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## Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist International March 1919

### REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

ON THE OCCASION OF THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING (1919-2019)

by RAY LIGHT

“Departing from us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to remain faithful to the principles of the Communist International. We vow to you, comrade Lenin, that we shall not spare our lives to strengthen and extend the union of the working people of the whole world—the Communist International!”

— Joseph Stalin, (Stalin, *Works*, Vol.6, p. 52)

“... the pressure of the capitalist states on our state is enormous, ... the people handling our foreign policy do not always succeed in resisting this pressure, the danger of complications often gives rise to the temptation to take the path of least resistance, the path of nationalism ... the path of least resistance and of nationalism in foreign policy is the path of the isolation and decay of the first country to be victorious.”

— Joseph Stalin, (Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, pages 170-171)

“One need not destroy one’s enemy. One need only destroy his willingness to engage.”

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

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#### I. FROM THE FORMATION OF THE COMINTERN AND THE VICTORY OF THE OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA TO THE COMINTERN’S 7TH CONGRESS

One hundred years ago the first world conference of communist parties and social-democratic organizations was held in the still newly liberated land of Soviet Russia, in the midst of a Civil War and the imperialist intervention of a dozen foreign powers. It began with Lenin’s opening speech on March 2, 1919. In the course of the next four days a proposal was put forth and implemented to transform the conference into a constitutive congress of the Communist International. Accordingly, thirty-five parties and organizations unanimously voted to establish the Third International, with the name of the Communist International (Comintern). On March 6, 1919, the constituent assembly of the Communist International concluded its work. The Comintern *organization* was born.

(contd. on p. 2)

See Cindy Sheehan’s “**U.S. Hands Off Venezuela**” column on page 17

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In our article on the “October Revolution and the Communist International,” we noted that, “On August 4, 1914 as the First World War broke out, both the German and French social-democratic deputies voted for war credits for ‘their’ respective bourgeois governments. From that day onward, whatever proletarian internationalism had previously existed among the Parties of the Second International was ripped asunder.” (*Ray O’ Light Newsletter #105*, November-December 2017)

Less than four months later, in the Bolshevik party organ, Lenin declared: “At this time of supreme and historic importance, most of the leaders of the present Socialist International, the Second (1889-1914) are trying to substitute nationalism for socialism ... [they] committed an act of treachery against socialism by voting for war credits, ... by justifying and defending the war, by joining the bourgeois governments of the belligerent countries ... the collapse of the Second International is the collapse of opportunism ... The aims of socialism at the present time cannot be fulfilled and real internationalist unity of the workers cannot be achieved, without a decisive break with opportunism, and without explaining its inevitable fiasco to the masses ... The proletarian International has not gone under and will not go under. Notwithstanding all obstacles, the masses of the workers will create a new International.” (*Sotzial Demokrat #33*, 11-1-1914)



Accordingly, Lenin led “a decisive break with opportunism” on a global basis during the years of the First World War. Step by step—from the first Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915, to the Second Zimmerwald (Kienthal) Conference, in April 1916 – Lenin was mobilizing the new C.I. In April 1917, after the Bolshevik-led workers, peasants and soldiers overthrew the three hundred year Romanov Tsarist monarchy, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties in Russia were ready and able to take power ahead of the Bolsheviks, many of whose leaders were in exile. In this crisis, Lenin issued his famous April Theses. There, he projected a path to proletarian power through the decisive overthrow of the new “revolutionary” government of the Russian bourgeoisie. This government was still connected to and dominated by British and French imperialism and therefore continued the deposed Tsar’s commitment to the mass slaughter of the First World War. Lenin’s tenth and final thesis was: “10) A New International. We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International ...” That same month the Seventh Conference of the Bolshevik Party

resolved that the party undertake the task of taking the initiative in creating a Third International.

***Is there any self proclaimed Communist Party today, which when confronted with the enormous and complicated tasks involved with contending for state power, would make a priority of leading a global effort to establish a new Communist International!?*** Yet this is exactly what the Lenin-led Bolsheviks set out to do; and they accomplished both.

Indeed the Bolshevik-led Comintern was key to the unprecedented victorious proletarian seizure of power in the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, its preservation in the civil war and imperialist intervention period that immediately followed as well as in the ensuing consolidation of proletarian power in a new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

“From the standpoint of preserving the Republic of Soviets itself:’ In the midst of the Civil War and Imperialist Intervention (1918-1921) the Communist International was established on the soil of the Soviet land under attack from all sides, and under the leadership of the Bolshevik-led government that was the main target of the attack! What Leninist boldness and vision! As the authoritative *History of the CPSU(B)* points out, “The Red Army was victorious because the Soviet Republic was not alone in its struggle against Whiteguard counter-revolution and foreign intervention, because the struggle of the Soviet government and its successes enlisted the sympathy and support of the proletarians of the whole world. While the imperialists were trying to stifle the Soviet Republic by intervention and blockade, the workers of the imperialist countries sided with the Soviets and helped them. Their struggle against the capitalists of the countries hostile to the Soviet Republic helped in the end to force the imperialists to call off the interventions.” (“October Revolution and the Communist International,” *ibid.*)



Lenin speaking at 3rd Congress of Communist International

“From the international standpoint:’ The pivotal role of the Comintern was evident in the rapid global advance of proletarian organization and power and the upsurge in national liberation movements against imperialism

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(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

for a full quarter of a century from its founding in 1919 until its dissolution in 1943. All these achievements and advances internationally contributed to the Soviet-led defeat of global fascism in 1945. This immortal accomplishment, in turn, paved the way for the explosive growth of national liberation movements against imperialism throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East which took form as bourgeois democratic governments among one-third of the world's population in the so-called 'non-aligned movement between capitalism and socialism.' And it led to the creation of a socialist camp in which approximately another one-third of all human beings lived. ***The world-wide victory of socialism over the capitalist system then seemed imminent!***" (Emphasis in original, bold added, *ibid.*)

We concluded: "Lenin's emphasis on and confidence in the Communist International (Comintern) was fully vindicated." (Emphasis in original. *Ray O' Light Newsletter #105*, November-December 2017. Also cited on pp. 83-84, ROL-USA pamphlet (2018), "*Commemorating the Hundredth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution*")

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The Comintern carried out yeoman work spreading the proletarian revolutionary message of class struggle against international capital and boldly organizing around it throughout the world all through this period up to its formal dissolution in 1943 in the midst of the most important war of the Twentieth Century which it, along with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, played a leading role in winning! However, from the onset of the decade of the 1930's, under the impetus of the Great Depression, the global capitalist economic crisis severely impacting virtually everywhere outside of the USSR, a global fascist movement was developing. Fascism was the only effective opposition the international monopoly bourgeoisie could put up against the rising militancy of the international working class that was, under the growing influence of the Soviet-led Comintern, threatening the very survival of monopoly capitalism and imperialism. The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928 had intensified the proletarian class struggle against international capital under the militant slogan "Class against Class." But, under the pressures of the Great Depression, fascism too continued to gain momentum in many major capitalist countries.

It was in this context that the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow in August 1935. The Congress was led by the towering figure of Georgi Dimitrov, its General Secretary. Comrade Dimitrov had become world famous for his defense *in the Nazi Court* of himself and his fellow communist



Georgi Dimitrov

defendants where they were tried for allegedly starting the Reichstag Fire. In his authoritative bourgeois history on "*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*," William L. Shirer reported that the trial of the communists "before the Supreme Court at Leipzig turned into something of a fiasco for the Nazis and especially for Goering, whom Dimitrov, acting as his own lawyer, easily provoked into making a fool of himself in a series of stinging cross-examinations. ... "the trial, despite the subserviency of the court to the Nazi authorities, cast a great deal of suspicion on Goering and the Nazis." Shirer adds, however: "but it came too late to have any practical effect. For Hitler had lost no time in exploiting the Reichstag fire to the limit." (pp. 193, 194)\*

After the trial, Dimitrov and his two Bulgarian co-defendants were quickly whisked out of Germany. The Nazis clearly could not handle him. *With his unprecedented and invaluable experience in dealing with the Nazi Regime, Dimitrov was brought into the top leadership of the Comintern.* At the Comintern's Seventh Congress in 1935 he presented the Main Report emphasizing and broadening the communist "anti-fascist united front" work as a corrective to the more aggressive but somewhat sectarian "class against class" orientation that had been projected since the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928.



Stalin and Dimitrov at 7th Congress

A year later, in Spain, the application of the new broader "united front against fascism" policies would be tested in battle. The Stalin-led Soviet party and state in conjunction with Dimitrov and the Comintern would apply this Seventh Congress Comintern line with great discipline and courage, with militancy and caution, with moderation and boldness. And, indeed, it is with good reason that the Spanish Civil War came to be widely considered the dress rehearsal for World War II. (See Section IV in this article.)

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\*Under Hitler's pressure the next day, German President Hindenburg signed a decree "for the Protection of the People and the State." With the emergency powers granted to Chancellor Hitler and the Nazis, the Reichstag Fire hysteria led directly and rapidly to the one-party totalitarian Nazi state being achieved "with scarcely a ripple of opposition or defiance." (p. 201)

(contd. on p. 4)

## II. THE POST WORLD WAR II DECENTRALIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF CAPITALIST POWER IN THE USA

It took epic heroism and sacrifice on the part of the Soviet people, in particular, along with the collective wisdom of the international working class through the CPSU-led Communist International, especially in the Dimitrov-led Seventh Congress period, to lead the world's peoples to victory over global fascism in World War II. Millions of the world's finest communists and anti-fascist fighters died in the unparalleled effort; many others were seriously injured. Still millions more were war-weary and needed some relief, a respite, particularly in the Soviet Union.\*

This war-weariness left even the most advanced revolutionary forces susceptible to pacifist hopes and democratic illusions about post war peace with our wartime allies, especially U.S. imperialism. There was the added pressure that the Soviet economic miracle was largely in ruins and had to be replicated in short order. And many of the new leaders of Soviet bloc countries faced similar challenges in reconstruction. Our forces were vulnerable to revisionist treachery.

Nevertheless, *to a large extent, the international communist movement was a victim of its own success.* Prior to World War II, there was a virtual identity of interests between the Comintern and the USSR, its host and the universally recognized center of the world proletarian revolution. This enabled comrade Stalin and the CPSU leadership and comrade Dimitrov and the Comintern leadership to have a unified and long term strategic approach to dealing with global capitalism, including both the "democratic" imperialist states and the fascist powers. After the victory, there were a number of independent "left" parties in state power (many of them anti-fascist coalitions rather than communist parties), each with a tendency to do what was advantageous for its own short-term interests.

On the other hand, the Comintern and Soviet-led global defeat of fascism in World War II represented a decisive

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\*Even sinister anti-communist British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had admitted shortly after the decisive Soviet defeat of massive German armies in the titanic, months-long Battle of Stalingrad: "No government ever formed among men has been capable of surviving injuries so grave and cruel as those inflicted by Hitler on Russia. ... Russia has not only survived and recovered from those frightful injuries but has inflicted, as no other force in the world could have inflicted, mortal damage on the German army machine." (Churchill, August 31, 1943)

weakening of the imperialist camp as a whole. Prior to World War II, there were sharp contradictions among the various imperialist powers which Stalin and the Soviet Party and the other Comintern parties were able to skillfully utilize to keep the major fascist powers of Germany, Italy and Japan and the Anglo-French-U.S. powers sufficiently at odds to keep them from uniting to crush the USSR. After the war, however, U.S. imperialism, strengthened politically and militarily by its alliance with the USSR and the defeat of the fascist powers and supercharged economically by its war production, emerged as the unchallenged hegemonic imperialist power.

The international communist movement, in 1943, had given up the Comintern, its global communist vanguard organization, as a concession to get the bestial U.S. and British imperialists to finally open the long-promised "second front" in the war against fascist Germany. So it no longer spoke with one international voice after the WW II victory.

Sun Tzu had taught: "Supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy." With the communist and anti-fascist coalition parties *in state power now focused on national construction rather than revolution*, they lost sight of the strategic proletarian goal of defeating monopoly capitalism and imperialism and ushering in a socialist world leading to communism.\*\*



By contrast, for the weakened and defeated imperialist powers, hegemonic U.S. imperialism now represented the only salvation for monopoly capitalism and imperialism. So the U.S. state was able to pursue a single-minded, unified strategy. And this U.S. imperialist strategy included developing bilateral relations leading to rapprochement with the rising socialist and "non-aligned" increasingly separate and "independent" powers. Indeed, Sun Tzu had also taught: "*The Supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.*"

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\*\*It was no accident that the first international communist meeting that was scheduled that could assess Khrushchev's vicious and counter-revolutionary "secret speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956 was the Meeting of the Twelve Parties *in state power* in 1957. The subsequent meeting of 81 Parties in 1960, the majority of which still faced the challenge of systemic revolutionary change, was therefore forced to confront the reactionary obstacle of the Twelve Party Declaration of the socialist camp. The 81 Party Statement was the last joint statement of the international communist movement prior to the Sino-Soviet split.

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### III. FROM TITO TO KHRUSHCHEV TO THE CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST MODERN REVISIONISM IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

In 1948, Titoism in Yugoslavia, riding what became the rising “Bandung” wave of newly independent states, began the trend among the socialist/communist parties in state power to desert the socialist camp in the name of “non-alignment,” speculating on “neutrality” between East and West. Yet the Titoite revisionists and those in the socialist camp that followed their revisionist path were, in reality, betrayers of the national liberation struggles in collaboration with U.S.-led international capitalism.\*

In the face of this treacherous and destructive process, there were communist forces throughout the world that struggled to defend and expand the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), some hoping it would ultimately represent a road back to a full-fledged global vanguard organization, a Communist International.

*Internationalism and Nationalism*, the outstanding polemic against Tito-ism and bourgeois nationalism in the socialist camp was written by Chinese communist leader Liu Shao-chi in 1948, while the Chinese C.P. was still in the process of leading the strategically important Chinese national liberation movement



Liu Shao-chi

against the Kuomintang and U.S. imperialism. It was a year or so later when China went from the ranks of the oppressed nations to the already liberated ranks of the Socialist Camp, swelling socialist numbers by about a half a billion people!

In February 1956, after midnight on the last day’s session of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev delivered the most famous and infamous speech of the twentieth century; it was his so-called “Secret Speech” denouncing and defaming Stalin who had died three years earlier. Despite spontaneous expressions of hostility with which the speech was greeted by the surprised communist delegates, *within the top ranks* of the CPSU Khrushchev was able to use it in his battle for Soviet leadership. In addition, Khrushchev used it to attack the position of Mao Tse-tung, the chairman of

the Communist Party of China, in the course of replacing the deceased Stalin as the new preeminent leader of the international communist movement. And finally, Khrushchev could signal with this speech that he wanted “peaceful co-existence” with the hegemonic imperialist power, U.S. imperialism. Thus, did Khrushchev begin his march on the open path of the Yugoslavian renegade leader, Joseph Broz Tito.

As comrade Enver Hoxha, the outstanding Marxist-Leninist leader of Albania, observed in September 1963, “A few days ago Khrushchev concluded his visit to Yugoslavia. It is now clear to all that Khrushchev ... went there to complete the process of the full rehabilitation of the Tito



clique, to unite openly with this band of traitors, long condemned by all the communist and workers’ parties, to hatch up new plots against the socialist camp, the international communist movement and peace, and to take another step in his rapprochement with U.S. imperialism.” (“Results of N. Khrushchev’s Visit to Yugoslavia,” 9-13-63)

This article was reprinted fourteen years later by the Albanian Party of Labor in 1977 under the title “Khrushchev Kneeling Before Tito.” The Albanian Party of Labor was now sending a message correctly criticizing the CP of China, which, along with the Albanian comrades, had earlier condemned Khrushchev’s visit to Tito in Yugoslavia to “rehabilitate” him and to signal Soviet readiness for a deal with U.S. imperialism. Tragically, in 1977, the now revisionist Chinese leadership was making the same pilgrimage taken earlier by Khrushchev to obtain Tito’s “blessing” and to signal that the CP of China, too, was well along on the road to rapprochement with U.S. imperialism!

The highest expression of the Chinese and Albanian anti-revisionist polemics had been “A Proposal Concerning The General Line of the International Communist Movement,” published on June 14, 1963. This letter from the Central Committee of the CPC was in reply to the Khrushchevite revisionist C.C. of the CPSU letter of March 30, 1963.\*\* We continue to believe: “A Proposal’ was the last great effort to defend Leninism in the arena of the international communist movement that had been born with the October Revolution. It proved in the revolutionary practice of the early 1960’s to be a political line capable of helping to lead our movement to new

\*\*In that letter the Khrushchevites had attacked *Hammer & Steel* by name as the Chinese CP’s supporter in the USA. We were then youth associated with this small but effective anti-revisionist group that had been singled out for praise by both comrades Mao and Hoxha.

\*And the 81 Party Statement of 1960 still formally identified Tito in this light.

(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

victories internationally. (Remember Cuba, Vietnam, Ghana, Indonesia, Algeria, Congo, Central America among many others.)” (Ray O. Light, 1999 Pamphlet Introduction to reprint of CPC’s “A Proposal Concerning A General Line on the International Communist Movement,” 1963)

The so-called Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution beginning in mid 1966, despite its initial “radical” appearance, decisively turned the Chinese Communist Party *inward*. The invaluable CPC polemics against Titoite and Russian Revisionist betrayal of the oppressed peoples were stopped and the focus of the Cultural Revolution quickly became Chinese national (bourgeois) construction. Moreover, “Mao Tse-tung Thought” was raised as the magical answer to everything and, on this basis, *Leninism was abandoned as outmoded!*

Soon after the launching of the so-called “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (GPCR) in China in mid 1966, the veteran anti-revisionist communists in the small U.S. group producing *Hammer & Steel Newsletter*, recognized that the GPCR was neither proletarian nor revolutionary. In fact rather than being a continuation of the principled struggle against Soviet revisionism that the Chinese and Albanian Parties had led throughout the early 1960’s, a struggle which had inspired a great upsurge of the movements of national liberation of the oppressed peoples, the GPCR represented a bourgeois nationalist *retreat* from the proletarian revolutionary struggle against imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism. Following on the heels of the Soviet revisionist betrayal, the GPCR was the terrible blow that foreclosed the possibility of the international communist movement successfully resisting and reversing the disintegration of its collective life for years into the future.

Recognition that the GPCR was a real setback for the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples deepened my appreciation for the historical accomplishments of the October Revolution in Russia and the Communist International under Leninist leadership. Standing on the shoulders of *Hammer & Steel*, in early 1968, on behalf of Youth for Stalin, I wrote “*The Role of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the International Marxist-Leninist Movement: The October Revolution vs. the ‘Cultural Revolution.*”

On this basis, I observed: “Since the death of Stalin, *the two main characteristics of the international situation* have been (1) the intensification of the contradiction between the oppressed nations and U.S. imperialism; and (2) the development of a policy in most socialist countries of betrayal of the oppressed nations based on the ascendancy of the national bourgeois class in the socialist countries.” (“*The Role of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the International Marxist-Leninist Movement: The October Revolution vs. the ‘Cultural Revolution,*” Youth for Stalin, April 1968)

Less than a year and a half later, in *Long Live Leninism—Toward A New Communist International*, the first substantial document written on behalf of the *Stalinist Workers Group for Afro-American National Liberation and A New Communist International (SWG)* I elaborated further:

“Since the end of World War II, the peoples of the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa, Arabia, Latin America, and Afro-America have been the main contradiction facing world capitalism, they have been on the front lines of the struggle against world capitalism. The main bastion of world capitalism in this period, the main oppressor of the world’s peoples, has been U.S. imperialism. As a tiny group of U.S. Marxist-Leninists, citizens of U.S. imperialist society, SWG has a special obligation, responsibility, opportunity, and privilege of giving strong ideological support to all those many nations oppressed by “our own” imperialists. Throughout the three and one half year existence of *Youth for Stalin-Stalinist Workers Group* we have attempted to carry out a Leninist policy, especially on the national question.

“However, throughout this period, the leadership of the ‘socialist camp’ (including not only the Russian revisionists but also the Chinese revisionists), rather than being a solid foundation upon which the oppressed peoples can depend for support in their struggle against U.S. imperialism, has been just the opposite. Under the banner of ‘peaceful co-existence’ with U.S. imperialism, these ‘social-chauvinists’ and ‘social-pacifists’ of our time have tried in every way to moderate, pacify, and ‘contain’ the national liberation struggles of the oppressed peoples; they have been a tremendous obstacle in particular to the development of proletarian leadership in the oppressed nations capable of leading the national liberation movements to victory over U.S. imperialism ...

“Prior to World War II, the capitalist world objectively was far more powerful than the revolutionary forces around the single great bastion of revolutionary socialism, the USSR. Nevertheless because of the outstanding subjective leadership provided by Lenin, Stalin, the Bolsheviks, and the Communist International, the cause of socialism was advanced to such a point in the Soviet Union, in China, etc. that the forces for national liberation, socialism, and communism, emerged victorious over world capitalism in World War II. Following the war the objective situation was favorable to the revolutionary forces, and the Chinese Communist Party (C.P.), under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, took full advantage of the objective opportunities to win victory in the Chinese national democratic revolution. Yet, since the Chinese revolution, in 1949, the subjective leadership of the world revolutionary movement has become so bankrupt that the oppressed peoples have been largely unable to take advantage of the objectively favorable situation!

(contd. on p. 7)

(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

**“With Leninism, in spite of a generally unfavorable objective situation – victories. Without Leninism, in spite of a generally favorable objective situation – defeats!”** (*Long Live Leninism—Toward A New Communist International*, 1971, Bold added.)

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The most significant effort to begin to reestablish a coordinated international communist movement in the fifty years since was inspired by the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA) in the mid 1970's. It was reflected first in the “Joint Statement of Marxist-Leninist Parties of Latin America” in November 1976. The statement was presented by the seven Latin American Party delegations that had attended the Seventh Congress of the Party of Labor of Albania. Secondly, in a major editorial in the main Albanian periodical (*Zeri I Popullit*, July 7, 1977) the PLA openly polemicized against the bankrupt bourgeois “Three Worlds Theory” then being promoted by the Chinese leadership that emerged from the Cultural Revolution. Several months later, in October 1977, five European Communist Parties signed a Joint Declaration after fraternal meetings in which they discussed fundamental questions of strategy and tactics. In this statement the European parties polemicized against the bourgeois nationalist “Theory of the Three Worlds” in line with the Albanian Party’s urgently needed and widely discussed polemic.\*

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By the end of 1977, however, before “the third anniversary of the titanic victories of the Kampuchean (Cambodian) and Vietnamese people over U.S. imperialism and their comprador puppets,” there had already been a six months-long “border war taking place *between* these two great peoples, who ... so recently shed their blood in the vanguard of the forward march of history ... in the vanguard of the cause of communism.” “Now Socialist Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea ... [were] shedding *each other’s* blood—while the vultures of international capital, led by U.S. imperialism, have fomented this tragic conflict and now look on anxiously awaiting their opportunity to feast once again on the suffering of these two peoples.” (p. 2, “Triumph and Tragedy in Indochina,” Ray O. Light, Introductory Article, from April 1978 pamphlet, entitled, *“The Tragic War Between Kampuchea and Vietnam and the Struggle for Proletarian Internationalism”*)



\*Some of these parties in Latin America and Europe continue to function today in the Latin America-based International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) gathered around the positive journal, *Unity and Struggle*.

We stated: “Every honest communist force in the world ... must address the question of how two great peoples tested in the harshest and most brutal imperialist wars waged against them by bestial U.S. imperialism only a few short years ago, led by so-called communist parties whose leadership was itself tested in these great conflicts—how can Kampuchea and Vietnam now be fighting each other?!?” (*ibid*, p. 4)

The Party of Labor of Albania made a correct and principled appeal to the two fraternal governments to cease the armed hostilities and resolve their disagreement through “cordial and comradely talks.” (1-5-78 *Zeri I Popullit* editorial) In addition, the PLA called on “sister People’s China” to “mediate” the conflict. Tragically, neither the parties and governments of Kampuchea and Vietnam nor the Party and Government of the Peoples Republic of China responded to the call of the PLA! And, shamefully, there seemed to be no other fraternal initiative from the almost comatose international communist movement.

In June 1979, we sadly concluded; “Perhaps U.S. imperialism’s hegemonic position at the point of the ‘V’ in relation to China and the USSR can be seen most clearly in *Indochina*. Here only a few short years ago was the scene of U.S. imperialism’s bloodiest and most bestial crimes against the world’s peoples and here the heroic Indochinese peoples gave the world’s peoples invaluable leadership on how to deal with U.S. imperialism. Yet in the past year or so when Kampuchea and Vietnam have been at war with each other, while Soviet social-imperialism has ties with Vietnam, and China with Kampuchea, only U.S. imperialism has had the ability to influence both Kampuchea and Vietnam through its ties with the USSR and China!” (p. 14, *Ray O’ Light Newsletter #2*, “The U.S.-China Alliance and the Question of the Main Enemy”)

The international working class and the oppressed peoples of Indochina and the world now suffered gravely. We paid a grievous price for the absence of a Communist International!

#### IV. THE OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONALIST ROLE OF THE STALIN-LED USSR AND THE DIMITROV-LED COMINTERN IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

More than fifty years have passed since the beginning of the so-called “cultural revolution” in China. Now we are looking back fully one hundred years and are stunned to realize that most of the remarkable accomplishments of the international proletariat and its allies, with leadership and organization provided by the Bolshevik-led Comintern and Bolshevik-led Soviet state power, occurred within just the first thirty-five years of this one hundred years. (This includes the twenty-five years of the CI’s organizational existence and the five to ten years

(contd. on p. 8)

(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

of momentum that continued to carry our movement forward following the Comintern's formal dissolution in 1943.) Indeed, following on the heels of the Soviet-led and Comintern-led defeat of global fascism in 1945, the last truly global great advance was the victorious Chinese national democratic revolution formally declared by Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung on October 1, 1949.

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Of course, even during the twenty-five years of the Comintern's actual organizational existence, there were not only coordinated imperialist invasions of Soviet Russia and the USSR in the CI's beginning and ending years but there was also a brutal propaganda war constantly waged against it "from all sides." This makes perfect sense: for the biggest fear of the capitalists is that the international working class will unite and smash the global capitalist system and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Unfortunately, with the relative lack of successful national democratic and proletarian revolutions in the past fifty years or so as compared with the tremendous successes during the first thirty years beginning with the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the formation of the Communist International, *there has been a tendency even in the most serious revolutionary parties to blame the Communist International for all the failures of the proletarian revolutionary cause over the past fifty years.* The argument goes something like this: "The Comintern made so many errors in my country (or in the world, etc.) that it has prevented my country's party, etc. from being successful all these years." (I took special note of this tendency during 2017, the centennial year of the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia.) This argument assumes that "my country's individual national party" and "our national cadre" are superior to the collective unity of thought and action that the international working class possesses when we are organized together. It assumes further that "my country's party" would have made less errors and less serious ones had we been free of "the burden of the Communist International." This bankrupt bourgeois nationalist line of "self-reliance" harkens back to the old Titoite line of "every party and every country for itself." It still serves to help keep the international communist movement weak and divided.

One justification for the continuation of the Titoite bourgeois nationalist domination of the international communist movement is the bourgeois falsification of the facts regarding the general political situation during the period of the critical Spanish Civil War. There the Comintern *actually* played an outstanding positive revolutionary role in stark contrast with the treacherous role played by the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers in this "dress rehearsal for World

War II." Yet, as is the case with so many other places and events, it is especially difficult to uncover these facts today. Pioneered by virulent and relentless Trotskyism, the prevailing counter-revolutionary, social-democratic "conventional wisdom" (blessed by Soviet revisionist Nikita Khrushchev *in state power* and many others since) is that there was something seriously wrong with Stalin, the USSR and the Communist International. And international capital, still led by the U.S. Empire today, has the biggest stake in keeping you and me from discovering the proletarian truth.

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***The Role of the Comintern and the Soviet Union  
in the Spanish Civil War***

At the beginning of the 1960's as a high school teen, the first group with which I studied Marxism was a Trotskyite group mostly made up of college students and a few workers in their twenties. As it happened, this group included a large number who became regional and national leaders of the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party in the USA over the next decade. They were a relatively serious group, which gave their opinions weight. In our study meetings they placed great emphasis on the supposedly rotten, counterrevolutionary role played by Stalin, the Soviet Union and the Communist International in the Spanish Civil War. Had I not been raised in a wholesome family led by a courageous anti-revisionist and anti-fascist communist couple, the ferocity with which these Trotskyites fulminated ***against the Communists of the 1930's and 1940's who had spearheaded the defeat of global fascism*** would most likely have either led me into their sectarian group or driven me away from left-wing politics altogether. Now, almost sixty years later, as I share this experience with you, I feel my anger rising still.

Because the Spanish Civil War was immediately ended with the triumphant fascist dictator Franco linking Spain to the Anti-Comintern Axis and this so-called "dress rehearsal" was followed shortly thereafter by World War II itself, and because, more than in most countries, Republican Spain had featured such deep political schisms among the left parties that were all involved (for better or worse) with "defense of the Spanish Republic," and because of the decades of Franco fascist rule in Spain after World War II, conflicting accounts of what and who caused its defeat have been especially problematic.

Consequently, in this exposure of the Trotskyite "big lie" attack on the Comintern and USSR in Spain at the time when the fate of the Spanish Republic still hung in the balance as well as the relentless "uncorrected" Trotskyite attack on this issue to the present day, I rely primarily on the current scholarship of elite bourgeois Princeton University professor, Steven Kotkin. I'm currently about



(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

half way through studying Kotkin's three book series, entitled "Stalin," encompassing several thousand pages.\*

*With Stalin as the leader of the international communist movement, including the Soviet Union and the Comintern, world capitalism was almost vanquished and replaced by proletarian socialism!* Kotkin appears to be serving U.S. imperialism by trying to acquire such a profound and thorough understanding of Stalin that the monopoly capitalists and imperialists can somehow *prevent* a brilliant and effective working class leader of Stalin's magnitude ever coming to power again anywhere in the world. For this purpose, even with his own slanderous and slanted pro-imperialist positions, Kotkin has had to expose many bourgeois, petty bourgeois *and* Trotskyite lies about Stalin, the Soviet Union and the Comintern in the more than 1500 pages I've read thus far. And this now includes Kotkin's material on the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

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Kotkin explains that Spain was the only major European country to avoid the First World War and that the birth of the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931 "bucked the authoritarian trend engulfing the continent." He continues: "That year, amid a resounding Republican Party victory in municipal elections, King Alphonso XIII, who had reigned since he was born in 1886 fled abroad (without formal abdication) inspiring hopes among the country's peasants and workers and fears among the propertied and the Church establishment. But the Republic had managed only timid land reform, while Spain's few pockets of industry remained gripped by the Depression." (p. 312)

In this concrete situation it is unsurprising that Spain's parliament, the Cortes, was split between being "for and against the Church and the army, for and against socialism." Nor is it surprising that a military coup in August 1932 was defeated by a general strike. Likewise, the country experienced wild electoral swings: left in 1931; right in 1933; and then back to the left on February 18, 1936, when a leftist Popular Front coalition defeated the ruling coalition of right wing parties in the National Front.

To his credit, Kotkin exposes the connection between the brutality first meted out by Spanish General Francisco Franco and his brutal legions in



From right: Hitler, Franco Mussolini

*the war against the colonial people of "Spanish Morocco" and his later enactment of similar "savage cleansing" against "his own" Spanish population after leading a coordinated fascist coup backed by Hitler and Mussolini against the democratically elected Spanish Republican government.*

Impressively, Kotkin exposes **British** involvement with the Franco fascists from the beginning, though he doesn't emphasize it. He also points out that, "France ought to have been Spain's natural partner, especially after the June 1936 formation of a Popular Front government in Paris, which included Communists as well as Socialists under Prime Minister Leon Blum. Spain's Popular Front government had already appealed to France's Popular Front for military aid by July 18 and got an initial positive response from Blum but ... on a visit to London ... *Blum discovered that Britain opposed helping Spain's elected government.* Britain had a great deal at stake: it accounted for 40 percent of total foreign investment in Spain, including the Rio Tinto mining conglomerate. But Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin sought to avoid new government commitments, given the costs of maintaining the empire, or unwittingly facilitating a Communist takeover in Spain. ... much of British business sided with him as well. And so, on July 25, *Blum reversed himself and agreed to join Britain's policy of 'non-intervention.'*" (*Stalin, Vol. 2, Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941*, p. 317, My emphasis, ROL) The betrayal of the Spanish Social Democratic government by French Social-Democracy was a crippling blow to the Spanish people in their fight against the German and Italian fascist-backed Franco fascists.

"... emboldened by reports of British acquiescence and French paralysis, he [Mussolini] decided to provide substantial military assistance, without consulting his own military men. In parallel to his expansionism in Abyssinia, the duce dreamed of a still larger Italian Mediterranean empire at French expense, via a friendly government in Spain."

Moreover, Kotkin makes it clear that the Soviet leadership in 1936 was trying to avoid provoking fascist Italy and Germany and thereby providing the imperialist powers with an excuse for the abrogation of the Non Intervention Agreement on Spain.\*\* Soviet foreign affairs commissar Litvinov, from early on, "was urging Stalin to maintain Soviet-French-Anglo 'solidarity' [i.e. Soviet solidarity with the "democratic imperialists"—ROL] by avoiding military aid to Spain's

\*\*Comrade Stalin's speech to the First Conference of Industrial Managers in February 1931 included the following dramatic challenge: "We are fifty to one hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make up this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us..." Less than ten and a half years later, in June 1941, Hitler's Nazi war machine launched the most powerful military invasion in human history on the USSR.

\*As an elite bourgeois professor, Kotkin apparently has an army of graduate students doing his research and extensive footnotes.

(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

besieged Republic.” Indeed, Commissar Litvinov had plenty of basis for worry: None of these imperialist powers, including the USA, backed the legally elected Spanish Republican government. All of them were either “neutral” on Spain or openly backed the Franco fascist coup.

Nevertheless, after announcing on August 30 that the politburo had prohibited sending arms, ammunition, or planes to Spain in accord with the agreement, on September 4 the first Soviet-produced newsreels from Spain were shown to Moscow audiences and soon distributed to other large cities. (Even earlier, on August 3, the day after the hottest day in Moscow in fifty-seven years, ostensibly under the leadership of the Soviet trade union movement, a throng of 100,000 demonstrators assembled on Red Square in suffocating heat with songs and speeches calling for defense of the Spanish Republic.) And on September 6 (one week after the military aid “prohibition”) Stalin sent a telegram to Kaganovich, one of his most trusted Soviet comrades, saying that “it would be good” to sell Mexico fifty Soviet bombers, and possibly 20,000 rifles and 20 million cartridges, which could then get to Spain. Kotkin explains: This “effectively set in motion a Soviet military intervention.” (ibid, p. 338)

*What political courage on the part of Stalin and the CPSU(B)! How genuine was the proletarian internationalism embraced and practiced by the Bolshevik-led Soviet power, center of the world revolution — with the Comintern at its very heart!*

Kotkin underscores this point: The Spanish left was irreparably divided against itself. And the French Social-Democratic Blum government had shamefully betrayed its fellow Social-Democrats in power in neighboring Spain. In addition, geographically, the USSR was further away from Spain than any of the other main protagonists and had previously had almost no economic ties to Spain. Yet the Stalinist leadership refused to use any of this as an excuse to turn its back on the Spanish Loyalist cause despite logistical challenges and the vital need to avoid a provocation that could bring any or all of the major imperialist powers to wage war on the USSR!

“Many Spaniards suspected both indigenous Communists and Moscow of the worst, but with Communists working against broad nationalization of private industry, many of Spain’s shopkeepers, farmers and lesser civil servants cooperated with them in defense of the Republic.” (p. 400) Moreover, comrade Stalin, in applying the Comintern’s new “United Front policy,” was “refusing to indulge the calls for a communist coup and insisting on upholding the Popular Front under the Socialist Party prime minister.” (p. 401)

Kotkin observes: “The anti-fascist popular front strategy (Dimitrov) and ‘collective security’ (Litvinov), once seen

as in sync, were deeply at odds, given France’s position.” [i.e. French betrayal of the Spanish Republic] (p. 320) And Stalin was siding with Dimitrov and the Comintern rather than with Litvinov and the Soviet state!!!

Kotkin shares that Stalin (with military leader Voroshilov) had decided against committing regular Soviet troops. But the politburo had already resolved to form volunteer “international brigades,” to be ... funded by Moscow. ... These Comintern brigades remained within the letter of the Non-Intervention Agreement. No Soviet nationals were

allowed to join, although many volunteered to.” Kotkin adds, “Already by early fall, there would be more than 550 Soviet personnel in-country.” (ibid, p. 338-339)



Soviet Pilots, Soto Airfield near Madrid

And the International Brigades, coming from dozens of countries and organized and led by the Comintern, would number more than forty thousand. Their selfless devotion to the cause of Democratic Spain would inspire millions on the road to victory over global fascism in World War II.

Kotkin reports that at the first meeting of the Non-Intervention Committee (held in London) on September 9, with 27 European states represented, acrimonious exchanges took place especially between the Soviet ambassador and the German embassy counselor. But, according to Kotkin, the most serious problem was the cynicism of the British host government. He observes: “Given that the public heard every day about how Italy and Germany were intervening forcefully, British credibility suffered a blow.” (ibid, p. 339)

According to Kotkin: key Soviet diplomat, Litvinov, lamented, “the Spanish question has ruined our relations with England and France and sowed doubts in Bucharest and even Prague.’ But Stalin would not be cowed: on October 23, the Soviet Union—without relinquishing membership in the Non-Intervention Committee—announced that because of others’ violations, it was not bound by the Non-Intervention Agreement. The French were incredulous.” The secretary-general of the French foreign ministry complained to the British that Stalin has no ideals. And Kotkin observes: “For Stalin, of course, everything was the other way around: the inactions of France and Britain, in the face of the blatant Italian fascist and Nazi German violations, had soured *him* on the Western powers.” (p. 347, Italics in original)

Later, speaking about the substantial Soviet military aid to the Spanish government, Kotkin comments on the world class quality of the tanks and planes and admits: “In the face of such hardware, it was easy to

(contd. on p. 11)

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forget that the Soviet Union was in many ways still a poor country.” (ibid, p. 346) The military aid provided by the USSR (and the Comintern) was largely purchased rather than given. Indeed, Spain had the fourth largest gold reserves in the world, “a cache amassed by the crown over centuries.” (p. 343) But Spain’s industrial capacity was still weak. Meanwhile, the still impoverished Soviet Union, desperately trying to catch up with the West, was extremely productive and negotiated payment in gold from the Spanish state. Kotkin also describes the tortuous and difficult journey to Spain for Soviet cargo, using disguised ships with sailors wearing tropical clothing of South Asia or leisure wear of British cruise lines. Spanish ports were blockaded and ships were being attacked by Franco’s forces. “Still,” says Kotkin admiringly, “not a single ship with Soviet arms for Spain would be lost.” (p. 345)

Kotkin also raises Soviet criticisms of opportunist forces in the ranks of the Spanish loyalist coalition partners. The lack of Spanish government unity frustrated Soviets in-country as exemplified by the fact that each political party had its own security apparatus. And Soviet advisers were especially aghast that anarchist-controlled factories produced *not* the most *necessary* military items but the most *profitable*!

On November 8, 1936, Franco’s troops began their assault on Madrid, Spain’s capital city. According to Kotkin, “German and Italian planes had been bombing Spain for a hundred days” and “with the Madrid front close to breaking, the Republic government had hastily fled for safety to Valencia.” But Franco “had put off the offensive, while working to make himself *caudillo* (Fuhrer or duce).” And “the delay had allowed the Soviet military adviser Gorev to organize defenses.” “That day, the first troops of the International Brigades had arrived in Madrid.” (See all the Kotkin quotes in this paragraph at the bottom of page 350.)

Kotkin reports that, “Madrid came under withering assault for ten days as shrapnel and incendiary bombs exploded in its plazas. But Soviet planes had broken the Nationalists’ monopoly of the skies; there was no more bombing of Madrid from low altitude with impunity ... No less crucially, Soviet-led mechanized units, using the T-26 [tanks], rendered any attempted advance costly.” It is revealing that both Fascist Germany and Fascist Italy recognized Franco’s Nationalist government on November 18, a big boost. Nevertheless, five days later *Franco called off his direct assault on Madrid* as morale had definitely shifted in favor of the Spanish Republic and its Soviet and Comintern-led defenders.

Kotkin observes: “In preventing Franco’s seizure of Madrid, the Red Army had indeed demonstrated its mettle for all the world’s skeptics. The French took notice of Soviet aircraft performance in Madrid’s defense; the British of the overall Soviet effort. The

Soviet government has saved the government in Madrid which everyone expected to collapse,” concluded the undersecretary of state at the foreign office. “The Soviet intervention has indeed completely changed the situation.” (p. 352)



Soviet T-26 Tanks in Spain

Clearly, among the Spanish working people there was heartfelt appreciation for the Soviet and Comintern sacrifices on their behalf. For example, there is a marvelous personal experience shared by a British woman traveler in 1937 in one of the several thousands of footnotes to this second volume alone. (p. 991 FN #20) *Helen Grant, a British woman traveling in Catalonia in 1937, noted that at a film screening, there were “great cheers from the gallery when Stalin’s photo appeared on the screen, but only from the gallery [her emphasis].” Among the higher paying middle class part of the audience (where she sat) “people kept quiet.” Jackson, British Women, 117.*

Says Kotkin: “By spring 1937, Spain’s Communist party—long one of Europe’s smallest—reached 250,000 on its way to 400,000. ... Spain’s communists, moreover, were a fighting force: perhaps 130,000 of the 360,000 troops in the Republic’s People’s Army were Communists. The entire POUM may have had 60,000 members, the anarchist groups 100,000, and the Socialist Party 160,000. *Civil War had made the Communists Republic Spain’s dominant force.*” (p. 406, My emphasis, ROL) But while Stalin and the Comintern forces were backing Caballero, “Largo Caballero regretted this ever-growing influence of the Spanish Communists and of Moscow, and ... he floated versions of a war settlement through the Spanish ambassador in Paris. France would obtain



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the part of Morocco it did not control, Germany would be offered mines and other economic concessions, and Italy a naval base on Menorca, while the Soviets would be forced out."

Caballero's betrayal of the main forces fighting against the Franco fascists could only lead the cause to defeat. Madrid, the last Republic holdout in Spain, fell to Franco's forces on April 1, 1939. Note that Britain and France had *already* treacherously recognized his regime on February 27. And the caudillo paid these "democratic" imperialist powers back on March 26 when he declared Spain's allegiance to the Anti-Comintern Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan.\*

Kotkin sums up the Spanish Civil War as follows: "Although he [Franco] had forged a politically and militarily unified Nationalist cause, a successful Popular Front on the right, he had still required thirty-two months, some 100,000 combined Italian and German troops, immense quantities of foreign weaponry, disorganization and mini civil war in the Republic camp, the timidity of France *and the active collusion of Britain to triumph.*" (p. 615, my emphasis, ROL) ***Notice that nowhere in Kotkin's list is there even one criticism of Stalin, the Soviet Union or the Comintern!***

Moreover Kotkin adds: "... after his victory, Franco would put to death more people than had all the kings of Spain combined; he offered no amnesty, instead forcing still more Spaniards into labor battalions or exile ..." "... [and] Franco was a criminal. The putsch he helped launch and the methods he used to prosecute the ensuing civil war constituted massive crimes against humanity." (*ibid.*, p. 615) Yet Kotkin admits that "the British government and establishment were more or less pleased [with Franco's victory]. But Britain's reputation had suffered." (*ibid.*, p. 616)

*One final note on the International Brigades as emissaries of the Communist International and the Soviet Union:* Many of these internationalist heroes died there and have become one with the Spanish earth. Within the few years that followed, many of the surviving veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the other International Brigades voluntarily enlisted in the military services of their own reactionary countries, including the USA, to be able to contribute to the fight against fascism once again in World War II. They remained part of the Comintern-led United Front Against Fascism. They became part of the core of the military heroes of the victorious Soviet and Comintern-led struggle that defeated German,

\*Often, with good reason, the Spanish Civil War is referred to as "the Dress Rehearsal for World War II." Certainly, the two most important individual protagonists in that next war, Stalin and Hitler, learned that the leaders of both British and French imperialism were afraid to fight either the fascist armies or the communist armies.

Italian and Japanese fascism and ushered in the period of greatest advance for humanity. For within less than a decade after WW II, two-thirds of the world's people lived in either the "non-aligned" camp or the socialist camp!

[For more on the long-term impact of the International Brigades and the Comintern role in the Spanish Civil War, see my article, "On the Passing of the Last Surviving Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and John McCain's Astonishing Tribute." (*Ray O' Light Newsletter* #97, July-August 2016)]

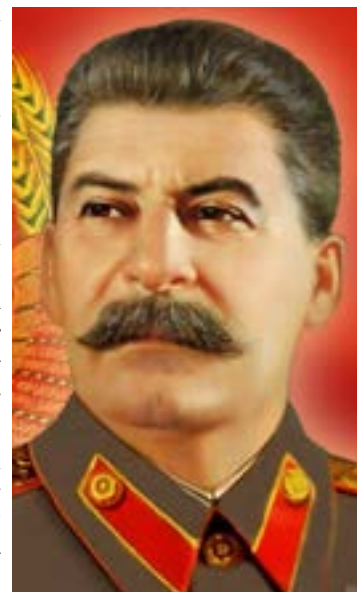


Abraham Lincoln Brigade members

Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and John McCain's Astonishing Tribute." (*Ray O' Light Newsletter* #97, July-August 2016)]

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*One final note on Kotkin:* Professor Kotkin is a skilled academic in service to the U.S. Empire. Throughout the first two massive volumes of "Stalin," Kotkin refers to Stalin as "the dictator" or "the despot" over and over again. It is noteworthy to contrast Kotkin's constant need to cue his reader that Stalin is "a bad guy" with the extremely principled approach to this question taken by the militant anti-imperialist journalist, Anna Louise Strong, in her exceptionally clear-eyed 128 page volume, entitled "**The Stalin Era,**" written in the shadow of Khrushchev's attack on Stalin in 1956. Reported Ms. Strong: "In all my years in the USSR, I never heard them speak of 'Stalin's decision' or 'Stalin's orders,' but only of 'government orders' or 'the Party line,' which are collectively made. When speaking of Stalin, they praised his 'clearness,' his 'analysis.' They said: 'He does not think individually.' By this, they meant that he thought not in isolation but in consultation with the brains of the Academy of Science, the chiefs of industry and trade unions. Even towards the end, when men immoderately deified him, they hailed him not as 'Great Ruler,' but as 'Great Teacher,' the leader who analyzed the way." (p. 22, *The Stalin Era*, 1957)



Clearly, the Professor Kotkin who discovered and amassed the documentation on the Spanish Civil War presented above was no partisan of comrade Stalin or the Comintern. Yet, despite Kotkin's anti-Stalin and anti-Comintern bias, the highlights he enumerates of the Soviet and Comintern contribution to the Spanish Civil War include the following:

(contd. on p. 13)

1. The Comintern's United Front Against Fascism, applied by the Stalin-led Soviet state as well as the Dimitrov-led Comintern organization and the Spanish Communist Party, was the *only political force* on the side of the Spanish Republic that functioned so as to build rather than destroy the united front that was the backbone of the Republic. The sectarianism and anti-communism of all the other Republic political forces doomed the Republican government to defeat at the hands of the Franco fascists.

2. The Soviet Union was the most dominant force in the Comintern. And the Soviet state, despite functioning under constant capitalist encirclement and in imminent danger of invasion by any and/or all imperialist powers (both "democratic" and fascist) throughout this period and despite its logistical challenges in rendering its support, was *the only country in the world* that gave Democratic Spain substantial solidarity and support in its civil war against the fascist foe.

3. The Soviet-produced tanks, airplanes and other weapons of war sent to the Spanish government were largely of world-class quality and well worth the prices it paid. And the Soviets never failed to deliver a shipment, despite the great logistical challenges. Furthermore, even after all the Spanish gold removed to the Soviet Union had been spent on weapons, and the Spanish Republic was already tottering, a Spanish emissary pleaded for Soviet credits to buy more. Stalin extended the credits and they were never repaid; it wasn't about the gold. More to the point, no price, no amount of gold, would have been enough to jeopardize the existence of the USSR itself. Yet the USSR and the Comintern, applying the principle of proletarian internationalism, were willing to pay the price and never abandoned the Spanish Republic.

## V. THE TROTSKYITE BIG LIES THAT HELPED BRING KHRUSHCHEV TO POWER AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

*In light of the above, what are we to make of Trotsky in the 1936-1939 period, the Trotskyites of the 1960 period who I briefly associated with, and the Trotskyites of today?*

At the time that the fate of the Spanish Republic hung in the balance, Trotsky and his minions did not focus on rallying supporters for "defense of the Spanish Republic," and to oppose Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the principal backers of the Franco fascist military forces. Nor did they expose the consistent treachery of British imperialism toward the elected Spanish government, in collaboration with the fascist Axis powers. And neither did they expose the outright betrayal by the Blum-led Social-Democratic government of France which, pressured by the British rulers, choked off Social-Democratic Spain. Instead, Trotsky and his followers attacked the Stalin-led Comintern and Soviet and

Spanish communist forces fighting to build the United Front Against Fascism, the one force whose politics and revolutionary practice was leading, at least initially, toward the Spanish people's victory!

No wonder, as Kotkin reports, "When the spectral Fourth International ... had finally managed its founding Congress, it was attended by a mere twenty-one delegates, who had met in secrecy in a village outside Paris for just a single day, the stateless Trotsky himself had not been able to attend." (Kotkin, Volume II, p. 787) This was in September of 1938. The Spanish Republic would be dead at the hands of the Franco fascists in 1939 and Trotsky would be assassinated in Mexico City in August of 1940, before World War II had even begun. Yet, upon his death, as Kotkin describes it, "When the celebrity's open casket was driven through the streets of the Mexican capital, nearly a quarter million people turned out." (*ibid*, p. 787)

*So what accounts for Trotsky's "celebrity" in his last few years and his long and still lingering "after-life" up to today?!*

Kotkin sheds light on the answer: "Trotsky had been writing about the creation of the Fourth International since at least 1933, but the Congress had only taken place on September 3, 1938 and was attended by fewer than two dozen delegates." (p. 610) Still, "In October 1938, he had fantasized, in a speech in Mexico ... that, in the course of the next ten years, the program of the Fourth International will become the program of millions, and these revolutionary millions will be able to take heaven and earth by storm." Kotkin concludes: "**However absurd his 'movement,' Trotsky's pen was another matter.**" (*ibid*, p. 610, My emphasis, ROL)

Yes. Trotsky's Poison Pen was more powerful than his Sword. *While posing as a pure and orthodox proletarian revolutionary, it was as a slanderer and defamer of Stalin, Soviet Socialism and the Comintern, that Trotsky had become an international celebrity.* And the various Trotskyite sects around the world ever since have constituted a monopoly capitalist and imperialist-sponsored "movement" to continually heap calumny upon the real accomplishments of Stalin, Soviet Socialism and the Comintern. The Trotskyite "movement's" mission continues to be to help the world's reactionaries effectively block the international working class and the oppressed peoples from once again discovering and marching on the path of Leninism and the Comintern, the path of our magnificent victories!

The young Trotskyites, from those of the World War II period, and including those from the 1960 period (that I briefly studied with) up to today, like their deceased mentor himself, were "free" (no matter what capitalist dictatorship conditions their country's working people have lived under) to trumpet their revolution-sounding declarations loudly and proudly. Meanwhile, the genuine Communists who have done *real revolutionary work* (contd. on p. 14)

(Reflections on the Communist International continued)

before, during and after the Spanish Civil War and World War II generally have had to remain discrete and circumspect about their phenomenal revolutionary accomplishments. For they have had to operate with some level of secrecy so that the *genuine movements* of the working class and the masses against monopoly capitalism and imperialism have a future in the process of laying the basis for proletarian revolution.

One important example of the negative impact of the loud trumpeting of Trotskyite declarations involved the erroneous perceptions of Venezuela's late President Hugo Chavez. Brother Chavez was a solid anti-imperialist, who built an economic and political alliance with Fidel Castro and the Cuban government



that was a win-win situation for the peoples of both Cuba and Venezuela. Beyond that, the Venezuela-Cuba Alliance became the foundation for a broader Latin American Alliance, especially directed against the U.S. imperialist Empire, a win-win situation for all of Latin America.

But Hugo Chavez, who considered himself a socialist, though not a proletarian one, projected the idea of setting up a Fifth International. This meant that he was upholding the "Spectral" Fourth International of Trotsky as being on a par with the Third International that had played such a key role in the decades-long success of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and such a key role in leading the peoples of the world in the victorious defeat of world fascism! Whatever illusory lessons Chavez may have drawn from the Fourth International fantasy, certainly these included that any sort of "socialist" force could become an affiliate. And what deep lessons of class and national struggle could be learned from the "experience" of Trotsky's "absurd movement" that Kotkin had accurately summed up as a "pen?!" Certainly, whatever illusions or fantasies Chavez entertained about Trotsky's Fourth International made it more difficult for brother Chavez or honest proletarian forces around him to ever discover the tremendous proletarian revolutionary experience of the Bolshevik Revolution, Socialist Construction and the consolidation of the USSR, the founding and functioning of the Communist International, including its vital participation in the peoples victory over global fascism in the most important crisis of the Twentieth Century.

Trotskyism today provides the false and hollow international organization that is the consolation prize for those potentially revolutionary internationalists who recognize the need for a Communist International!

Referencing comrade Karl Marx, Trotskyism is the opiod of the aspiring internationalist.

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### ***From Trotsky to Khrushchev to the USA***

In 1940, under tremendous political pressure from the U.S. imperialist state, the CPUSA disaffiliated from the Comintern. It was the one notable party to do so *before* the Comintern organization's dissolution *by its leadership* in 1943. Nevertheless, throughout the next fifteen years, inspired especially by the 1945 Soviet-led global victory in World War II over world fascism to which it had contributed substantially, — despite the Comintern's dissolution in 1943, the post WWII rapid rise of U.S. imperialist reaction with McCarthyism and the U.S. war in Korea, and growing U.S. economic hegemony in the world capitalist system, and the death of Stalin in 1953, — "the left/progressive movement" in the USA, remained centered around the CPUSA and the remnants of Soviet-led (and Comintern-led) communism. Such was the powerful influence of the victories achieved under the leadership of the Soviet-led Comintern!

On April 29, 2017, the *New York Times* published an op-ed by veteran *Times* and *Village Voice* columnist, Vivian Gornick, entitled, "When Communism Inspired Americans." Gornick, despite being a liberal feminist, nevertheless states: "It is perhaps hard to understand now, but at that time, in this place, the Marxist vision of world solidarity as translated by the Communist Party induced in the most ordinary of men and women a sense of one's own humanity that ran deep, made life feel large; large and clarified." "My parents were working class socialists," Gornick explained. "I grew up in the late 1940's and early 50's thinking of them and their friends as what they themselves called progressives — a movement that included everyone from communist party organizers to left-wing sympathizers."

An eye-witness herself as a young woman, Gornick reported that "the growing fervor of the American communist movement came to a screeching halt in February 1956."

Delivered after midnight on the closing night of the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, CPSU leader Nikita Khrushchev's unscheduled "Secret Speech," was arguably the most famous and infamous speech of the twentieth century.

Stalin's steadfast leadership of the struggle against international capitalism, both in fascist and "democratic" forms over the decades, was reflected in the deep love and loyalty of the people for Stalin and most of all their *political trust*. Khrushchev had benefited from the political trust of the workers, the soldiers and peasants and the non-Russian nationalities of the USSR for Stalin. He had also benefited from the trust that the working people of the world had for Stalin.

(contd. on p. 15)

Khrushchev's class hatred for Stalin was fueled by his desire to capitulate to the imperialist enemy in order to be "the boss" and have the "good life" for himself and his family. Khrushchev's resentment of Stalin was reflected in his one-sided "peaceful co-existence" overtures to U.S. imperialism from the very beginning of his bid for power. It was as if U.S. imperialism and the recently defeated anti-Comintern Axis Powers had no monstrous and greedy designs on the Soviet peoples and the international working class.

Trotsky's biography and motivation for his anti-comintern and anti-Stalin poison were quite different from Khrushchev's. But the anti-communist poison spewed by both Trotsky in the late 1930's and Khrushchev in the late 1950's was invaluable to the most powerful reactionary forces challenged by Stalin and the USSR at the given time.

Finally, fifty years later, U.S. Professor Grover Furr, a socialist and communist sympathizer, wrote a four hundred page book, entitled "*Khrushchev Lied.*" Furr had noticed some factual errors upon his first reading of the speech. Returning to the Speech some years later, Furr took note of commentary by bourgeois scholars who also observed inconsistencies and falsehoods contained therein. First published in Russian in 2007 and in English in 2011, Furr and his Russian colleague Vladimir Bobrov took advantage of the access to previously secret Soviet archives to be able to separate truth from falsehood in Khrushchev's speech. Furr's book documents his findings that *virtually all of Khrushchev's sixty-one specific claims against Stalin in that speech proved to be false!!* In this light was Khrushchev a long-term intelligence agent, rather than just a weak and corrupt bureaucrat?!



Regardless, within weeks of the publication of the Secret Speech, thirty thousand people in the USA who had been doing what even the bourgeois Gornick described as "good work" quit the struggle! And at the height of the McCarthyite political hysteria there was no way these folks would ever be replaced! As Sun Tzu taught: "*One need not destroy one's enemy. One need only destroy his willingness to engage.*"

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**VI.  
SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF MOSTLY  
SETBACKS AND DEFEATS AND  
NO FIGHT FOR A NEW COMINTERN**

At least the past sixty-five years since (approximately since the death of Stalin in 1953) have been largely characterized by setbacks and defeats. *Yet it is precisely*

*in this sixty-five year period that virtually no effort has been made to re-establish a Communist International in the tradition of the Third International, the Comintern!*

Those of us who have claimed to be communists in this period have to be held accountable for any failure on our part to make a priority of the building of a new Communist International along with the constant duty to engage in proletarian internationalist activities which helps lay the basis for construction of such a global vanguard organization.

The basic argument is that, like Leninism itself, its organizational expression in *the Third, Communist International was not defeated from without; rather it was deserted, abandoned and betrayed largely by opportunists among the vanguard forces that achieved state power or some substantial level of autonomy/privilege through the victories guided by the Stalin-led Bolsheviks, the Soviet Red Army and masses and the Communist International.* These peoples victories, especially with the achievement of state power, meant that there was no longer an unquestioned center of the world proletarian revolution as the Bolshevik-led USSR had been prior to World War II.(including as the host country and party for the Comintern) A Comintern was now more needed than ever to struggle for global proletarian principled unity!

Like Leninism itself, its organizational expression, too, in the form of a new Communist International with most of the principles of the Third International resurrected and applied under current concrete conditions, is precisely what is needed by the international working class and the oppressed peoples today. Moreover, ***given the advanced and accelerating state of decay of the human habitat on Mother Earth under the current domination of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, all the peoples of the world have an urgent stake to embrace the proletarian-led fight for a socialist world.***

***LONG LIVE MAY DAY!  
LONG LIVE LENINISM!***

***TOWARD A NEW  
COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL!***



**LONG LIVE LENINISM  
—TOWARD A NEW  
COMMUNIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
(1971)**

*By Stalinist Workers Group for Afro-American National  
Liberation and a New Communist Internatonal*

The lengthy article, entitled “Long Live Leninism—Toward A New Communist International” by *Stalinist Workers Group* was published in early 1971. It provides detailed insights into the treacherous political role of Soviet and Chinese revisionism, in particular, in their collaboration with the hegemonic imperialist power, U.S. Imperialism at the expense of the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples of the world.

(Suggested minimum donation \$3/copy, \$5 for two pamphlets.

*Political Origins* will be included with any request)



## U.S. Hands off Venezuela

by CINDY SHEEHAN



Nothing has been frying my bacon more lately than when noted “lefties” or so-called progressive politicians “oppose” the U.S. and its partners in crime sanctioning other countries, but then turn around and absolutely support the Empire’s reasons for doing so.

For example, Democrat Congressional Representatives Ro Khanna of California and Pramila Jayapal of Washington recently jointly composed a “Dear Colleague” letter to have their ilk in Congress sign on to. While the D.C. letter has a good beginning, opposing sanctions and possible military intervention it degenerates quickly into supporting the lies of the Trump regime:

*“We strongly condemn the Maduro government’s actions, including repression of Venezuelan civil society, failed economic policy, the killing of unarmed protestors, disregard for the rule of law, the holding of unfair elections, and blocking humanitarian aid from entering the country.”*

Let us dissect this deceitful paragraph. My first thought is, why would a decent person not oppose this “Maduro” with all of his/her heart? I mean, he sounds like a real “dictator,” right? Wrong!

How any U.S. Congressperson could legitimately question the “repression of civil society” in another country where they live/work in one where cops regularly murder mostly men of color with total impunity, is one thing, but their claim is absolutely false. Venezuela has a free civil society that takes profound ownership of politics and social programs. If civil society were so “repressed,” why are there so many people wearing the color of the revolution out in the streets supporting the government and so few white supremacists in Venezuela supporting the traitorous self-installed government?

In the first paragraph of this D.C. letter Khanna and Jayapal state: *“Furthermore, the President’s (Trump) recent economic sanctions threaten to exacerbate the country’s grave economic crisis, causing immense suffering for the most vulnerable in society who bear no responsibility for the situation in the country.”*

U.S. sanctions, a blockade, the stealing of Venezuelan assets by Great Britain and the U.S., are almost

totally responsible for the “failed economic policy” the authors lament in the second paragraph. Of course, that sentence is an attack on socialism and the very fact that even in the crisis, the people of Venezuela are housed and they are fed — unlike the gross policies of the imperialistic government that Khanna and Jayapal represent. Here, in the wealthy U.S. about one million children go to bed hungry every night and the Trump regime and its “left cover” dare to criticize Venezuela?



Some of the nearly 3 million low-income housing units built in Venezuela

The claim that Maduro is “killing unarmed protestors” is very devious, because, yes, protestors have been killed, but the opposition consistently calls for violence when protesting the government of the Bolivarian Revolution. I wonder how many protestors would be slaughtered here in the U.S. if we went to all of our rallies armed to the teeth? The opposition in Venezuela even has been filmed burning a government supporter by dousing him with gasoline and burning him over 80% of his body. The opposition in Venezuela has long been in so-called cahoots with the U.S. in supporting *non-peaceful* means of protest and change.

The paragraph goes on to detail Maduro’s “disregard for the law.” Which law would that be? President Maduro has been doing a heroic job of trying to hold the legacy of Chavismo and the Bolivarian Revolution together. I think, maybe, it might be against the law to declare oneself president and then have the Trump-led criminals in Washington DC back him up? What “rule of law” allows for the unelected usurpation of power?

The accusation of holding “unfair elections” is so laughable, I won’t even address it here for long, except to say that some of the Venezuelan opposition boycotted the last election, so that’s an

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issue of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. We could also have many pages of how unfair the U.S. elections are, but this is only a short article.

Venezuela is not in a humanitarian crisis, therefore it does not need "humanitarian aid." Recent history in Libya and Syria shows us how "wonderful" U.S. humanitarian intervention is. Why is it a crime for Venezuela not to accept a Trojan horse aid package, delivered by special forces and coming from the direction of the U.S.'s evil buddy in the region, Colombia? While the U.S. is sending unneeded or unwanted aid to Venezuela, maybe it should stop by Haiti or Puerto Rico on the way back and put the aid where it is really needed?

The letter closes with perhaps the most disgusting claim yet: *"Further, threats and involvement in Venezuela's domestic affairs by the U.S. are counterproductive as they play into the Venezuelan government's narrative that the opposition is a proxy for the U.S."*

Since Hugo Chávez Frias became president of Venezuela in 1998 and immediately fulfilled his promise to have the people write their own Constitution and its provisions for social improvements were being rapidly instituted, the USA has had the Bolivarian Revolution in its crosshairs.

The U.S. has not only openly supported previous opposition leaders but has dumped tens of millions of dollars into opposition politicians and NGO through USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy. Under the criminal Bush regime, the U.S. supported the violent, attempted coup of then-President Hugo Chávez in 2002. The Venezuelan government has this "narrative" only for the very important reason that it's true. The U.S. even rapidly supported the traitor Juan Guaidó—Trump and Pence sending support (monetary and material) and even the Rapist of Haiti Bill Clinton got into the act, tweeting:

*The heartbreaking violence in Venezuela must stop. I stand with President @JGuaido, the National Assembly, and the people of #Venezuela as they embrace their right to live in peace, choose their leaders, and decide their future, in harmony with their neighbors.*

The best way for Venezuela to "live in peace" is for people like Clinton to quit flapping his despicable jaws and for the U.S. to let it live in peace. Remember all the times Clinton spread "democracy" and "peace" to such places as Iraq, Somalia, and Rwanda, in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia, and in Haiti while he was POTUS? Having Clinton yammering about "democracy" in

Venezuela and standing with an illegitimate president is so hypocritical, it goes beyond the definition.



War Criminals of a Feather

Now, of course, opposing sanctions (or even worse, military intervention) is the good and correct thing to do, but it's my opinion that we cannot also spout the now prevalent formula of "Mr. X is an evil dictator who murders his own people, but the U.S. should not meddle."

Of course, Trump did not begin the U.S. program of complete dominance of our neighbors in Central and South America (and the Caribbean), it began with the Monroe Doctrine in the 1800s.

Like I said above Venezuela has been of special interest to the Empire since Chavez was elected in 1998.

The gains of the Bolivarian Revolution have been nothing but stunning since then: the income gap in Venezuela has narrowed; people have been educated and their health (including dental and vision) taken care of; housing and food became human rights instead of privileges for the wealthy; and much more.

Not only were these vast in scope social programs implemented, but the people of Venezuela were empowered to have a say in their government. For example, the only way the Bolivarian constitution can be amended is through public referendums. Conversely and realistically, only the elitists can amend the constitution of the Empire, or just use loopholes and their money to subvert it at every opportunity.

Chávez was a champion of not only the people of Venezuela but brought a new standard of life to Cuba, recognizing Fidel Castro as the great leader he was and recognizing Cuba as a force for good in the world. The Cuban-Venezuelan alliance brought doctors, professors, and engineers to Venezuela to help fulfill the social programs and Venezuela sent beef and oil. Citgo oil (under the leadership of Chávez) was the only oil company to answer the call for low-cost heating oil for poor people in the Northeast USA of North America.

I spent time traveling in Latin America with President Chávez and saw the universal love and

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respect he received. The USA's programs of constant harassment and coup attempts did not work against Chávez because not only was he a popular leader, but he was the democratically elected leader of the sovereign Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

After Hugo Chávez died of a very aggressive form of cancer, Nicolás Maduro was elected to the presidency after a short term of interim presidency. Maduro was handpicked by Chávez to be his successor, and, in my opinion, only an insane person, or someone who was devoted to his friend and dedicated to the Revolution would want to fill those shoes.

Maduro is NOT a “dictator,” (he has been elected in legitimate and transparent elections—the last one by 67%) nor is he corrupt or incompetent. Since he took over the reins of the government, he has not had one moment of peace from the opposition in Venezuela, which is fully supported and funded by the U.S. Empire. Besides stealing the assets of Venezuela, the Evil Empire has placed numerous economic sanctions and diplomatic restrictions on what it calls a “state sponsor of terror.” The U.S. has been helped by its puppet in the region: Colombia.

We should strongly condemn the USA's recent attempts at further destabilization in Venezuela when the corrupt and vicious Trump regime “recognized” the traitorous, counter-revolutionary, Guaidó, as the legitimate leader of Venezuela by executive decree. By international law, the USA is the largest “state sponsor of terror” and the Trump regime has little support in the USA, so why should its decrees be accepted internationally?



Top: Chavista Constituent Assembly. Bottom: political party of Guaidó.

According to journalist John Pilger, the U.S. has overthrown 67 leaders in Latin America, but I don't think Maduro will be #68: Maduro and the people of Venezuela are not backing down. Will Trump and his neocons Bolton and Elliot Abrams risk a full-scale invasion, because that is what it will take, and of course, the people will suffer further.

As for the traitor Juan Guaidó, he has illegitimately appointed a new board of directors to the state oil company PDVSA and is apparently in Colombia right now mustering counter-revolutionary support. Until the USA recognized this putschist, only people in the traitor's district had ever heard of him and he was only “head” of the National Assembly because it was his turn.

Interestingly enough, the traitor, Juan, has also said that he would “renew” diplomatic relations with Israel and the illegitimate state of Israel jumped right on board to recognize another bastard. Venezuela cut ties in 2009 over the Israeli ongoing genocide in Gaza. Also, on April 27, 2009, Venezuelan foreign minister Nicolas Maduro met with Palestinian National Authority foreign affairs minister Riyad al-Maliki in Caracas, where formal diplomatic relations were established.



Venezuela's opposition cheer the U.S. and Israeli flags at their rally earlier today. pic.twitter.com/SXxzYyDMvs-teleSUR English (@telesurenglish) Feb. 2, 2019

As for the legitimate government of Venezuela, we all should proudly stand with President Maduro, and the people of Venezuela, who, after being empowered by the Bolivarian Revolution will refuse to descend back into poverty and tyranny. We cannot be like the fake lefties above who pretend to oppose intervention, while listing very good reasons for intervention, only if they were true.

We should all courageously oppose U.S. misleadership in the Democrat and Republican parties; especially Trump's new crop of neo-cons: John Bolton and Elliot Abrams!

***U.S. bloody hands off of Venezuela—  
and everywhere else!***

***Long live the  
Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela!***

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[see CINDY SHEEHAN'S SOAPBOX]

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*“The great appear great to us  
Only because we are on our knees:  
Let us rise.”*

— Camille Desmoulins

**Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ROL), USA** is a revolutionary working class organization that fights for working class power and the elimination of all human exploitation. ***Ray O’ Light Newsletter*** is the regular publication of ROL, USA. We believe, with comrade Lenin, that the working class “... needs the truth and there is nothing so harmful to its cause as plausible, respectable petty bourgeois lies.” In the spirit of Karl Marx who taught that “our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action,” we welcome your comments.

Comradely the Newsletter Staff,

*Ray Light*, Editor

*Pat Kelly*

*Carl Pappos*, Production Coordinator

Boxholder, 607 Boylston St., Lower Level Box 464, Boston, MA 02116 USA