Still Defending Stalin

Stalin’s service to the cause is actually well documented by his modern day defenders and in some case proves to be an obsessive attempt to prove every besmirch allegation upon him a falsehood. A local example is when, in London, in 1991, the Stalin Society-UK was formed as an organization whose stated goal was to refute anti-communist and anti-Stalin libels and slanders through rigorous scholarly research and vigorous debate. Their assessment always comes down in his favour. Over the years, the Stalin Society-UK has contributed a number of articles dealing with the Stalin Period of Soviet history, and has conducted and sponsored numerous education events, forums, and symposia. Without measuring what constitutes success, internationally the Stalin Society has been replicated.

On March 8, 2014 The Stalin Society of North America was founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at which it gave the first, annual SSNA award “For Distinguished Contributions to Stalin and Soviet-Era Scholarship and Activism” to Professor Grover Furr of Montclair State University. [http://www.stalinsociety.org/](http://www.stalinsociety.org/)

And a flurry of Facebook societies have appeared:

**Stalin Society Pakistan** that produces a bi-annual internet journal, Left Progressive Review.

**Stalin Society India** [https://www.facebook.com/StalinSocietyIndia/](https://www.facebook.com/StalinSocietyIndia/)

**Stalin Society Tunisa** [https://www.facebook.com/Stalin-Society-Tunisia-527571410628640/](https://www.facebook.com/Stalin-Society-Tunisia-527571410628640/)

The CPGB ML is one of the few organisations to march with portraits of Stalin in the streets of London. “Yet, for many in Britain, Stalin remains a controversial figure, apparently embodying all that is ‘wrong’ with communism. So why does our party insist on defending him and safeguarding his legacy? Because the reality is that no greater achievements have been made by the working class anywhere.”

Which downgrades the Chinese Revolution, countless national liberation successes, and the loss of socialism in the Soviet Union. Having allowed the agenda to be set in response to the denigration of Stalin, lip service is paid to the notion of corrective practice, as specific references remain absent, while proclaiming

“We must learn from the wealth of Bolshevik theoretical and historical experience in order to successfully guide the struggle against the British imperialist bourgeoisie. That is why we must defend Stalin and the Soviet Union against incessant and entirely false attacks of our ruling class and their hired ‘intellectual’ servants – whether these apparently originate within or outside the working-class movement.”

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1 Red Youth, Stalin and the USSR – myth and reality

2 Ditto [https://redyouth.org/](https://redyouth.org/)
Chairman of the Workers’ Party of Belgium, Ludo Martens (1946-2011) produced a thoughtful and widely distributed study, *Another View of Stalin* (1996), and *Khrushchev Lied* by Professor Furr Grover (2013) challenges the charges in Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech”. Even a considered study like Martens avoids well known issues in the public domain like when the Comintern announced the dissolution of the Polish Party in 1938 and the lukewarm support for the Greek Liberation struggle although the aim of his work is “to deconstruct many “well known truths” about Stalin, that are summarized – over and over – in a few lines in newspapers, history books and interviews, and which have more or less become part of our unconsciousness”.

Martens, more fully in the Maoist tradition appreciates that errors (some might argue crimes) occurred that require a sober, rather than mindless, evaluation. As is suggested, “It was by analyzing these weaknesses that Mao Zedong formulated his theory about continuing the revolution.”

Apologetic self-proclaimed “Stalinists” promote the colossal achievements of the Soviet Union led by Stalin as living proof of the validity of the socialist system. In this disservice they present a static picture neither addressing what was both undesirable and wrong in that experience, actions to be avoid in future and retain a political understanding frozen in a tableau that does not develop political strategy nor appreciate the importance of political elements important to a liberation struggle for a classless society.

Furthermore those, mainly outside China, inspired by the Cultural Revolution developed lines of political investigation on the nature of the state, the struggle against it, mass line democracy and liberational feminism, and more latterly the ecological dimension; while others drawing upon the experience of peoples’ war and united fronts have also enriched the arsenal of struggle against imperialism. This approach critically engages with the legacy of not only Stalin, but also Mao Zedong to advance the unceasing urge for freedom and liberation.

The late Ludo Marten expressed a common view amongst anti-revisionists of differing political roots that “if there was a failure in the Soviet Union, it was a failure of revisionism, introduced by Khrushchev”.

That does raise the question of what about the failure to prevent the rise of revisionism, is that not too a part of Stalin’s legacy. In understanding how capitalism came to be restored in the Soviet Union there are those who argue from a Maoist position that sees the nature of the Soviet Union “change colour” from an much earlier date than those who belatedly see that,

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4 Ditto p284 See also *Appreciating Mao*. https://emaism.wordpress.com/2015/04/25/50-index-to-50-posts/
5 Ditto p12
“In 1956 Khrushchev attacked Stalin’s achievements so that he could change the fundamental line of the Communist Party. The progressive degeneration of the political and economic system that followed led to the final break with socialism in 1990 with Gorbachev.”^6

This narrative pushes aside the millstone that acknowledging what the polemical struggle against modern revisionism represents to them; the ideological criticism, and theoretical developments that ensued cannot be reconciled with the decades of continued support for Soviet policy under Khrushchev and his successors.

In contrast, they make a totem of their politics with the emphasis on defending Stalin rather than drawing lessons from the past experiences. The argument is:

“Essentially, Stalin has not been continuously vilified because he was a mass murderous dictator who exercised total control over the population, while strangely simultaneously giving full rights to all citizens, eradicating illiteracy, drastically expanding life expectancy, but because he posed a rightful threat to Western imperialism.”^7

“Here is a man who in death, as in life, inspires the most furious and passionate hatred of the bourgeoisie and its troto-revisionist hangers on. And the inspiration for this hatred rests not with the man, his personality or habits, but with his politics and with the achievements associated with those politics – namely, the defence of the principles of scientific socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.”^8

There is a historical legacy that communist build upon and Marxism has developed from its Nineteenth Century roots, enriched by new thinking and contributions from various struggles throughout the world. The CPGB ML states, limiting revolutionary communism to such a narrow yardstick, that,

“To desert the USSR, the CPSU (B) and Stalin means ultimately to embrace the path of social democracy (Labour party imperialism) and to replace the class struggle for socialism with begging for a few crumbs from our capitalist masters. This, lamentably, has been the fate of the once-proud CPGB, whose revolutionary tradition of the 1920s-50s has been ditched in favour of prettifying the ‘left’ wing of British imperialism. “

The New Communist Party is in further denial, besides errors in chronology, its thesis does little to explain the victory of revisionism in the Soviet Union that was brewing under Stalin’s watch.

“In the years which followed much of Stalin's work was undone. Revisionist and corrupt elements who had wormed their way into the leadership began by attacking Stalin’s record

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6 Martens (1996): 12
7 Red Youth, Stalin’s significance today
https://redyouth.org/2016/02/24/stalins-significance-today-red-youth-corinne/
8 Red Youth, The Morning Star and the “single, divisive individual”
and then moved to attack what had been built during his leadership. They paved the way for hidden traitors to rise to top and lead the counter-revolution which destroyed the Soviet Union in 1990. “

There is no acknowledgement of even the criticisms made by the Communist Party of China. One can learn from the past without abandoning the future. What lessons have been learnt? Too many contemporary Stalin’s defenders do not critically say “we would not do as Stalin did.”

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