, chief of the second motorised German army, was forced to give up the conquest of the town.

In his memoirs, Guderian wrote:

The rapid advance on Tula which we had planned had therefore to be abandoned for the moment.

* Antony Beevor, *ibid*, pp33, 36

And:

Numerous Russian T34s went into action and inflicted heavy losses on the German tanks.*

Guderian's motorised army remained blocked close to Tula, some two hundred kilometres from Moscow. One month later, the Soviet counteroffensive pushed back Guderian's tanks another one hundred and thirty kilometres. Because of this failure, Guderian lost his command of the second motorised German army.

Beevor's descriptions of battles invariably coincide with those of the Nazi generals. According to Beevor:

It was, however, the weather which rapidly became the Wehrmacht's worst hindrance.

Beevor's good Germans 'struggled on as best they could', however, although 'the tank engines were frozen solid' and 'bad visibility hampered the "flying artillery" of the Luftwaffe'.† No explanation is offered as to why the Soviet tanks and planes did not suffer the same fate!

On the Soviet side, according to Beevor, it was not at all a question of heroic actions for the defence of the country, but of 'suicidal resistance' and of 'food riots, looting and drunkenness'.† The October Revolution anniversary parade in Moscow on 7 November was, according to our illustrious author, only a trick to mislead journalists.

There is no mistaking Beevor's sympathies: malicious pleasure when the Soviet army is forced to retreat, along with unashamed admiration for the Nazi offensives, pervades the pages of *Stalingrad*.

Unfortunately for our author, however, the new Nazi offensive met with more and more problems. Towards the end of November, the

* *General Heinz Guderian – Panzer Leader*, Da Capo Press, 1996, pp233, 237

† Antony Beevor, *ibid*, pp36, 40, 39, 39, 38

Nazis were completely exhausted. The general command seems to have had no idea about reality of the war. On 23 November, Halder wrote:

The military situation: East: Russia's military authority no longer a threat.*

Thirteen days later, on 6 December, the Soviet army launched a counteroffensive that pushed the Germans two hundred and fifty kilometres back from Moscow!

Beevor is desperate to find an excuse for this Nazi defeat. Among other things, we are told that 'Hitler's almost superstitious refusal to order winter clothes' was to blame! Again this superstitious Hitler! But despite the fact that the Nazis were forced to retreat a massive two hundred and fifty kilometres, Beevor writes:

Stalin's general offensive deteriorated into a series of flailing brawls.†

The reader is left wondering if the battle of Moscow really ended with Soviet victory. As a matter of fact, it did! Not only did the Soviets win the battle for the city, but the Nazis never got close to Moscow again and were never able to reconquer any of the lost territories around Moscow.

Let us take another example of Beevor's many lies – the one concerning the motorised division *Grossdeutschland*. Beevor wants to make us believe that before the final offensive against Stalingrad,

The *Grossdeutschland* and the *SS Leibstandarte* panzer grenadier divisions were to be sent back to France.†

He adds that the chief of the German general staff, General Franz

* Halder, *ibid*, p563

† Beevor, *ibid*, pp44, 43, 81

Halder, had commented on this question in his *War Diary* on 23 July 1942:

This chronic tendency to underrate enemy capabilities is gradually assuming grotesque proportions and develops into a positive danger.

But when one actually reads Halder's diary, it becomes apparent that the entry in question is not about *Grossdeutschland* or the *SS Leibstandarte* divisions, but about Hitler's disposition of troops around Rostov! On the same page in the *War Diary*, Halder wrote on 24 July:

East of Rostov, new success of *Grossdeutschland*.*

There was no question of sending *Grossdeutschland* to France. In the *Halder War Diary*, one can follow the movements of this important division from 5 July 1942. In July, it was south of Stalingrad. On 14 August, it was sent to help the division of the army group centre, close to Rzjev and about two hundred kilometres west of Moscow, where, according to Halder:

Our own losses, notably in tanks, are highly unpleasant.*

Grossdeutschland was lucky; if it had not been sent to Rzjev, it would have been destroyed at Stalingrad, which was the fate of the Nazi fourth armoured army to which it belonged.

* Halder, *ibid*, p646, 657

Lies concerning Katyn

Another of Beevor's casual lies relates to the massacre that took place in Katyn forest, near Smolensk. In his smear campaign against the Soviet Union, Beevor must of course devote a chapter to the NKVD, charging this organisation with the most horrendous crimes. Beevor writes:

Another department of the NKVD, set up by Beria in the autumn of 1939, dealt with enemy prisoners of war. Its first major task had been the liquidation of over four thousand Polish officers in the forest at Katyn.*

Such a serious assertion calls for some kind of evidence, but Beevor prefers to take his information directly from Hitler! The existence of mass graves of a large number of Polish officers was made public by Hitler's and Goebbels' propaganda department on 13 April 1943. The Nazis accused the Soviet government of having organised the massacre of fifteen thousand Polish officers, but the Katyn area had by then been under German occupation since 1941.

During these two years of occupation, the Nazis never mentioned any massacres near Katyn. And during those two years, the Nazis had killed millions of people in concentration camps and in the occupied countries, among them in the Soviet Union. Why make public 'the Soviet massacres' of fifteen thousand people in April 1943?

It should be noted that the announcement of the massacre was made on 13 April, just two months after the great Nazi defeat at Stalingrad on 2 February 1943, at a time when the Nazis desperately needed a piece of anti-Soviet propaganda. The British foreign sec-

* Beevor, *ibid*, p86

retary, Anthony Eden, told Parliament on 4 May 1943 that the Nazi murderers of hundreds of thousands of Poles and Russians were trying to use the story of the massacre to destroy the unity of the allies.

That pronouncement put an end to the Nazi lies about the Katyn forest massacre until, during the cold war against the Soviet Union, new accusations appeared about a Soviet massacre in the Katyn forest. This time it was not the Gestapo, but the US and Britain who were making the allegations.

Later, these were renewed by the Soviet counter-revolutionaries Gorbachev and Yeltsin. A commission of enquiry was set up to examine the question once more and to find who had carried out the massacre of the Katyn forest. Neither the Soviet-Polish commission of inquiry nor the Russian-Polish commission could find any evidence of Soviet involvement in the killings, although they wanted badly to do so.

The results of the commission showed that the Polish officers who died at Katyn had been assassinated with German weapons and that the victims numbered about four thousand, not fifteen thousand, as Hitler had said.

Interestingly, the Swedish translation of Beevor's book does not agree with the original in English. In the Swedish edition, we are told that fifteen thousand Polish officers were executed at Katyn, but in the original English edition, the figure given is four thousand. Is it Antony Beevor who wants it that way, or the Swedish editor?*

At any rate, this is one more example of just how serious such 'history' books are!

* Historiska Media 2000, p99

The Nazis are Beevor's heroes

Beevor's lies are so frequent that it is tiring to read the book. All that Beevor writes is taken from the Nazi war propaganda to smear the Soviet Union:

Most of the [Soviet] conscripts hurled into battle had often received little more than a dozen days' training, some even less . . . Three battalions of trainee officers, without weapons or rations, were sent against sixteenth Panzer division . . . [by] the army commander, who was clearly drunk.*

Beevor's' book is sometimes like a joke about smart Germans who eliminate Russian idiots and 'clear the woods' as at 'a rather large deer shoot'.*

The Luftwaffe pilots dispatched their enemy '*mit Eleganz*' . . . [and] the suntanned young fighter pilots . . . seem[ed] to have offered the magical vision of an aerial Teutonic knight in shining armour[!]*

Meanwhile, according to Beevor, the

Soviet fighter pilots still suffered from an instinctive fear of the enemy.*

In the chapters on Stalingrad, Beevor goes on with his propaganda story. The 'Russian attacks' were, according to him, 'appallingly wasteful and incompetent' and 'the real obstacles to the attackers, as they soon found, lay in the ruined cityscape' rather than the city's

* Historiska Media 2000, p99

† Antony Beevor, *ibid*, pp89, 96, 110, 115, 138

Soviet defenders. Beevor's bias is unrelenting. Here, for example, are two typically contrasting characterisations: 'the star [German] commander', and 'the [Soviet] sinister-looking army commissar'. Beevor's account is full of Soviet officers who flee and soldiers who 'faced the military tribunal' and 'were probably shot'.* How can one be 'probably shot'?! There are many stories about good Germans shooting at Russians coming in waves upon waves, so that

In front of our position the Soviet dead piled up and served as a sort of sandbag wall for us.*

According to Beevor, desertions and executions were commonplace in the Soviet army. The Soviet leadership is always presented as brutal, pitiless, sanguinary, and Soviet officers completely pitiless towards the soldiers. Then how could they wage this war against the Nazis year after year and even win it?

Even the monument devoted to the heroic Soviet soldiers who defended Stalingrad on Mamaia Kurgan, the hill on which many fights took place and where much blood was shed, is minimised by Beevor. The mobilisation of women to the factories is turned into a crime.

Beevor wants to wipe out any trace of the Soviet victory. Whenever there was a problem on the Soviet side, Beevor does everything he can to make us believe that the Soviet government and officers were incompetent leaders. When the German offensive is stopped, Beevor writes only a few lines, with plenty of excuses to justify Nazi failures. The Germans were defeated by 'General Mud' and 'General Winter'.*

With regard to the German war of extermination against the Soviet civilian population, Beevor writes:

There were numerous Soviet claims of German atrocities that are hard to assess.†

* *Ibid*, pp124, 128, 129, 372, 282, 263

The many sentimental stories about the German defeat – eg, Christmas celebrations the German way – may well move the reviewers in the western bourgeois press to tears. Beevor's attacks on the Red Army officers and Stalin are the most primitive anti-communism; without the least evidence, he delivers one untruthful story after another.

The defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad

There are some questions of historical interest worth commenting on. Predictably, Beevor blames Hitler for the German defeat at Stalingrad, while the 'legendary' German generals from 'the best German military families' escape all responsibility.

This is not fair. The plans for the conquest of Stalingrad had been made in total agreement by Hitler and all the generals of the headquarters and the general command. The conquest of Stalingrad was, in fact, a necessity.

The Nazis had sent Army Group A with a force of five hundred thousand men, into the Caucasus to conquer the Soviet oil sources. Left in the south, north of Rostov, was Army Group B, which included the sixth army and the fourth armoured army. It was necessary to defend Army Group B as well as the left wing of Army Group A against attacks from the Soviet forces west of Stalingrad. The Nazis needed control of Soviet territory as far as the river Volga in order to be able to transport oil from the Caucasus.

This explains the vital importance of Stalingrad. But the German attack against Stalingrad was based on erroneous premises.

In the summer of 1942, Hitler and the generals at the headquarters and general staff believed that the Soviet Union was unable to continue the war on a large scale. Failing to understand that the Soviet socialist system could muster forces in a way which is impossible for a capitalist country, they thought the Soviet Union was completely finished as a military power. They reckoned in a capital-

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ist manner that a certain number of inhabitants only can support a certain number of soldiers, considering the cost of training and weapons; they did not understand that socialism liberates men and makes it possible to create much greater forces than capitalism.

Hitler and the generals thought that Stalingrad was going to be an easy battle. Later, in October 1942, the German high command wrote:

The Russians are seriously weakened after the last combats and, during winter 1942-3, they will not be able to have as great forces as during last winter.*

In reality, the Soviet war industry was stronger than ever, but to Hitler and his generals, the Soviet counterattack came like a bolt from the blue.

Socialism is the basis of the success of the Soviet Union

From where did all these fresh Soviet troops and new weapons come? All the new guns, tanks and planes? That is what General Jodl, chief of the operations of the German headquarters, asked himself after the war.

We had absolutely no idea of the force of the Russian troops in this area. There was nothing over there at the beginning, but all of a sudden they made an attack with a great force which had a decisive importance.*

When the Nazi sixth and fourth armies were encircled at Stalingrad, the difficulties multiplied for the Nazis. Hitler and his HQ ordered

* Cited in Georgy Zhukov, *Marshall of the Soviet Union Zhukov: Reminiscences and Reflections*, Swedish edition, Moscow, 1988, Book 2, p97

General Paulus, chief of command at Stalingrad, to resist at any cost and wait for relief.

There was not much else Paulus could do. To try to fight his way through the encirclement would be a risky enterprise, requiring a redeployment of the Nazi forces inside the encirclement that would take several weeks and come at a high cost in terms of killed and wounded German soldiers and destroyed materiel.

If the breakout did not succeed, it would be a catastrophe; even if it did succeed, there would be many tens of thousands of casualties and huge quantities of materiel would have to be left behind. Nobody at the German HQ, neither Hitler nor the generals, was willing to take the responsibility for that, so the order was: stay where you are, we will help you out.

But this order was not given only out of concern for the surrounded army; there was something of great importance which required it. Germany's Army Group A was in the Caucasus! If the encircled sixth army tried to break out, it would suffer huge losses in soldiers and weapons, and thus weaken Army Group B, perhaps making it incapable of stopping the Soviet forces from confining Army Group A in the Caucasus. That would be a catastrophe at least twice as big as if the sixth army were destroyed at Stalingrad.

The German headquarters and the general staff realised what a huge miscalculation they had made. Their top priority was now to withdraw Army Group A from the Caucasus as quickly as possible; the sixth army would have to fend for itself. For Army Group A, the withdrawal soon became a panic, as it was pursued by Soviet forces with many German casualties and enormous losses in materiel.

Enormous losses for the Nazis

An attempt to rescue the sixth army was later made with a new army, Army Don, which consisted of forces hastily withdrawn from France, Germany and the eastern front. This army was under the

command of General Manstein, whose 'military qualities and intelligence' were, according to Beevor, 'undeniable'.* With much pomp and circumstance, General Manstein took over the command. An armoured army was sent from Kotelnikovo (about one hundred kilometres southeast of Stalingrad) to rescue the sixth army.

Beevor tries to transform this desperate German attack into 'almost a victory', but wars are won by the party that wins the last battle. Manstein's army managed to fight its way fifty kilometres inside the Soviet lines, but that was all. With enormous losses, the Germans fled back to the point of departure, and then retreated still further.

The German armoured army and the remainder of the German front close to Stalingrad moved another fifty to a hundred kilometres west; the Caucasus was liberated and the German front was pushed back two to three hundred kilometres from Stalingrad.

In terms of killed, wounded and disappeared soldiers, Nazi Germany had, by September 1942, lost more than 1.6 million soldiers.† Two months later, in November 1942, the Nazis had already lost more than two million soldiers. Between June and November 1942, in the fight for Stalingrad, the Nazis lost seven hundred thousand soldiers, one thousand tanks, two thousand guns and 1,400 aeroplanes.*

To all these losses were added the sixth army and a great part of the fourth armoured army at Stalingrad: one marshal, twenty-four generals, ten thousand officers and over three hundred thousand soldiers. The weaponry lost by the Nazis at Stalingrad represented six months of German weaponry production.

The defeat was disastrous; never before had a German army been so totally defeated and destroyed. In Germany, Hitler proclaimed three days of national mourning.

* Antony Beevor, *ibid*, p273

† Halder, *ibid*, p669

‡ Zhukov, *ibid*, p97

Bourgeois history serves the capitalist class

When we turn the last page of Beevor's *Stalingrad*, two questions arise. Why are such deceitful books written? In whose interest?

We live in an era when neo-liberalism has spread over the world. The new liberal capitalism wants to deprive the workers of everything: their living conditions, their safety, and even their history.

The capitalists want us to lose confidence in ourselves so as to be able to rule without restrictions; there is not much difference between liberalism and nazism in this respect.

The author of this text once wrote that neo-liberalism and nazism are cousins, but they might even be identical twins. Antony Beevor is one of the new liberal writers who have taken it upon themselves to degrade the victory of the Soviet Union in the second world war.

Penguin Books publishes Beevor's book as if it were a history book. Why? In fact, it is nothing more or less than a recitation of Nazi war propaganda.

The editor does not even react against open racism in the book.

As a colonialist and officer in the British empire, Beevor tells us a tale about 'the Zulu king marching an *impi* [detachment] of his warriors over a cliff to prove their discipline^{*} – in order to impress British officers of course . . .

Beevor is not alone in trying to degrade the victory of the Soviet Union; there are many of his kind in Europe and the United States. These people are paid by a forest of private 'foundations' to deny the victory of the Soviet Union over nazism.

It is important to expose their lies. Beevor's book on Berlin is even worse.

* Antony Beevor, *ibid*, p28

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What interest does Penguin Books have in publishing such rubbish?

Mário Sousa

Uppsala, Sweden, 21 September 2004

The Soviet-German non-aggression pact³

Bourgeois ideologists in imperialist 'democracies', to camouflage the pro-fascist sympathies and actions of their own bourgeoisie, have always tried to distort and falsify the origin, the content, the reasons behind, and the effect of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, popularly known as the Hitler-Stalin or Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The Trotskyites, as on every other question, in this instance too have been happy to repeat the bourgeois imperialist lies and falsifications.

That the imperialist bourgeoisie and its agents in the working-class movement – social democrats and Trotskyites – should attack the Soviet policy is perfectly understandable. The Soviet policy turned the tables on imperialism when it had been hoping to crush bolshevism but instead ended up locked into a bitter war against itself.

The imperialists of Britain, who had hoped to turn Nazi Germany against Soviet Russia, were now obliged to fight against Nazi Germany themselves. The conduct of the Soviet and Comintern policy contributed in no small measure to bringing about the situation in which imperialists of different countries were forced to wage a war of destruction against each other instead of uniting in a war of extermination against the socialist USSR.

In the light of this, is it surprising that the imperialists should attack Stalin, the CPSU(B) and the Comintern? Can we expect the imperialists to be grateful to the CPSU(B), the Comintern and Stalin for weakening imperialism?

As for the Trotskyites, we have shown in our earlier publications⁴ that in the 1930s they had become an agency of fascism and worked for the defeat of the USSR. It was not therefore surprising that Trotskyites should attack the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' for frustrating the plans of Trotskyist agents of fascism.

Until recently, Marxist Leninists and progressive people all over the world regarded the conduct of Soviet and Comintern policy during the period under discussion as a model for the application of the tactics of Leninism to an extremely complicated and dangerous international situation, which led to the defeat of fascism and to the weakening of international imperialism. Since the early 1970s, however, thanks to the consolidation and growth of Khrushchevite revisionism, whose treachery ultimately resulted in the collapse of the USSR, revisionist parties and organisations have been happy to join imperialist and Trotskyist circles in denouncing the Soviet Union, and Stalin in particular, for signing the non-aggression pact.

These gentry assert that by concluding this pact, the Soviet Union abandoned proletarian internationalism. In the dying days of the Soviet Union, the Gorbachev revisionist renegade clique went so far as to engineer, in December 1989, the passing of a resolution by the Supreme Soviet that criticised this pact 'as a personal decision by Stalin that contradicted the interests of the Soviet people'.

Under the pressure exercised by the combined forces of imperialism, revisionism and Trotskyism, there were even some individuals and organisations calling themselves Marxist-Leninist and anti-revisionist who joined the fray on the side of those who denounced the Soviet Union for concluding the non-aggression pact.

One can only conclude such 'Marxist Leninists' are not really Marxist Leninists at all, but hidden Trotskyites and agents of imperialism in the anti-revisionist movement, who are still angry and who have still

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not forgiven Stalin for leading the struggle against imperialism and for weakening imperialism.

As for the imperialist bourgeoisie, it is keen to hide from the proletariat the simple fact that both fascism and the carnage of the second world war, which claimed nearly sixty million lives and wreaked untold devastation, were the product of imperialism; that the imperialist 'democracies', in their blind hatred of Soviet communism, did everything in their power to strengthen Hitlerite fascism and direct its aggression against the USSR; that the Soviet Union in signing the non-aggression pact with Germany turned the tables on imperialism and forced the principal imperialist countries to fight against each other; that in this war, while the Soviet Union and the people of the world fought against fascism, the imperialist powers were merely engaged in a struggle for domination through redivision of the already completely divided world.

To hide all these facts, the imperialist bourgeoisie, especially the Anglo-American bourgeoisie, has used the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against fascism to indulge in an orgy of self-glorification through wholesale falsification of the historical significance of the second world war, the events leading to it, and the part played by each of the participants in that titanic struggle – all for the purpose of burnishing the tarnished image of imperialism, especially that of the imperialist 'democracies' of those days, and maligning and belittling the truly heroic part played by the Soviet Union.

Attempts are being made to convince the proletariat that the Soviet Union, in signing the non-aggression pact, brought about the onset of the war and that, therefore, it was as guilty as Nazi Germany, and Stalin as wicked as Hitler, in unleashing this unprecedented slaughter.

In other words, attempts are being made through the falsified version of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, to equate fascism with communism and to present imperialist 'democracy' as the only solution and ultimate destiny of humanity. Nothing could be further from the truth, which is as follows.

Summary of facts about the German-Soviet non-aggression pact

Here are the incontrovertible facts summarising very briefly the USSR's position on the question of war with imperialism.

First, it was the endeavour of the Soviet Union not to embroil herself in a war with imperialism.

Second, since it was not entirely up to her to avoid such war, then, if imperialism should be bent on waging a war against the Soviet Union, the latter should *not* find herself in the position of having to fight alone, let alone having to face the combined onslaught of the principal imperialist countries – Germany, Britain, France, USA, Italy and Japan.

Third, to this end, divisions between the fascist imperialist states on the one hand and the democratic imperialist states on the other should be exploited to the hilt. These divisions between the two groups of imperialists were not a figment of Stalin's imagination. They were real, based on the material interests of the two groups of states under consideration.

Uneven development of capitalism causes some states to spurt ahead and others to lag behind. The old division of the world no longer corresponds with the balance of forces, thus making necessary a new division of the world. This is precisely what the first world war was about; and this is precisely what Germany, Italy and Japan, having spurted ahead in the capitalist development of their economies, were clamouring for.

On the other hand, the old imperialist countries, notably Britain and France, having lagged behind in the capitalist development of their economies in comparison with the newcomers, notably Germany, were quite happy with the old division of the world. In demanding a new division, the fascist states were encroaching upon the material interests of the democratic imperialist states.

There was thus scope for this conflict of interests to be exploited by the USSR.

Fourth, to this end, the USSR, pursuing a very complicated foreign policy, did its best to conclude a collective security pact with the democratic imperialist states to deter aggression by the fascist states, providing, in the event of such aggression taking place, for collective action against the aggressors.

Fifth, when the democratic imperialist states, overcome by their hatred of communism, refused to sign a collective security pact with the USSR and continued their policy of appeasement of the fascist states, in particular that of Nazi Germany, in an effort to direct her aggression in an eastwardly direction against the Soviet Union, the latter was forced to try some other method of protecting the interests of the socialist motherland of the international proletariat.

The USSR turned the tables on the foreign policy of the democratic imperialist states by signing, on 23 August 1939, the German-Soviet non-aggression pact.

Sixth, in signing this pact, the USSR not only ensured that she would not be fighting Germany alone, but also that the latter would be fighting against the very powers who had been trying, by their refusal to agree on collective security, to embroil the USSR in a war with Germany.

On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later, the Anglo-French ultimatum expired, and Britain and France were at war with Germany.

Seventh, the provisions of the additional secret protocol went far enough to safeguard the Soviet 'spheres of interest', which, as will be seen, proved vital to Soviet defences when the war actually reached her.

Finally, the German-Soviet non-aggression pact bought the Soviet Union an extremely valuable period of two years for strengthening her defence preparedness before she entered a war she knew she could not stay out of forever.

When the war was finally forced on the Soviet Union, she made the

most heroic contribution in the crowning and glorious victory of the allies against Nazi Germany and her allies. The Red Army and the Soviet people showed their tenacity, and the tenacity and superiority of the socialist system, by defeating the Nazis in the USSR and pursuing them all the way to Berlin, liberating in the process country after country from Nazi jackboot occupation and bringing socialism to eastern Europe.

All revolutionary and honest bourgeois historians and politicians agree on the above summary. Only the most die-hard anti-communists, particularly the Trotskyites, ever dare to dispute it. What follows is a substantiation of the above summary.

Soviet Union well aware of the coming war

Of course, it is utter nonsense to say that Stalin and the CPSU did not realise that the Soviet Union might have to fight Germany and that she relied on Nazi goodwill. The fact is that the

Soviet Union was menaced in the east and west, and the conduct of foreign relations became more complex and demanding as [Stalin] sought to deflect or at least delay the inevitable war. He carried enormous responsibilities, and only a man of exceptional physical stamina, sharp and disciplined intelligence, and iron self-control could have met such demands . . .

Fundamental to Stalin's policies, internal and external, was the conviction that war was imminent and might devastate Soviet Russia before she was able to gather strength. It was this thought that had demanded immediate collectivisation and headlong industrialisation. There was no time to lose . . .*

* Ian Grey, *Stalin – Man Of History*, Abacus, London, 1982, pp293, 295-6

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As early as January 1925, addressing the central committee, Stalin, having said that 'the preconditions of war are ripening', went on to warn:

Our banner is still the banner of peace. But if the war begins, we shall hardly be able to sit with folded arms. We shall have to come out, but we ought to be the last to come out. And we should come out to throw the decisive weight on the scales, the weight that should tilt the scales.*

Everyone is, of course, aware of his 1931 speech containing the following statement, which even the Trotskyite Deutscher calls 'a prophesy brilliantly fulfilled':

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.†

In his autobiography, *My Struggle*, Hitler had clearly and candidly outlined the foreign policy of the Nazis:

We national socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our prewar period . . . We stop the endless German movement to the south, and turn our gaze towards the land in the east . . .

If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia.‡

* J V Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vol 7, pp13-14

† 'The tasks of business executives' by J V Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vol 13, p41

‡ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, London, 1984, pp598, 604

Soviet efforts at achieving collective security and the appeasement policy of the non-aggressive imperialist states

The Soviet Union can hardly have relished the spectacle of Nazi accession to power in January 1933, which created for the USSR an unprecedentedly dangerous situation. Hence the emphasis of Soviet foreign policy in this period on the preservation of world peace and efforts at concluding a collective security pact with the democratic imperialist countries which had, as already mentioned, an objective interest in the maintenance of the then existing division of the world.

In the conduct of foreign policy, Stalin showed great caution, restraint and realism. He needed time to build up Russia's industry and military strength. He was constantly provoked in the east and the west, and in ways that must have infuriated him, but he never lost sight of the overriding need to delay the outbreak of war as long as possible. It was for this reason that he placed the greatest emphasis on peace and disarmament in world affairs. At the same time he pursued a policy of collective security . . . *

The policy of collective security was pursued because the socialist Soviet Union had every interest in averting war and getting on with the task of socialist construction, which required peace, and because the non-aggressive imperialist countries had an interest in averting a war by the aggressive states or in ensuring their early defeat.

Addressing the eighteenth congress of the CPSU in March 1939, and arguing that the war had already started, Stalin said:

* Ian Grey, *ibid*, p296

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The war is being waged by aggressor states, who in every way infringe upon the interests of the non-aggressor states, primarily England, France and the USA, while the latter draw back and retreat, making concession after concession to the aggressors.

Thus we are witnessing an open redivision of the world and spheres of influence at the expense of the non-aggressive states, without the least attempt at resistance, and even with a certain connivance on their part.*

Although having an objective interest in entering into a collective security arrangement with the USSR, nevertheless, overcome by their hatred of socialism, Britain and France, led by the governments of Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier respectively, refused to conclude such an alliance.

Is it [the policy of appeasement by the non-aggressive states] to be attributed to the weakness of the non-aggressive states?

asked Stalin. He went on to answer thus:

Of course not! Combined, the non-aggressive, democratic states are unquestionably stronger than the fascist states, both economically and militarily.

. . . The chief reason is that the majority of the non-aggressive countries, particularly Britain and France, have rejected the policy of collective security, of collective resistance to the aggressors, and have taken up a position of non-intervention, a position of neutrality.

The policy of non-intervention reveals an eagerness, a desire . . . not to hinder Germany, say . . . from embroiling herself in a war with the Soviet Union, to allow all the belligerents to sink deeply in the

* J V Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Moscow, 1953, p753

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mire of war, to encourage them surreptitiously in this; to allow them to weaken and exhaust one another; and then, when they have become weak enough, to appear on the scene with fresh strength, to appear, of course, 'in the interests of peace', and to dictate conditions to the enfeebled belligerents.

Cheap and easy!*

Further, referring to the Munich agreement which surrendered Czechoslovakia to the Nazis, Stalin continued:

One might think that the districts of Czechoslovakia were yielded to Germany as the price of an undertaking to launch war on the Soviet Union . . . *

Outlining the tasks of Soviet foreign policy, Stalin stressed the need

. . . to be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull chestnuts out of the fire for them.*

The Soviet government was not even consulted about, let alone included in, the Munich conference, which, gathering on 28-30 September 1938, surrendered Czechoslovakia to the tender mercies of fascist Germany. At the same time, the western powers refused to respond to the Soviet proposals for a grand collective security alliance under the aegis of the League of Nations.

This is what Winston Churchill had to say in this context:

The Soviet offer was in effect ignored. They were not brought into the scale against Hitler and were treated with an indifference – not

* *Ibid*, pp754, 756, 759

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to say disdain – which left a mark on Stalin’s mind. Events took their course as if the Soviet Union did not exist. For this we afterwards paid dearly.*

In the same volume, Churchill admits that the Soviet plan would have averted, or at least delayed, war for a considerable time, and it was time that the Soviet Union was playing for.†

But the non-aggressive states’ anti-communism won a temporary victory. Lord Halifax, the British foreign secretary, told Hitler in November 1937 that:

He and other members of the British government were well aware that the führer had attained a great deal . . . Having destroyed communism in his country, he had barred the road of the latter to western Europe and Germany was therefore entitled to be regarded as a bulwark of the west against bolshevism . . .

When the ground has been prepared for an Anglo-German rapprochement, the four great west European powers must jointly set up the foundation of lasting peace in Europe.‡

The Soviet Union persists in her policy

Knowing, as the CPSU leadership did, that the policy of appeasement, which was in conflict with the interests of British and French imperialism, would sooner or later be opposed by powerful representatives of imperialism in these countries, it persisted in its efforts to conclude a collective security alliance.

* W S Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol 1, p104

† *Ibid*, pp234-251

‡ *Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-45*, Vol 1, London, 1954, p55

On 15 March 1939, Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia. Public opinion in the west was outraged by the rape of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain was visibly shaken by the angry public and parliamentary reaction.

On instructions from the British government, the British ambassador in Moscow called on the Soviet foreign minister, Maxim Litvinov, to inquire what the Soviet reaction would be if Germany were to attack Romania. Litvinov responded the same evening with the proposal that representatives of Britain, France, the USSR, Poland and Romania should meet urgently to forestall this danger. The British government rejected this proposal and instead proposed a declaration that in the event of further aggression the four countries would consult with each other.

Although annoyed by this response, the Soviet government agreed to it, provided that Poland was also a signatory. The Polish foreign minister, Colonel Beck, as anti-Soviet as Chamberlain, refused to sign, proposing instead a Polish-British mutual assistance pact.

On 31 March 1939, without prior consultation with the Soviet Union, the Polish-British pact, giving a unilateral British guarantee to defend Poland against aggression, was announced. On 13 April, it was extended to include Greece and Romania. As Ian Grey correctly observes:

If Germany attacked Poland or Romania, Britain could do nothing without the support of the Soviet Union, and in a way that was gratuitously insulting, both governments having carefully ignored the Soviet government. Churchill, Eden and others were quick to point out the stupidity of Chamberlain's policy.*

Under extreme domestic pressure, the British government, on 15 April, proposed to the Soviet Union that the latter should give unilateral guarantees. The Soviet government turned down this proposal

* Ian Grey, *ibid*, p306

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as it provided no assistance for the USSR in the event of a German attack.

On 17 April, the Soviet government proposed a British-French-Soviet pact of mutual assistance, which was to include a military convention and to guarantee the independence of all states bordering on the Soviet Union from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Chamberlain and Halifax rejected it on the spurious ground that it might offend Poland and Germany, and because it would commit Britain to the defence of Finland and the Baltic states.

For Stalin the inescapable conclusion was that the leaders of the British government were so blinded by hostility towards the Soviet regime that not even to avert the horrors of war would they consider an alliance with Soviet Russia against Germany.*

And it was evident that to the British and the French ruling circles, the thought of a coalition with the Soviets was still repugnant . . . ; that some leading western statesmen looked upon nazism as upon a reliable barrier against bolshevism; that a few among them did toy with the idea of turning that barrier into a battering ram; and that, finally, even among those who saw the inescapable need for an alliance with Russia, some wondered whether it would not be sound policy to let Germany come to grips with Russia first.†

On 3 May, Litvinov was replaced as commissar for foreign affairs by Molotov. This should have served as a clear warning to Britain and France, for Litvinov's name was very closely associated with efforts for a collective security. Even now, the USSR persisted in its policy of working for a collective security alliance.

The British government was under increasing public pressure to

* Ian Grey, *ibid*, p307

† Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin – A Political Biography*, Pelican, London, 1966, pp413-4

negotiate with the Soviet Union. On 2 June, the Soviet government submitted a new draft agreement, specifying the countries to be guaranteed and the extent of the commitment of the three signatories. Expressing interest in the Soviet proposals, the British government decided to send a representative to Moscow to speed up the negotiations. Although Chamberlain and Halifax had personally gone to Berlin, they sent a junior official from the foreign office to Moscow, a deliberate affront which gave 'actual offence'.^{*5}

On 17 July, Molotov announced that there was little point in continued discussion on the political treaty in the absence of a military convention being concluded. The British government responded to Molotov's announcement by agreeing to send a military mission to Moscow.

Instead of sending Lord Gort, chief of the imperial staff, as the Soviet government had hoped, Chamberlain appointed an elderly retired admiral, Admiral Reginald Plunkett-Ernie-Erle-Drax, who proceeded on 23 July by the slowest means of transportation and the slowest route (having been into the bargain instructed 'to go very slowly with the conversations') and who arrived in Moscow on 11 August. What is more, the Soviet side discovered to its amazement that the British delegation had come merely to 'hold talks', with no authority to negotiate.

What is certain is that, if the western governments had wanted to drive [Stalin] into Hitler's arms, they could not have set about doing so more effectively than they did. The Anglo-French military mission delayed its departure for 11 precious days. It wasted five days more en route, travelling by the slowest possible boat.

When it arrived in Moscow its credentials and powers were not clear. The governments whose prime ministers had not considered it beneath their dignity to fly to Munich almost at Hitler's nod, refused

* Churchill, *ibid*, p304

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to send any official of ministerial standing to negotiate the alliance with Russia. The servicemen sent for military talks were of lesser standing than those sent, for instance, to Poland and Turkey.

If Stalin intended an alliance, the way he was treated might almost have been calculated to make him abandon his intention.*

All the same, on 12 August, the talks on a military convention began. Marshal Voroshilov, leader of the Soviet delegation, informed the delegates that without Soviet troops being permitted to enter Poland it would be impossible for them to defend it. The Poles declared that they did not need, and would not accept, Soviet aid.

If Stalin is to be judged by his conduct at the time [around September, 1938] there is nothing with which he can be reproached.*

And further:

The unwritten maxim of Munich was to keep Russia out of Europe. Not only the great and seemingly great powers of the west wished to exclude Russia. The governments of the small east European nations as well squealed at the great bear: 'Stay where you are, stay in your lair.'

Sometime before Munich, when the French and the Russians were discussing joint actions in defence of Czechoslovakia, the Polish and the Romanian governments categorically refused to agree to the passage of Russian troops to Czechoslovakia. They denied the Red Army – and even the Red Airforce – the right of passage not merely because they were afraid of communism; they fawned on Hitler.

It must have been shortly after Munich that the idea of a new attempt at a rapprochement with Germany took shape in Stalin's mind.*

* Deutscher, *ibid*, pp425, 419

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The French and British governments, too, rejected this provision. It was pointless in the circumstances to continue the discussions, which were adjourned indefinitely on 21 August.

After this, the Soviet government, realising the stubborn persistence of the British and French governments in their refusal to conclude an alliance with the USSR, resolved to conclude the non-aggression pact with Germany.

Stalin's foremost concern was still to gain time so that Soviet industry and the armed forces could gather strength. Reluctantly he turned now to the possibility of an agreement with Hitler.*

As to why Stalin agreed to the non-aggression pact with Germany, Deutscher says:

That [Stalin] had little confidence in Hitler's victory is equally certain. His purpose now was to win time, time, and once again time, to get on with his economic plans, to build up Russia's might and then throw that might into the scales when the other belligerents were on their last legs.†

Soviet-German non-aggression pact signed

Although Germany had approached the Soviet Union as early as 17 April 1939 for a normalisation of German-Soviet relations, and subsequent approaches had been made to the Soviet government through the German embassy in Moscow, the German ambassador, Count Fritz von der Schulenburg reported as late as 4 August:

* Ian Grey, *ibid*, p309 and Churchill, *ibid*, p306

† Deutscher, *ibid*, p430

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My overall impression is that the Soviet government is at present determined to sign with England and France, if they fulfil all Soviet wishes . . . It will take a considerable effort on our part to cause the Soviet government to swing.*

On 14 August, Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, instructed Schulenburg by cable to call on Molotov and to read him the following communication:

There is no question between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea which cannot be settled to the complete satisfaction of both countries . . . I am prepared to make a short visit to Moscow . . . to set forth the führer's views to M Stalin . . . only through such a discussion can a change be brought about . . .†

On 16 August, Schulenburg saw Molotov and read to him Ribbentrop's communication. The same night he reported to Berlin Molotov's 'great interest' in the communication, adding that

Molotov was interested in the question of how the German government were disposed towards the idea of concluding a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.†

Ribbentrop answered the same day, instructing Schulenburg to see Molotov again to convey to him that:

Germany is prepared to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.

I am prepared to come by aeroplane to Moscow at any time after Friday 18 August, to deal, on the basis of full powers from the

* Cited in Churchill, *ibid*, p305

† *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-45*, Series D, Vol 7, London 1956, pp63, 77

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führer, with the entire complex of German-Russian relations and, if the occasion arises, to sign the appropriate treaties.*

On 17 August, Molotov handed a written reply to Schulenburg proposing a trade agreement to begin with, to be followed 'shortly thereafter' by the conclusion of a non-aggression pact. On 18 August, Ribbentrop informed Schulenburg telegraphically that the 'first stage', that of signing a trade agreement, had been completed and requested that he be allowed to make an 'immediate' trip to Moscow.

On 19 August, Schulenburg answered that Molotov had agreed that

The Reich foreign minister could arrive in Moscow on 26 or 27 August.

Molotov handed me the draft of a non-aggression pact.*

On 20 August, Hitler sent an urgent personal telegram to Stalin, accepting the Soviet draft non-aggression pact, with the plea that Ribbentrop be received in Moscow on 22 August or at the latest on the 23rd.

Stalin replied on 21 August agreeing to the visit:

The Soviet government have instructed me to inform you that they agree to Herr Von Ribbentrop's arriving in Moscow on 23 August.*

Ribbentrop arrived in Moscow at the head of a delegation on 23 August. On the same night, he was received by Stalin. According to a reliable account, the meeting was cold and far from amicable. Gauss, chief assistant to Ribbentrop, who accompanied him, recorded:

* *Ibid*, pp84, 134, 168

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Ribbentrop himself had inserted in the preamble a rather far-reaching phrase concerning friendly German-Soviet relations. To this Stalin objected, remarking that the Soviet government could not suddenly present to their public a German-Soviet declaration of friendship after they had been covered with pails of manure by the Nazi government for six years. Thereupon this phrase in the preamble was deleted.*

The pact was signed. Under the secret protocol it was agreed that, in the Baltic, 'the northern frontier of Lithuania shall represent the frontier of the spheres of interest both of Germany and the USSR' and in the case of Poland, 'the spheres of interest both of Germany and the USSR shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narew, Vistula and Sau'.†

In other words, the Curzon line was to be this boundary, and in the area east of it, which had been seized by Poland from the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, Germany had agreed to the USSR taking whatever action it liked.

Why the Soviet Union signed the 23 August pact

Addressing the Supreme Soviet on 31 August, Molotov dispelled the 'fiction that the conclusion of the German-Soviet non-aggression treaty had upset the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations:

Attempts are being made to spread the fiction that the conclusion of the Soviet-German pact disrupted negotiations with Britain and France for a mutual assistance pact . . . In reality, as you know, the very reverse is true . . . The Soviet Union signed the non-aggression pact with Germany, amongst other things, because negotiations

* Cited in Churchill, *ibid*, p306

† *Documents on German Foreign Policy, op cit*, p264

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with France and Great Britain had . . . ended in a failure through the fault of the ruling circles of Britain and France.*

Even the historian Edward Carr, a decidedly anti-Soviet writer, is obliged to admit that the Soviet Union's decision to sign the non-aggression pact with Germany was a most reluctant and enforced second choice:

The striking feature of the Soviet-German negotiations . . . is the extreme caution with which they were conducted from the Soviet side, and the prolonged Soviet resistance to close the doors on the western negotiations.†

The same Edward Carr, noting that the Chamberlain government 'as a defender of capitalism' turned down an alliance with the USSR against Germany, made the following estimation of the gains made by the Soviet Union as a result of signing the non-aggression treaty with Germany:

In the pact of 23 August 1939, they [the Soviet government] secured: (a) a breathing space of immunity from attack; (b) German assistance in mitigating Japanese pressure in the far east; (c) German agreement to the establishment of an advanced bastion beyond the existing Soviet frontiers in eastern Europe; it was significant that this bastion was, and could only be, a line of defence against potential German attack, the eventual prospect of which was never far absent from Soviet reckonings. But what most of all was achieved by the pact was the assurance that, if the USSR had eventually to fight Hitler, the western powers would already be involved.†

* Molotov, *Soviet Peace Policy*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, p20

† E H Carr, 'From Munich to Moscow: II', in *Soviet Studies*, Vol I, October 1949, pp104, 103

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After the above correctly, succinctly and brilliantly summarised gains for the Soviet Union, consequent upon signing the 23 August pact, it is difficult to imagine that there are still people around who assert that in signing this non-aggression pact with Germany the Soviet Union was guilty of 'an abandonment of proletarian internationalism'.

Unfortunately, there still are such people. It is difficult to say whether it is ignorance or malice that causes them to make such idiotic statements. All we can say is that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear.

Hostile as he is, even Deutscher is obliged to admit another gain – ie, the moral advantage gained by the Soviet Union through signing the 23 August pact with Hitlerite Germany:

The USSR's moral gain consisted in the clear awareness of her peoples that Germany was the aggressor and that their own government had pursued peace to the very end.

Conclusion

For our part, we will always look back with admiration and gratitude at this master stroke of Soviet foreign policy, which contributed so significantly to freeing humanity from the horrors of Nazi domination.

The results were just what the USSR had expected. Just one week after the signing of the pact – ie, on 1 September, the Nazis invaded Poland. Two days later, their ultimatum having expired, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

While the imperialists, all of whom had planned to throttle the Soviet Union, fought each other, the latter secured nearly two valuable years to prepare herself for the eventual war, which came at 4.00am on 22 June 1941, with the German invasion in the form of

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Operation Barbarossa, launched by Hitler with 162 divisions, 3,400 tanks and seven thousand guns. The Soviet Union's heroic defence, the titanic battles she fought, her legendary victories, have passed into folklore and require no further comment here.

One final point: circles hostile to the Soviet Union have always equated the Soviet march into Poland east of the Curzon line with the Nazi invasion and occupation of the rest of Poland. The two are qualitatively different.

First, the Soviet forces moved only into territory which was theirs before it had been snatched by Poland after the October Revolution. Second, and much more importantly, the Soviet Union waited for sixteen days after the Nazi invasion of Poland.

When, on 5 September [1939], Ribbentrop began to press the Russians to march into their share of Poland, Stalin was not yet ready to issue the marching orders . . . He would not . . . lend a hand in defeating Poland, and he refused to budge before Poland's collapse was complete beyond doubt.*

When it became absolutely clear that the Polish state had collapsed, then the Soviet forces entered Poland (on 17 September) in order to safeguard her defences and the people of territories invaded by Soviet forces alike. The truth is that the Soviet army were greeted by the local population as liberators and heroes.

In his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 31 October 1939, Molotov said:

Our troops entered the territory of Poland only after the Polish state had collapsed and actually ceased to exist. Naturally, we could not remain neutral towards these facts, since as a result of these events we were confronted with urgent problems concerning the security of our state.

* Deutscher, *ibid*, p432

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Furthermore, the Soviet government could not but reckon with the exceptional situation created for our brothers in western Ukraine and western Byelorussia, who had been abandoned to their fate as a result of the collapse of Poland . . .

When the Red Army marched into these regions, it was greeted with general sympathy by the Ukrainian and Byelorussian population, who welcomed our troops as liberators from the yoke of the gentry, from the yoke of the Polish landlords and capitalists.*

The Soviet march into these areas had the effect of rescuing thirteen million people, including one million jews, from the horrors of Nazi occupation and extermination. It can only be surmised that those opposed to the Soviet entry into the territories east of the Curzon line would rather have seen these areas overrun by the Nazis – a very queer ‘internationalism’ indeed!

Such people are actually to the right of even some Conservatives. Let the following words, spoken in the House of Commons on 20 September 1939 by Conservative MP Robert Boothby, put such ‘socialists’ and ‘internationalists’ to eternal shame:

I think it is legitimate to suppose that this action on the part of the Soviet government was taken . . . from the point of view of self-preservation and self-defence . . . The action taken by the Russian troops . . . has pushed the German frontier considerably westward . . .

I am thankful that Russian troops are now along the Polish-Romanian frontier. I would rather have Russian troops there than German troops.†

* Molotov, *ibid*, pp31-3

† Quoted by Bill Bland in *The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939*, an excellent paper presented to the Stalin Society in 1992

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It is to be hoped that the above restatement of facts concerning the Soviet-German non-aggression pact will be of assistance to those who are genuinely desirous of knowing the truth concerning this very important treaty and its place in the complicated world situation at the time.

Harpal Brar

London, August 2005

Resolution: The defeat of fascism

This congress joins with the whole of progressive humanity in celebrating this year the sixtieth anniversary of the victory of the mighty socialist Soviet Union against Hitlerite fascism on May Day 1945.

As we remember the twenty-seven million Soviet citizens who died to safeguard freedom, we urge working people to realise that Hitlerite fascism is not the product of some evil quirk in the German character, as has been generally put about by the imperialist rivals of German imperialism. It was merely a resort to naked terror that any bourgeois regime will resort to when it ceases to be able to control the exploited and oppressed masses by deception alone.

The bourgeoisie of any country, including ours, will resort to these tactics when its rule is under threat from the masses who have had enough of poverty, starvation, disease and war. The German masses had fascism imposed on them because they were becoming too militant for German imperialism to handle.

What prevented the German working class from overthrowing capitalism before the latter managed to impose fascism, however, was the treacherous and dirty role of social democracy, which divided the German working class, which refused to unite to safeguard democracy in a front with the communists, and which paved the

way for the advent of fascism rather than see German imperialism overthrown.

The Soviet Union, under the leadership of comrade Stalin and the Communist Party, fought the Nazi beast almost single-handedly, with ninety percent of the Hitler army marauding on its soil for four years. It played by far the greatest role in the Nazis' defeat, which was a tribute to its socialist economy – its programme of industrialisation and collectivisation – which provided it with the wherewithal to defeat the Nazi war machine against which the heavily-armed bourgeoisies of various western European countries, such as France and Holland, were unable to hold out for longer than a few weeks – if that.

Since its socialist economy was built in a period of a mere ten years, transforming the Soviet Union from a backwater into a superpower in that short time, the Soviet Union's defeat of such an industrially advanced country as Germany is proof that socialism, in unleashing to the full the productive powers of the masses of working people, sets free a truly extraordinary and mighty indefeasible force. We can infer that after capitalism's final defeat, the energy of the liberated masses, devoting itself a hundred percent to the exponential improvement of their wellbeing, will unimaginably transform social existence – banishing forever poverty, ignorance and war.

The Soviet Union was a bastion of peace and justice, and the world has been suffering in an unprecedented manner from the unbridled aggression of western imperialism ever since she collapsed. We pledge solidarity with the peoples of the countries comprising the former Soviet Union, led by their Marxist-Leninist communist parties, in their revolutionary struggle to seize back the socialist motherland that has been snatched away from them.

Long live the Great October Socialist Revolution!

Passed by the CPGB-ML second party congress
London, July 2005

NOTES

1. This article first appeared in the May 2005 edition of *Lalkar*. See www.lalkar.org.
2. This review, which does an excellent job of laying bare Beevor's falsification of history, was written by Swedish comrade Mário Sousa and first published by the Swedish Communist Party (KP). It was published in English in the July edition of *Lalkar*.
3. This article first appeared in the September 2005 edition of *Lalkar*.
4. See *Trotskyism or Leninism?* by Harpal Brar (1993). [Available from CPGB-ML]
5. Some of the individuals and organisations in the 1970s who criticised the Soviet Union and Stalin for concluding the non-aggression pact prided themselves on being the leading Maoists in Britain. It is clear, however, that their ignorance of Marxism Leninism is only matched by their ignorance of the writings of Comrade Mao Zedong. Had they taken the trouble to read Mao Zedong's article 'The identity of interests between the Soviet Union and all mankind', dated 28 September 1939 – ie, just a month after the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact – they would have realised the utter falsity of their accusations. We reproduce below a significant section from this article:

Some people say that the Soviet Union does not want the world to remain at peace because the outbreak of a world war is to its advantage, and that the present war was precipitated by the Soviet Union's conclusion of a non-aggression treaty with Germany instead of a treaty of mutual assistance with Britain and France. I consider this view incorrect.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union over a very long period of time has con-

sistently been one of peace, a policy based on the close links between its own interests and those of the overwhelming majority of mankind. For its own socialist construction the Soviet Union has always needed peace, has always needed to strengthen its peaceful relations with other countries and prevent an anti-Soviet war; for the sake of peace on a world scale, it has also needed to check the aggression of the fascist countries, curb the warmongering of the so-called democratic countries and delay the outbreak of an imperialist world war for as long as possible.

The Soviet Union has long devoted great energy to the cause of world peace. For instance, it has joined the League of Nations, signed treaties of mutual assistance with France and Czechoslovakia and tried hard to conclude security pacts with Britain and all other countries that might be willing to have peace.

After Germany and Italy jointly invaded Spain and when Britain, the United States and France adopted a policy of nominal 'non-intervention' but of actual connivance at their aggression, the Soviet Union opposed the 'non-intervention' policy and gave the Spanish republican forces active help in their resistance to Germany and Italy. After Japan invaded China and when the same three powers adopted the same kind of 'non-intervention' policy, the Soviet Union not only concluded a non-aggression treaty with China but gave China active help in her resistance.

When Britain and France connived at Hitler's aggression and sacrificed Austria and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union spared no effort in exposing the sinister aims behind the Munich policy and made proposals to Britain and France for checking further aggression. When Poland became the burning question in the spring and summer of this year and it was touch-and-go whether world war would break out, the Soviet Union negotiated with Britain and France for four months, despite Chamberlain's and Daladier's complete lack of sincerity, in an endeavour to conclude a treaty of mutual assistance to prevent the outbreak of war.

But all these efforts were blocked by the imperialist policy of the British and French governments, a policy of conniving at, instigating and spreading war, so that eventually the cause of world peace was thwarted and the imperialist world war broke out. The governments of Britain, the United States and France had no genuine desire to prevent war; on the contrary, they helped to bring it about. Their refusal to come to terms with the Soviet Union and conclude a really effective treaty of mutual assistance based on equality and reciprocity proved that they wanted not peace but war.

Everybody knows that in the contemporary world rejection of the Soviet Union means rejection of peace. Even Lloyd George, that typical representative of the British bourgeoisie, knows this. It was in these circumstances, and when Germany agreed to stop her anti-Soviet activities, abandon the Agreement Against the Communist International and recognise the inviolability of the Soviet

frontiers, that the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty was concluded.

The plan of Britain, the United States and France was to egg Germany on to attack the Soviet Union, so that they themselves, 'sitting on top of the mountains to watch the tigers fight', could come down and take over after the Soviet Union and Germany had worn each other out. The Soviet-German non-aggression treaty smashed this plot.

In overlooking this plot and the schemes of the Anglo-French imperialists who connived at and instigated war and precipitated a world war, some of our fellow countrymen have actually been taken in by the sugary propaganda of these schemers. These crafty politicians were not the least bit interested in checking aggression against Spain, against China, or against Austria and Czechoslovakia; on the contrary, they connived at aggression and instigated war, playing the proverbial role of the fisherman who set the snipe and clam at each other and then took advantage of both. They euphemistically described their actions as 'non-intervention', but what they actually did was to 'sit on top of the mountain to watch the tigers fight'.

Quite a number of people throughout the world have been fooled by the honeyed words of Chamberlain and his partners, failing to see the murderous intent behind their smiles, or to understand that the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty was concluded only after Chamberlain and Daladier had made up their minds to reject the Soviet Union and bring about the imperialist war. It is time for these people to wake up. The fact that the Soviet Union worked hard to preserve world peace to the very last minute proves that the interests of the Soviet Union are identical with those of the overwhelming majority of mankind.

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The Soviet victory in the second world war shook imperialism to its very foundations.

The war itself was a product of the deep worldwide capitalist crisis of overproduction and of the consequent imperialist rivalry over territories, raw materials and sources of profit.

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Ever since that victory, the imperialists have worked unceasingly to distort and falsify these simple truths – in the hopes of hiding the intrinsically warlike nature of imperialism and of maligning the heroic sacrifices and the pivotal role of the Soviets in defeating Hitlerite fascism.

Front: The Motherland is Calling by Irakli Toidze, 1941

Back: Triumph of the Victorious People by Mikhail Khmelko. Soviet soldiers throw captured Nazi standards at the foot of Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square during the victory parade of May 1945



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