



# Euro-Stalinism: Its enemies and its accomplices

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In this article from *Workers Power* in 1978 Dave Hughes examines the crisis of European Stalinism, the emergence of the Euro-Communist trend and the impact it had on various Trotskyist groups

The public split in the Communist party of Great Britain, the formation of a 'New' Communist Party, the attacks on Santiago Carrillo in the *Moscow New Times*, the rapprochement between the new Chinese leadership and the erstwhile 'arch revisionist' Tito all demonstrate a 'World Communist Movement' passing into a new phase of internal upheavals. These events and the debate and discussion they have unleashed in the ranks of the Italian, Spanish, French and even British parties have prompted those groupings stemming from Trotsky's Fourth International both to analyse these developments and attempt to intervene in them. The potentialities for an intervention are obviously greater than at any time since 1968 (the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia) or perhaps even the situation after Khrushchev's 'secret speech' and the Hungarian Revolution. This time however it is the developing period of capitalist crisis and the role the western CPs will be called to play in the political re-alignments that this has precipitated which is at the heart of the upheavals in the Stalinist Parties. The responses of a whole spectrum of 'Trotskyism' to this situation reveal the disintegration which has occurred in the last 30 years in what was once the only coherent revolutionary communist opposition to Stalinism.

The New Draft of the British Road to Socialism, the criticisms of the Soviet Party by the Euro-Communist parties of Spain, Italy and France, the loyal bargains struck by these parties with their national capitalisms have prompted many on the left such as the SWP (GB) and the RCG to argue that these parties are no longer Stalinist, that they have become classic social-democratic parties. Public disputes in these parties between the 'Old Guard' and the Euro-Communists (most sharply the campaign launched by Sid French in Britain) have posed the question to Trotskyists as to whether either side is in any way progressive in these disputes, as to how to relate to the differences in the Stalinist parties. ~

Stalinism came to power in the Soviet Union under the slogan of "Socialism in one Country" against the Internationalist Left Opposition's fundamental political platform (from which all other positions were derived) was that socialism could be constructed in the Soviet Union, without the victory of the proletariat in an advanced capitalist country as long as the Soviet Union was protected against armed intervention. . Turning their back on the International programme of the Comintern and the Leninist Bolshevik Party, the Stalin faction amalgamated with the philistine conservative Russian bureaucracy on the basis of a nationalist programme. '

'Socialism in one Country' meant the turning of the Russian party and Comintern away from the tasks of preparing the International revolution. It had immediate implications for the non-Russian parties. Their first task, from the late 1920s, was now to protect and aid 'socialism' as it was being constructed in the USSR and the aid meant campaigning for peace, against all plans for invasion against the USSR. This necessitated forging alliances with all those forces who could be won to peace and non-aggression while the Soviet Union built socialism'.

In a series of turns 1925-1928; 1928-1934; 1934-1939; 1939-1941, 1941-1947 the CPs were ordered into crippling alliances with one section of the world bourgeoisie or another depending on the tactical requirements of the Russian bureaucracy. The victims of these opportunist alliances were the Chinese, German and Spanish proletariats and their vanguards. Trotsky, from the mid-twenties onwards analysed the development of Stalinism from the initial adherence to the theory of Socialism in one Country.

Firstly it follows inevitably that if Socialism cannot be built in 'one country' then there must be a series of national

programmes, of national roads to socialism. The theory of 'socialism in one country' propounded for Russia; leads inevitably to each Stalinist party adopting national programmes for its particular socialism. Trotsky pointed this out as early as 1928,

"If Socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia ; then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be achieved in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory. The draft programme empowered them to do so. The day after tomorrow the French will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of Social-patriotism." (Third International after Lenin, Pathfinder 1970 edition)

The process of political degeneration of the Stalin faction which accompanied its destruction of the last vestiges of working class power in Russia was completed in the period 1933-38. Between 1933 and 1936 Trotsky thoroughly revised his characterisation of the Stalinist tendency abandoning his definition of it as Centrist\_ 1933 and the endorsement by the Comintern and all its parties of the strategy which led to the capitulation convinced Trotsky that the Comintern was "dead for the revolution". The Stalin-Laval pact of May 1935 demonstrated that the former had "repudiated revolutionary internationalism and passed over to the platform of social-patriotism". Further Trotsky stated that "nothing now distinguishes the Communists from the Social Democrats except the traditional phraseology? and that ?Stalinism and Social Democracy are not antipodes but twins."

This analysis was to be rapidly confirmed. Just as Social Democracy, which in 1914 had led the German workers into the Imperialist holocaust and within four and a half years was organising the physical liquidation of the vanguard. So Stalinism - after assuring the capitulation to Hitler, was 45 years later engaged in a bloody task in Spain as in Russia which differed from the work of the Eberts and Noskes only in its greater dimensions.

These events prepared and accompanied the Popular Front, a bloc with the reformist bureaucracy and the liberal bourgeoisie on the programme of these two 'progressive' forces. ' Between 1936 and 1938 such a Popular Front demobilised and betrayed the revolutionary upsurge of the French workers, making inevitable the second Imperialist War. Open support for 'one's own' bourgeoisie provided it was in alliance with or friendly to the Soviet Union, the defence of bourgeois democracy (against the proletarian revolution) these reactionary positions obliterated Leninist Defeatism and the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The total destruction of every vestige of inner party democracy and the employment of gangster tactics against the small nuclei of Trotskyists set new standards in counter revolutionary ruthlessness.

Trotsky stressed throughout the 30's the trend towards 'organic unity' between the Social Democrats and the Stalinists.

Yet this coalescence was not to occur. Why was this? Firstly the Russian bureaucracy proved to be a much more solid social formation - than Trotsky had foreseen. (Whether this was because it was a caste or a social class lie; beyond the scope of this article). Stalinism played a crucial counter-revolutionary role both during the Second World War and after it. It provided the Imperialist Bourgeoisies of Britain and the USA with a progressive, democratic cover and demobilised and betrayed the 'mass movement of the Western European working classes. At the same time the establishment of states in all respects similar to the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe initially gave it enormous prestige. In the post-war period Stalinism re-elaborated the reformist strategy of the Popular Front.'

But the idea of a national road to socialism is in itself a position that was originated by Social Democrats and is upheld by them to this day. Should we not say then that these parties are therefore indistinguishable from Social Democratic Parties? What this position forgets is that the national roads of the Communist Parties are elaborated on an understanding that particularly after World War II, socialism has been consolidated, indeed built in the USSR. This is of bedrock significance to the Stalinist position. What is specific to Stalinism is that a reformist strategy and tactics are predicated on a favourable balance of class forces created by the aftermath of the Soviet Union's victories in the Second World War. Through the mouth of such ideologues as E. Varga, Stalinism held and holds that this strengthening of the socialist camp makes possible a new type of social formation between capitalism and socialism - the People's Democracy! .

The 'People's Democracy' programme is based on the following Stalinist reasoning:- the world is divided between those forces representing monopoly and militarism and the forces of peace and socialism. The pillar of the forces of peace and socialism is of course the Soviet Union. In this new balance of forces it is possible to build an alliance with anti-monopolist and pacifist sections of the bourgeoisie, alliance which will take the form governmentally of a People's Democracy. The British Road to Socialism of 1951, published with Stalin's full approval, is precisely such a programme for People's Democracy. It is a nationalist programme for class collaboration in the cause of 'sovereignty' and 'peace'.

What is at the heart of Stalinism then is not reliance on Russian tanks or immediate subordination to every whim of Soviet foreign policy, It is the theory of 'Socialism in one Country' elaborated programmatically on the basis of the supposed 'triumph' that made possible the People's Democratic programme- (i.e. hide the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' redundant to Stalin). It is the possibility of building 'Socialism in one Country' that makes the Stalinist programme inevitably national.

This world view is clearly riddled with contradictions. They are becoming more apparent on a world scale. But we must not lose sight of these essential defining features of Stalinism. The RCG for example, in their headlong flight from Trotskyism, are now trying to argue that the European CPs have ceased to be Stalinist since at least the days of the Popular Front.

"Such parties are no longer appendages of the CPSU - they are not Stalinist organisations, whose strategies reflect the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union. The Communist Parties of the advanced capitalist countries are reformist parties and have been so for more than thirty years." (RC No 6 p2 written March 1977 - our emphasis)

The RCG conflate Reformism and Social Democracy and because the CPs clearly have a reformist strategy see them as identical to Social Democracy. They thus cannot explain the apparent 'left' turns of the CPs - for example the 'defeatist' line of the Comintern in the early 40s.

What further differentiates the Stalinist Parties from their Social Democratic 'twins' is their bureaucratic monolithism. ' The reasons for this are two fold. Firstly the Stalinist parties organise a more class conscious, militant section of the working class than the Social Democrats. The stolen heritage of Leninism and the October Revolution are a necessary ideological smoke screen for the Stalinist bureaucrats. Yet their whole strategy and tactics are in constant conflict with their fake 'Communism'. Secondly unlike the Social Democrats their continued link with the foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy means that they cannot totally merge themselves with the bourgeois public opinion of their respective countries. Thus either the norms of bourgeois democracy or of proletarian democracy are possible within their parties. A pale reflection of the organisational practices of the Russian party is thus it key feature of these parties.

There is certainly a contradiction between the continued adherence of the Western CPs to the position that the bureaucratic tyrannies of Eastern Europe and Russia are socialist and their national democratic roads to socialism, a contradiction which has a reflection in the continued existence of separate bureaucratic Stalinist parties. The resolution of this contradiction via 'organic unity' with Social Democracy however lies in the future and to affirm that it is already accomplished is to disarm revolutionaries in dealing with the distinct phenomenon of Stalinism. A task which incidentally co-operates with the Euro-Communists vigorous assertions that Stalinism is merely a historical phenomenon.

What then is the significance of the current splits and rifts in world Stalinism? The search for democratic allies, the popular alliance, is a sanctioned platform of World Stalinism. That is not at stake in the conflicts. But in order to cement those alliances with Social Democrats, Christian-Democrat's and radicals, the Western CP's have found it necessary to distance themselves from the Kremlin, from the Soviet Communist party. The support of dissidents in East Europe, the reconciliation of the one-party 'Russian' model are necessary entry tickets for the Western CP's into coalition and alliance with the 'Bourgeois parties. Euro-Communism, in spite of its counter position' for Russian Communism", has its roots in the very politics of 'People's Democracy' and 'Popular Front', in the political programme of Stalinism.

Secondly, certain of the ruling bureaucracies, manoeuvring for greater independence from the Soviet bureaucracy in the face of declining outlets for trade in the West, a desperate search for credit, mass resentment at price rises and continuing shortages, see the Euro-Communists as a lever to use and apply in that manoeuvre. Kadar in Hungary, Gierek in Poland, Ceasescu in Romania have all defended, to a greater or lesser extent, the Euro-Communists in their own bureaucratic national interests.

What is at issue for the Soviet bureaucracy is not the national alliances and class collaboration of the Western Stalinist parties. They have not condemned the strategy and tactics of Western CP's on this terrain. They have not criticised the Spanish CP's abject capitulation to the Spanish monarchy. When the Moscow New Times talks of Euro-Communist responding "exclusively to the interests of Imperialism and the forces of aggression and reaction", they do not mean any criticism of the Italian or French CP's commitment to Nato. What upsets the Soviet bureaucracy is that in a particular way, the 'Euro-Communists' provide partial support for the forces of opposition in the USSR and East Europe. By supporting individual oppositionists, by publicising their criticisms of the regime in newspapers widely read in East Europe, the Western CP's in pursuance of their national roads, render the Russian bureaucracy's national and international repression more difficult. This contradiction is at the heart of Stalinism itself, it is at the root of the current public conflicts with the Russian party.

The 'debate' in the British Party has to be seen in this light.

Despite the cant from French et al, the debate is not about 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' - which was not to be found in the 1951 draft. The New Draft is simply a revised version of the original, no different in basic politics but adding material on women and gays, support for human rights in Eastern Europe in particular. The new draft is more explicit in its distancing of the CPGB from the Russian bureaucracy - "Britain's road to socialism will be different from the Soviet road" 1039) but essentially remains the same. Thus

"There is an objective basis for an alliance between many of these sections of the capitalist class... and the working class against the common enemy - the big capitalists" (p613-615) Exactly the model of the People's Alliance Programme.

The French grouping are incapable of putting any political alternative to this position. They have operated with, and still argue for, the central strategy of the people's alliance. What they cannot stomach is any criticism of the Soviet Union and East Europe, in the most literal sense their politics mean no more than supporting the bureaucratic regimes of East Europe as Socialism, supporting Stalin's terror as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Sections of the Russian and East European bureaucracies may help buttress French's sect, may provide outlets for its press in particular. But on basic questions of programme and strategy it has no alternative to the demoralised CPGB's recipe of alliance with the Trade Union bureaucracy, pressure on the Labour left in pursuance of 'progressive' policies.

How should Trotskyists relate to these splits, to the issues that are posed in the debates?

If we characterise the Communist parties as Stalinist we do so understanding the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism both as ruling party and as collaborator in popular fronts and coalitions. Against the Stalinists as ruling parties we put forward a programme to organise the working class to overthrow the Stalinist regimes, a programme for the revolutionary instalment of workers power. Against the Western CP's we fight for an international programme to organise the workers for power, independent of the Labour and TU bureaucracies.

While Understanding the innate contradictions and tensions within world Stalinism we say that both the Euro-Communists and the Brezhnevists stand to hold the working class back. Even if the Euro-Communist leaders, (e.g. Carrillo) were to deny the socialist character of the USSR, to deny that the USSR was a bulwark of world peace and socialism (i.e. were to "go further" in their critique of the USSR) the resultant social-democratisation of those 'Communist' parties would be no more progressive and no less reactionary from the standpoint of the working class. The tactic of the SWP(US) and the IMG in trying to push Carrillo further, suggesting new slogans for him to raise "is thoroughly opportunist and misleading.

The SWP(US) clearly have great hopes that Carrillo will free himself from Stalinism, but to become what?

?For the time being, Carrillo seems to have held his position by counterattacking with some powerful political arguments. In the long run, he could only resist the power of the Kremlin by deepening and extending his criticisms of Stalinist dictatorship, by educating the party ranks about Stalinism and building an incorruptible leadership (sic). In order to do that he would have to break completely with Stalinism and his own past, not just on international questions but in every sphere of party work.

The danger to Carrillo is indicated by the wavering of the biggest Euro-Communist party, the Italian CP. "  
(Intercontinental Press July 18 1977)

And what is it this Carrillo "breaking completely with Stalinism" would become for the comrades of the SWP? It is clear he would be a reactionary social democrat, not a reactionary Stalinist. The IMG raise the same demand on Carrillo to break with Stalinism, but again they pose no more than that he should take up the -argument's of the Social Democrats:

"Despite these criticisms Carrillo's critique' remains incomplete. He fails to understand the need for institutionalised organs of workers democracy in a socialist State. He does not call for the abolition of the one-party states in Russia, China and Eastern Europe. He does not because there are questions which would have repercussions on the internal organisations of the PCE itself." (Socialist Challenge No.5)

The question is not for us to abstractly call for the abolition of the one-party states, most social democrats espouse that call in favour of 'multi-party' states. Our programme is for the revolutionary overthrow of those regimes by the working class. No reformists espouse that call. For the IMG however the issue can be boiled down to questions of democracy? how many parties under socialism, and organisation?hence the IMG's proposal that what holds back Carrillo ultimately is this fear of upsetting the internal structure of the PCE.

The USFI and the IMG have concentrated on lancing at these two supposed Achilles heels of Euro-Communism. The IMG and USFI pose an abstract vision. of socialist society as an alternative to the Stalinist States. Imprecor 7th July 1977 contains a 13 page resolution of the USFI on "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (p3 - 16). The whole purpose of this article is not with Stalinism in international disarray, to argue the Trotskyist programme against the Stalinist parties. It is to explain that more than one party would exist in a healthy socialist society, that it is necessary to state this in order to win the masses' confidence in socialist politics. The necessity to organise the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class against the expropriated classes is seen, in passing, as a 'possible' exception to the flourishing of multi-party democracy .

"In the process of establishing and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, civil war or international military interventions have been and can be unleashed by the bourgeoisie (sic). Under conditions of civil war restrictions on the political activities of the bourgeoisie may well be called but these arguments as to democracy are posed within a particular scenario by the USFI and IMG. There is a period of 'democratisation' of revivification of Marxist politics which the Euro-Communists, and reforming Stalinists in the East, can unleash whatever their intentions. The IMG in Socialist Challenge No 2 admonish them thus "socialists attempting to intervene in the run-up to the Belgrade Conference must not be tempted into merely denouncing imperialist hypocrisies but must get our own house in order." And by 'our house?' the IMG mean the Stalinist regimes and to get them 'in order' the IMG propose the right of political parties, the right to strike and the separation of party and state. Nowhere do they pose the need for independent workers organisation to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy, in fact it becomes clear that they think that the Stalinist bureaucrats, Carrillo in the West, Dubcek in the East, clearly can play a significant role in the process towards getting 'our' house in order.

"Any workers state which operated on these principles (as even the limited and embryonic (sic) example of Dubcek's Czechoslovakia demonstrates) would have an extremely powerful impact on the working masses of Capitalist Europe and America and would bring the possibilities of socialist revolutions in the West much closer to being realised". (ibid)

Keeping silent on the Trotskyist programme in favour of pushing the Euro-Communists further towards 'democracy' and away from Stalinism it comes as no surprise that the IMG related to the debates inside the CPGB fundamentally at the level of organisational norms not political programme. The IMG became outraged defenders of the old-fashioned

Stalinists, blocked and suppressed as they were by the Euro-Communist majority. Charlie Doyle, a CP member who objected to the new draft and more especially to criticisms of the USSR which he claimed was in the 'front line' of the world forces fighting imperialism, had his platform printed and his speech reported with no substantive political criticism.

And why did the IMG do so? In order to debate and counterpose a Trotskyist position? No.

"But because we think a vital practical principle of Leninism is involved in the banning of this pamphlet" (Socialist Challenge No. 1)

The IMG do not understand that the organisational violations of Leninism perpetrated by the Stalinists flow from their political programme, that it is the politics of the Stalinists that we fight and the organisational methods that follow from them. Instead Dodie Wepler in the Socialist Challenge talked as if it were possible for an organisation committed to it Stalinist programme to healthily debate the politics of oppositions, such as that of French, and as if Trotskyists should see as their prime orientation demanding that Stalinists become internally democratic, "Ultimately his (French's) supporters will suffer the same fate as all those CP militants who are beginning to question the line of the EC under the impact of the rise of world revolutionary developments." (Socialist Challenge No. 2)

Now, whilst revolutionaries support democratic demands in the Stalinist States, the Trotskyist programme is not distinguished by this position -liberal bourgeois and social democrats do likewise. Revolutionaries also support 'democratic rights' within the bureaucratic Stalinist parties\_ Neither of these positions are the bedrock of our programme however. Even to abstractly counterpose Soviets and a plurality of parties does not pass beyond a centrist position. For us Soviets are first organs of struggle before they can be organs of working class government. The struggle that lies ahead in the Soviet Union is a revolutionary one against the bureaucracy for the smashing of the bureaucratic military machine, for workers control and then workers management in the factories. Splits in the bureaucracy as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia will doubtless occur .opening up the road to working class struggle. But revolutionaries in Eastern Europe will at their peril act as left advisers to the Nagy's or Dubceks. presenting their programme as a more radical 'process of democratisation'. Likewise to intervene in the crisis of Western Stalinism as mere advocates of more 'inner party democracy' than the Carillos, Marchais or Maclellans are at present willing to grant, as the periodicals of the USFI are doing, is to locate oneself in the baggage train of Euro-Communism, not in the vanguard of World Trotskyism.

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