

# Dictatorship over the Proletariat: Portrait of a Fascist<sup>1</sup> Ruling Class

“There is more that binds us to Bolshevism than separates us from it. . . . I have always made allowance for this circumstance, and given orders that former Communists are to be admitted to the Party at once. . . . The trade-union boss will never make a national Socialist, the Communist always will. Adolph Hitler etc.

## I

**T**O characterize the two greatest world powers:

1. Soviet Russia is the extremest plutocracy in history.

The most savage and relentless enemy of all workmen all over the globe is Russia's rich ruling class. The Soviet is the highest fulfilment of the selfish ideals of unlimited monopoly capitalism.

2. America is history's extremest example of the freedom and well-being of the workingman and his trade-unions, the widest spread ever achieved of free consumer choice and high living standards among the large majority of the population. America is the highest fulfilment of the honorable ideals of socialism (though achieved—significantly—not by socialist but by a democratic capitalism).

American trade-unions are rendering a useful service to freedom in their campaign of telling European trade-unions the truth about Soviet working conditions. As an additional service, it is suggested that American unions distribute translations, without comment, of Russia's incredibly cruel labor laws, with her Simon Legree penalties for petty infractions. “The dictatorship of the proletariat” is the dictatorship over the proletariat.

To understand the Stalinist mind, Westerners must understand not only its innate affinity for fascism (the Hitler-Stalin pact, the present use of Nazis in Hungary and Rumania, the tacit pact with Peron) but also its hate of the workingman. Its hate is logically justified: are not the workers of the West always trying to get higher living standards—that is, to accom-

<sup>1</sup> I use “fascist” to mean a one-party totalitarian ruling class, militarized and nationalistic, ruling its slaves by terror and circuses. The term “Stalinist fascist” is used here simply because it is accurate, corresponds to the facts. But use of it should not lend aid and comfort to the non-Stalinist or “true” Bolsheviks, those who prefer Lenin or Trotsky. Although Lenin and Trotsky were more Marxist and internationalist (less fascist in that sense) than the Stalinist bureaucracy, yet they were every whit as terroristic and despotic toward the rest of the country, including the workers, as Stalin or any frankly fascist regime. All were terrorists who believed in bad means to bad ends; down with all of them!

modate themselves in the existing capitalist system—when they should instead aim at causing depression and misery so as to cause revolution? Are not American workers, in particular, treacherously indifferent to the drive for funds and circulation of the martyred *Daily Worker*?—leaving it to the humiliation of being financed by mere millionaires? Millionaires are the sole class of unemployed in America which produces communists. (Is this explained less by Marx than by Freud?)

The difference in power and in living standards between the Soviet ruling class and its workers<sup>1</sup> makes the difference between America's "classes" negligible in contrast. On October 2, 1940, fees for higher education were imposed (instead of the free education of Lenin's day and of American public colleges). This encourages class differences to become permanent, owing to the increased educational opportunities of the rich in Soviet Russia. Since 1940, Soviet youth has, in effect, been divided into two groups:

1. Those with rich parents, the families of the bureaucratic and party hierarchy. These youths go on to the universities and can end up as high officials.

2. Those whose parents cannot pay for higher education. By a special mobilization-of-youth law, these are sent to learn various trades wherever the state decrees.

Except for those who earn special university scholarships, group two tends to produce the hereditary lackeys and employees of group one, for the class gap in Soviet power and living standards is so much greater than the admitted gap in America.

When a capitalist employer pays his workers too little or himself too much, he can often be halted by strikes, pickets, unions, and a critical public opinion. But what is there to halt or even faintly restrain the enslavement of the workers by the employer when the employer is also the "state" and the secret police and the judicial system and when no opposition movement may even be dreamt of?

In no other country, can the "capitalist employer" (in this case the "state", meaning the Soviet ruling class) tie the workers to their jobs like medieval serfs. Workers need passports and special permission to move even from town to town. They are told what jobs to work at. Of course, all strikes against the employer are forbidden as treason.

1. On the misery of the Soviet working class, and on the higher living standards of the tsarist period and of the early NEP era, see Manya Gordon, *Workers Before and After Lenin* (1941). Also Harry Schwartz, *Russia's Soviet Economy* (1950); M. Yvon, *What Has Become of the Russian Revolution?* (1937); Freda Utley, *The Dream We Lost* (1940).

American trade-unions rightly point out that a sales tax falls hardest on the working class. The Soviet ruling class raises over half of its state budget by a sales tax on the masses. It then pays itself proportionately far higher salaries (in effect "profits", with plenty of what Marx called "surplus value") than the average employer in the West. Refugees to the West, whether simple workers or high Communist officials, join in expressing their dismay at the contrast in Russia between the the working-class misery and the feudal privileges of the new slave-owner class in their *dachas*.

Sixty per cent of the Soviet national budget has usually come from the sales tax (or turnover tax).<sup>1</sup> It falls heavily on all significant consumer goods, including the indispensable food items. It does not fall on capital goods (favored over consumer goods). Thereby it becomes not only a tax but a ruthless weapon. The weapon achieves three purposes:

1. It prevents the Russian consumer—the worker and peasant—from ever rising beyond his near-starvation level.

2. It diverts national income from consumer goods (high standards of living) to capital goods (machinery and high armament production).

3. It protects the power and class distinctions of the new feudal ruling class. As follows.

By putting the main tax on the masses (consumer goods), the sales tax makes it possible to keep the income tax very low indeed. And the income tax is what concerns employers in all countries, meaning the high Communists and bureaucrats in in the case of statist Russia. In recent years, Soviet income of over 1,000 rubles monthly has been receiving a flat 13 per cent tax, instead of a progressively rising tax as in capitalist America. This means that technicians, industrial directors, and officials in "socialist" Russia—that is, the ruling class—pay a much tinier income tax than they do in capitalist America. In America a millionaire would create a national scandal if he could hire fiendishly clever lawyers to outwit our progressive income tax and get off with paying a mere 13 per cent.

American consumers—the working population—can ulti-

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<sup>1</sup> H. Schwartz, *Russia's Soviet Economy*, pp. 414-416:

"It is essentially a differentiated sales tax imposed heavily . . . upon commodities at the time of fabrication and upon government purchases at low requisition prices of peasant obligatory deliveries. The tax must be included in the price of the commodity thereafter, so that is *passed on fully to the consumer* . . . Soviet budgetary statistics list it as revenue from socialized production, though ultimately it is paid in full by consumers and is clearly a sales tax. . . . The trend over the past two decades has been toward freeing non-consumer goods from the tax. . . . Food items and consumer goods were the sources of almost 90% of all turnover tax receipts in 1939."



abroad (the South Koreans, "American imperialism," "Wall Street fascism"). And those old pie-in-the-sky promises ("the state will wither away"), though threadbare by now, can always be hauled out just once more for the yokels back in Uzbekistan.

No wonder a Soviet peasant, on being asked if his village contained many Communists, replied: "Good heaven, no. We are all *poor* here."

The essentially Nazi mentality of the Soviet slave-owner class is no longer in doubt among the terrorized masses of Occupied Europe. Nor was it in doubt among the Russian D.P.'s and P. W.'s in 1945 who slit their own throats with razor blades when American officers tried to force them to return to Russia, in one of America's most shocking violations of human rights. But it is still in doubt among the duped workers of Unoccupied Europe and the fellow-traveler "liberals" of France and Italy. For them, the Communist Fuehrers must keep up the moldy old Potemkin-Village facade and —between yawns—the old "democratic" battle cries.

Marxism, not religion, is "the opiate of the people." Under its infallible Kremlin pontiff, the Marxist church provides the other worldly "pie in the sky" to distract the opiated people from changing the sorrows and realities of Russia's "this world."

This double-speak and double-think has interesting psychiatric results on its own manipulators inside Russia. What makes the Communist hate and contempt for the working class almost frenzied in its slave-driving brutality, is the fact that the hate can never be expressed verbally. It must be suppressed<sup>1</sup> and sublimated. It must remain on the mere reality level of Soviet practice instead of on that grander slogan level of Marxist theory. The attitude of many Western "progressives" toward this discrepancy between the actual and the theoretical position of the enslaved Soviet workers; is summed up by a witty old Russian proverb:

If it is written on the cage, "this is a lion," but your eyes see an ass in the cage, do not trust—your eyes.

The Soviet hate and distrust of its workers is reflected in its stricter-than-tsarist penal laws. You can read for yourself in the official Soviet law code the needlessly cruel and excessive penalties for minor infractions (often ignored in America) like dawdling during the lunch hour or a tardiness of 20 minutes.

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<sup>1</sup> Suppressed by the new feudal barons even from themselves. They are not mere charlatans and by no means deliberate hypocrites. They are double-think, newspeak schizoids.

If you run through the various labor-discipline decrees from 1938 on, you will note the steadily increasing severity towards "a worker or employee who is late in coming back from dinner or idles during working hours."

Two Soviet decrees of 1940, still valid, read: "Workers and employees who arbitrarily leave state, co-operative, and social enterprises and institutions shall be prosecuted, and on the sentence of a People's Court shall be subjected to imprisonment of two to four month's duration . . . . We order: workers and employees who without valid reasons are more than 20 minutes late after the dinner interval or leave work without permission earlier than 20 minutes before the dinner interval or before the end of the working day, shall be prosecuted as for absence without permission." For this the penalty is set as "corrective labor" (euphemism for forced slave labor) of "up to six months" plus "a cut in wages of up to 25 per cent!" Six months for 20 minutes!—one would like to hear a comment on this from all those Western fellow-travelers whose heart professionally and almost haemophilically "bleeds for the working class."

Even more severe than these decrees of 1940, are some of those listed in the 1947 Soviet publication, *Legislation Concerning Labor*, providing sentences of up to eight years in "corrective labor camps" for workers who endeavor to quit their jobs!

In connection with sentencing workers to "corrective labor," there is one key Soviet law that makes all other laws unnecessary. It crushes all concepts whatever of personal rights and fair trial. It makes all American "ordeals by slander" utterly trivial in contrast, for it facilitates incomparably wilder accusations and incomparably sterner punishments. It puts the entire Soviet populace legally at the mercy and whim of its slave owners, thereby legalizing lawlessness. It enables the slave owners to sentence to forced labor (in practice, usually death from cold and hunger) anybody whom they *admit* is innocent of any "specific crime" but whom they may vaguely suspect, or pretend to suspect, of being "socially dangerous." A decree of the Central Executive Committee of 1934 gives the secret police "the right to apply against people who are regarded as socially dangerous" (even when no crime is committed) "confinement in corrective labor camps for a period of up to five years."

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1 The labor-discipline quotations in this and the preceding paragraph occur in the following official Soviet sources: *Spravochnik P. Zakonodatelstvu Dlya Sudjebno-Prokurorskich Rabotnikov*, volume 1, 1949 edition, pp. 431, 503; *Trudovoye Zakonodatelstvo S.S.R.*, 1941, p. 236.

Article 22 of the basic criminal code allows the broadest leeway to punishment where there is admittedly no crime:

Punishment in the form of exile (Siberia, etc.) can be applied by a sentence of the state prosecutor against persons recognized as being socially dangerous, without any criminal proceedings being taken against these persons on charges of committing a specific crime or of a specific offence and also, even in those cases where these persons are *acquitted* by a court of the accusation of committing a specific crime<sup>1</sup>.

Under so loose a law, there is not one single Soviet citizen who is safe—even if acquitted and proved innocent—from the accusations of the inquisitors and, consequently, not one worker who can dare defy his master. Definition of the Communist legal code: the McCarthyite's paradise.

Western capitalism at its nastiest never degraded any proletariat so ruthlessly into beasts of burden. You can hear from the Soviet officials themselves why they prefer to keep the Russian proletariat at starvation level *even when* the economy would permit food increases. Aside from the natural desire of any ruling class to widen class lines, there is another reason for keeping Russian workers at near-starvation on principle. After being in Russia, a Communist deputy of the German Politburo has testified:

A high Soviet officer confessed to me, "We are starving people into Communism. Not only because we are building more and more canning factories and hoarding food for use in case of war. No, only hungry people work as hard as our gigantic efforts require. Only someone who suffers is prepared to work like a slave for something better, and, if necessary, to die." Hunger is a part of the system; I have seen a thousand times how prisoners worked to the point of exhaustion to earn an additional seven ounces of bread of the worst quality. Only people who never get quite enough to eat, allow themselves to be ruled with the whip; at the same time they believe the doctrine promising them salvation, and are prepared to fight for it. Well-fed humans are dangerous to the Soviet system<sup>2</sup>.

According to the official Soviet Law Code, no Soviet worker is allowed to negotiate for higher wages, although happily he has the right, if in the coal industry, to demand "steam baths." The Spanish Communist leader Enrique Castro Delgado, (better known under his famous pseudonym, Luis Garcia), represented the Spanish Communist party in Moscow in the Comintern during the war and was particularly interested in the condition of Soviet workers. Indeed his sympathy for the hardships of

1 *Italics mine, Stalin's Slave Camps* (Boston; Beacon Press, 1952) p.p. 10, 14, 15.

2 *Partisan Review*, New York, January-February, 1952, p. 47.

workers under capitalism had made him an ardent communist in the first place. During six years in the "workers' paradise," he visited any number of Soviet industrial plants and familiarized himself with working conditions. Here is his report in his recently-published book, *I Have Lost Faith in Moscow* (Paris, 1950):

If I had to choose between the gallows and work in a Soviet plant, I would unhesitatingly choose the former. A few hours of anxiety and an instant of pain are preferable to months and years of frightful agony: fourteen hours of work each day, meals consisting of a plate of warm water with a few leaves of cabbage, a production tempo that makes Ford and Citroen seem like splendid philanthropists; a ten-ruble daily wage, of which 30 per cent is withheld on various pretexts; constant surveillance by the party, the trade union and the NKVD; for billets, a hovel that an animal would scorn; the sight of one's fellow-workers' agony without the right to protest, to fight or to escape; the obligation to repeat constantly amid one's misery, "I am a citizen of a land of happiness."

No! The life of a worker is tolerable anywhere but in the "land of socialism." To be a worker here means hell.

Marx's prophecies about the future of capitalism have been almost 100 per cent wrong. He prophesied increasing rigidity, poverty, and misery, with the rich getting richer, the poor poorer, class lines widening, and democracy being replaced by class dictatorship. On the contrary, Western capitalism has adjusted itself with remarkable flexibility. Far from abolishing democracy, it has extended democracy, the franchise, trade unions, living standards, and civil liberties beyond anything dreamt of by Marx.

Capitalism has benefited from democracy's capacity for peaceful self-correction, a capacity ignored by Marx. This capacity has resulted in democracy's political reforms of capitalism's economic abuses. In the West, capitalism is a tool of democracy instead of vice versa; this is why both have survived and thrived. Marx's and Lenin's prophecies that capitalist "surplus value" would lead to an even more aggressive form of "imperialism," are today likewise erroneous. While the Western nations have freed half a billion colonial peoples since World War II, it is Soviet imperialism that has conquered a half billion of its neighbors and turned them into exploited colonials.

Because history has refuted the Marxist "surplus value" theories of capitalist poverty and doom, most capitalist economists assume these theories are valueless today. On the contrary, the Marxist theories of widening class lines and economic imperialism work beautifully today when applied to—Soviet

Russia. Marx can still be valuable. He can even be an accurate prophet after all. But you must apply his prophecies not to the increasingly democratic capitalist West but to the increasingly undemocratic ruling class of the country that claims to worship him. Here is how we may apply to Soviet Russia the Marxist theories of "surplus value," excess profits, class lines, "business cycle," recurring "capitalist crisis," and the resultant imperialism and war. The application is such a complete reversal of the usual picture held by anticapitalist Western liberals, that it merits a long quotation<sup>1</sup>:

The Kremlin houses neither mere adventurers, nor men propelled by passionate devotion to the idea of "world revolution" or "world Communism." On the contrary: they are prisoners of basic maladjustments in their own economic system, which drives them inexorably to seek an escape in external conquest. . . .

The underlying reason for the periodic crises of the Soviet system is the disproportionate rise of non-productive expenditures. The totalitarian state is a huge parasitic body. Besides the ordinary administration, there are swollen armies of supervisors to supervise the bureaucracy, and a large military machine with its own personnel. These are the new high-income groups whose economic demands are steadily rising—to leave them unsatisfied would be to undermine the classes that form the social foundations of the entire system. The "take" of this top strata of the state is quite apart from what are normally considered the "fixed costs" of an economy (administration, accounting, etc.) the tribute paid by all producers to the holders of political power far exceeds the practices of a private, capitalistic order, and only an authoritarian ruling group—backed to the hilt by a secret police—is able to extract it.

A few figures may be quoted to throw some light on the inflated size of these unproductive overhead costs. In 1937 the number of "bookkeepers, accountants, etc." was 1,617,000 in addition to 822,000 "economists, statisticians." In the United States in 1940 only 447,000 persons were employed as "bookkeepers, accountants, cashiers, ticket agents, etc." Thus the American economy required one "bookkeeper" for each 54 workers, the Russian one for each 20 workers. In all branches of the economy, inflated bureaucratic staffs have come into existence. In 1940 about 20 percent of all kolkhoz (collective farm) members were engaged in administrative or office work.

*The wage differentials that these officials enjoy are far higher than in capitalistic countries.* The salaries of chief engineers, directors, and top administrative personnel are often one hundred times greater than the average worker's wage. In the Soviet Army the ratio of a private's pay to a colonel's is 1:240, against 1:5 in the American Army.

Yet at the same time that these new "fixed costs" are far greater in any capitalist country, the level of productivity in Russia is much lower; a vicious circle begins to squeeze the regime like a vise. The

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<sup>1</sup> From the economist Dr. Guenter Reimann, "The Economic Crisis Behind Soviet Expansion: Does Russia's 'Business Cycle' Compel Foreign Aggression?," in *Commentary*, September, 1948. Italics mine.

state must seek to bolster the economic system by ever more stringent controls or "planning," but, in turn, centralized controls, national monopolies, and the upkeep of a secret police, result in tremendous economic costs. The more the state seeks to increase its share in the national wealth, the more it contributes to waste and unproductive expenditures: that is the "business cycle" of Soviet economy. . . .

To flee the permanent economic crisis that looms before it, the Soviet economy must seek to transfer its deficits to the shoulders of satellite countries. That is the dynamic behind Soviet expansion.

It is not a "socialistic" dynamic, or even a "collectivist" one. It is, in the old-fashioned sense of the term, a "*class*" *dynamic*—an expedition for plunder on the part of a ruling class whose very existence throttles the workings of its own economic system. The main purpose of the Soviet occupation of the countries of Eastern Europe was not to hasten the advent of world socialism; all policies of reconstruction and reorganization in Poland, Rumania, Hungary, etc., have been subordinated to the needs of the Russian government—needs filled by the dismantling and transfer of factories, highly advantageous and one-sided trade treaties, and the like. . . . New transfusions become ever more necessary, and they are sought for, grimly, at the point of a bayonet.

Using the Marxist phraseology, it is the "contradictions" of the Soviet statist economy that lead irresistibly to imperialist expansion—and possibly war.

Nevertheless, America still has a real chance of preventing this almost inevitable war—provided that this time not Karl Marx but our democratized capitalism tells the Soviet proletariat:

Unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains!