



APDUSA VIEWS

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**IN DEFENCE OF
SOCIALISM!**

**AGAINST
STALINISM!**

INTRODUCTION

In its fight to the death with socialism, the bourgeoisie have never had it so good. Like ninepins, the ruling classes of the so-called democracies of Eastern Europe have toppled one by one. In the name of democracy, the people of East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania overthrew their governments. They had become sick and tired of the repression, corruption and dictatorial practices of those governments. While most of the people clearly knew what they did NOT want, they had little idea of the social system they wanted to install in place of the one they had overthrown. Because of a lack of a political programme governing their activities, the leadership and initiative of the uprising fell in the hands of the liberals who are seeking to take these countries along the capitalist road. (Rumania and Bulgaria appear to be the exceptions). With sweet-sounding seductive promises of an affluent life supposedly existing in the West, the youth were the first casualties. They were most vociferous and active opponents of the regimes. They were straining at the leash to base their life style on the decadent culture of the West. Their hearts' desire is to model themselves on their counterparts there - music, hairstyles, clothes, habits and so on. As far as the older people went, they had an abhorrence for a system which they were led to believe was socialism. For them, there could be nothing worse.

STALINISTS BESMIRCH SOCIALISM

There can be no denying that socialism as a way of life, as an economic system and as a form of government has run into deep trouble. There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs. The most glaring one is the role of Stalinism. It is this aspect that we will focus on in this issue of "Apdusa Views".

"Grave digger of the Revolution", is how Trotsky once described Joseph Stalin. And grave-digger, indeed, he did become. Digging the grave of the revolution meant the destruction of Bolshevism as a way of life and as a guide to activity in the establishment of socialism.

In practice the destruction of Bolshevism meant, inter alia, the following:

1. The wholesale murder of the members of the Bolshevik Party, including its top leadership.
2. The murder on so large a scale meant the liquidation of the leading exponents and defenders of Marxism-Leninism and therefore an all out onslaught on Marxism-Leninism.
3. The falsification of history on an unprecedented scale ensured that the truth lay buried "under a mountain of dead dogs".
4. The savage repression of any opposition to Stalin and Stalinism; the penalty for opposition, real, imaginary or trumped up was death. The firing squad was the merciful way. The mercy lay in the swiftness of death.
5. A frontal attack on egalitarianism, i.e. the movement towards equality in income, in the standard of living, quality of life, etc. Stalinism gave its

official blessing to the creation of a highly stratified society, with the upper rungs enjoying a life of luxury second to none in the world.

6. Internationalism, the hallmark of Marxism-Leninism, was sacrificed at the altar of a new religion called "Socialism in One Country".

7. Real humanism, the quintessence of modern socialism, was brutally violated in a sea of blood. Under Stalinism, human life came to count for nothing. Snuffing out a human life was committed with more casualness than flicking away a burnt-out matchstick.

Volumes can be written on the terrible crimes of Stalinism. All those crimes have snowballed into one gigantic crime, namely, it sullied the noble cause of socialism in the eyes of millions of workers in America and Europe. What can be more criminal than to engage in activities which have made the workers recoil in horror from socialism - a system designed solely for the benefit of the workers?

The nett result of the effect of Stalinism is that it discredited socialism far more effectively than the awesome power of the propaganda machine of international capitalism.

The events in Eastern Europe were essentially a reaction against Stalinism which the people were told and were led to believe was socialism. For decades the people suffered cruel repression and had to contend with shameless double standards practiced by their rulers.

While the latter tirelessly extolled the virtues of austere and simple living for the people, they themselves wallowed in the most obscene and degenerate forms of luxury.

THE ROLE OF THE S.A. COMMUNIST PARTY (CPSA OR SACP)

From 1950 until February 1990, the SACP enjoyed a certain immunity from criticism. We believe that it would have been wrong for us to have criticised a banned organisation or person for the reason that that entity would not be allowed to defend itself. That immunity has now come to an end!

Being banned and therefore being unable to function openly saved the SACP from close and critical scrutiny of its activities. Indeed, the very lack of information about its activities surrounded it with an aura of mystery. Myths soon developed about its prowess and achievements. Thus it became a legend. Persons who knew nothing or very little about the history of the SACP were quite prepared to risk arrest and imprisonment by flying the flag or banner of that organisation. The unbanning of that organisation now gives us the opportunity to openly discuss its history and role. In doing so we will ensure that the myths and legends are left behind.

The SACP has been described as the most servile Stalinist party in the world. And not without cause. Throughout its existence of almost 70 years, it has not once publicly criticised the Soviet Union on its own accord. Its criticism of the Soviet Union last year was made only after Gorbachev made his own criticism. The SACP merely echoed that criticism.

All through the long night of Stalin's terror, there was no protest against or condemnation of the monstrous crimes committed against Bolshevism. No helping hand was extended, even symbolically, to the close associates of Lenin and other

members of the Bolshevik Party who were arrested and placed in the clutches of a killing machine which first thoroughly humiliated the victim by stripping him of any vestige of dignity and then casting him to his executioners. Not only did the SACP defend and justify these heinous crimes, it actively joined the campaign of calumny and vilification against innocent victims who were either dead or totally incapable of defending themselves. The SACP also zealously took part in the international Stalinist campaign of spreading lies and falsifying history.

One would have thought that after all these decades and after repeated disclosures about Stalinism, the local Stalinists would have learnt something. But no! Let us illustrate.

In the "Learning Nation", a supplement of the "New Nation" of the 25-31 May 1990, Brian Bunting, Editor of the "African Communist" took to task a contributor who dealt with the opposition to Stalinism. The contributor referred to Lenin's role in this opposition just prior to his death. Lenin at that time did not regard Stalin as a comrade. (In his Testament, Lenin directed that Stalin be removed as General Secretary). That observation caused Brian Bunting's hackles to rise. But the time had passed when he could simply rise to Stalin's defence. The fact was incontrovertible. So he gives vent to his fury by turning on Trotsky:

"But he (the abovementioned contributor) does not quote Lenin's criticism of Trotsky as an excessively self-assured politician who **always vacillated and cheated**" (our emphasis).

Brian Bunting leaves the reader in no doubt that he was referring to Lenin's judgement of Trotsky at about the same time that he broke comradesly relations with Stalin, i.e. just prior to Lenin's death. What was Lenin's last known and recorded judgement on Trotsky? In his Testament, Lenin had the following to say about Trotsky:

"He (Trotsky) is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC (Central Committee), but has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work".

Search as much as you want to, but you will not find the words "cheat" or "vacillate" or anything resembling these two words in spelling or in meaning in Lenin's Testament or in any of his post-revolution writings where he refers to Trotsky. So where does Brian Bunting get those words from? He got them from the same source where he got all his Stalinist lies, smears and denigration. That source is his own political dishonesty and his undying loyalty to Stalinism.

Yet Brian Bunting is the Editor of the "African Communist", the official organ of the SACP. With such a person chosen as Editor, we can safely say that the SACP has not changed its Stalinist spots, notwithstanding pious claims of a new look and a change in ethics and morality.

The SACP was the only organisation in South Africa which had the opportunity to learn first hand what was going on in the Soviet Union and in the East European countries. It had the monopoly of sending persons from South Africa to those countries. Such persons went in numbers to conferences, for study, political training, festivals, etc. Everything was provided - air tickets, hotel or hostel accommodation and the rest of the works. Quite clearly, those who went were screened about their loyalty to Stalin, Stalinism and later to the Soviet Union.

For those who were critical of Stalinism or the Soviet Union, it would have been the height of folly for them to have gone there. Let us hasten to add that servile loyalty was no guarantee of a safe return home. This, Lazar Bach would have learnt sadly before the bullets from Stalin's firing squad tore into his body. Bach was a member of the Politburo of the CPSA. He was summoned to Moscow to resolve a dispute. He never returned.

As stated above, the members of the SACP had the opportunity to observe and report the truth as to what was happening in these countries. Instead of the truth, we got accounts which read like brochures from the Tourist Bureaux of those countries. They lied about what was happening and slavishly dished out the Stalinist line of the day¹. How does the SACP explain its actions and attitudes? How could they in the name of Leninism assist, justify and defend the destruction of Bolshevism and the butchery of the leaders and the members of the Bolshevik Party?

We believe that the SACP is obliged to make a full public confession of all its pro-Stalinist activities and its defence of Stalin and Stalinism.

What is totally unacceptable is the kind of response given by Ray Alexander, the doyen of the local Stalinists, to the "Labour Bulletin" of March 1990:

"When the new situation in Eastern Europe broke out, it was a great shock to me personally. . . I defended the Soviet Union at all times, and Eastern Europe. And when I came out in exile I went to Czechoslovakia, the GDR, the Soviet Union, Hungary Romania and to Bulgaria. I haven't been to Yugoslavia.² Therefore when the news broke, it made me very unhappy. I felt in a way I was bluffed. . . I had not seen what other people had seen.³ Because I was put in a posh hotel. I was going from one meeting to another. I went to factories but I have never been in the home of people, except in Hungary. . . ,"

We have not come across anything so feeble, so unconvincing and so far removed from the truth. What quantity of perceptiveness is required to conclude whether there is a democracy or not; whether people are free to debate and discuss and to dissent?

Her responses have an all too familiar ring. It was the kind of response the German people gave when they were asked why they allowed Nazism to perpetrate genocide in the name of the German people. The typical response was: "We did not know that it was happening"

OUR POSITION ON SOCIALISM

Our position on socialism is set out in Resolution Number One passed at the New Unity Movement Conference held in December 1989:

"Socialism is the most potent and progressive force of the 20th Century and will continue being such for many centuries to come. Socialism alone can resolve the contradictions spawned by capitalism and imperialism".

¹ That must have been quite a feat bearing in mind the frequent twists and turns of Stalinist policy and tactics

² The only non-Stalinist socialist country in Eastern Europe.

3. The ugly but true side of Stalinist tyranny

A number of people who have been and still are ardent supporters of socialism are despondent over the events in Eastern Europe. They find the gloating of the bourgeoisie about the "failure of socialism" unbearable. More so, when echoed by the likes of Pik Botha and his latest boss. These supporters find it difficult to countenance the break-up of what was once the "mighty" socialist camp.

It is the view of the Unity Movement that any attempt to restore capitalism is a reactionary step and therefore must be condemned. But there is no need to be despondent. What has happened has happened. It must be realized that history cannot be cheated and the transgressor cannot expect to get away with it. There were no social revolutions in those countries. There were puppet regimes set-up there by Stalin through the use of the Red Army as the latter swept westward to Germany. The regimes did not enjoy popular support. The people did not identify with the regimes not only because they did not elect them but also because they felt the lash of the whip of the tyrannies which governed them.

Why should we mourn the Honeckers and the Ceausescus and their rotten regimes? It is better that they be swept away from the stage as stinking garbage. Now at least they cannot foul the socialist nest. Committed socialists will have the field for themselves. Initially, their work is going to be very difficult. But then the difficult road has never deterred the committed socialist.

These socialists will be at pains to explain to the people that there is nothing in common between socialism and Stalinism, just as there is nothing in common between a healthy cell in a human body and a cancerous cell. They will explain to the people the causes of Stalinism and the great harm it did to socialism. They will take care in explaining the full meaning of socialism in all its many facets:

- The abolition of exploitation of human beings by human beings;
- The productive forces of society be employed for USE and not for PROFIT;
- The wealth produced must be for the benefit of society as a whole and not for a minority section;
- The inculcation of deep humanism in all members of society;
- The development of mind and body to the fullest;
- The practice of SHARING and combatting selfishness;
- The joy in comradeship and the satisfaction experienced in working for society as a whole;
- Simplicity in lifestyle;
- The rejection of consumerism and the insane pursuit of material objects for the sake of possessing them rather for their use;⁴

⁴ . Hans Thulin, the Swedish millionaire paid R27,82 million for a 1962 Ferrari. Leonid Breznev, the Soviet leader after Kruschev, had a passion for luxury cars. He owned about 12 of them.

- Hard work, creative contribution to society and an unceasing search for truth and beauty;
- The establishment of an international brotherhood and sisterhood of people which will put an end to territorial, national and class wars and to thereby prove the truth of the famous dictum that the proletariat has no fatherland.

These are some of the positive aspects of socialism which will need to be explained carefully and patiently.

We can see no reason why in the long run the working people of the world who constitute the vast majority of the world's population, will not accept socialism.

CONCLUSION

The bourgeoisie all over the world are whooping with joy at what they call the "demise of socialism". They are going all out promoting the god called Free Market.

We leave our readers with the following thoughts which are by no means original but which are no less valid because of that.

1. The law of change and motion is of universal application. All things, animate or inanimate, are liable to change. Everything is dynamic, nothing is static. Therefore capitalism is not and cannot be eternal. It must die out and from its ashes a new socio-economic system must arise. That system, which is designed to resolve the major contradictions of capitalism, is socialism.

2. Apart from the contradictions inherent in capitalism (e.g. Wealth is produced by many hands yet the lion's share of that wealth goes to a few individuals), it's origin, its development and growth have been and remain cruel, barbaric and essentially inhuman. The workers' infatuation with capitalism must of necessity be brief and they shall come to regard the system as their mortal enemy.

3. The founders and propounders of modern socialism were motivated by a single all-consuming reason for their activities. That reason was the attainment of maximum happiness, both creative and conscious, for the largest number of people.

Not even the most shameless propagandist can make a similar claim on behalf of capitalism!

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