

Joseph Stalin

A Teacher From The Working Class

Speech by a representative of the Alive Production Collective
on the 100th anniversary of Stalin's birth, December 21, 1979

The task we have this evening is too momentous to achieve. How can anyone sum up Stalin's whole life and his great contribution in a forty-five minute speech? It can't be done. We can't say all we would want to say here tonight given the time we have.

Of course, the task would be momentous even if we were only to express our own positive feelings for Stalin, on this the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. There is more we should do than just express our positive view, however. There are definitely two strong views on Stalin. We have to contend with the fact that there are two views and we have to address ourselves to the view which is not our own. This all makes the task of tonight's speech larger.

A story will illustrate the two views held of Stalin. The story concerns Nikita Khrushchev who usurped power in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. Khrushchev was worried and said to one of his government ministers, "What am I going to do? Kennedy is coming to visit!" The minister, who didn't understand the worry, replied, "So what?" Khrushchev explained, "Kennedy was bragging to me about a machine supposedly invented in the USA which can resurrect a dead man." The minister again replied, "So what?" Khrushchev explained that he felt it necessary to go the U.S. President one better, "and I told him that the USSR has invented a new drug which makes any athlete run faster than the most speedy animal. Now Kennedy says he's going to bring his machine but we don't have the drug I bragged about. What am I to do?"

Khrushchev's crony hit on the resolution. He said, "Don't worry, Nikita. If Kennedy uses his machine to resurrect Stalin, you'll run faster than any man or animal!" (Laughter)

This is the Stalin we uphold.

We are cultural workers and we uphold Stalin for his contributions to culture. Apparently, Stalin was a man of great culture. We read in a bourgeois newspaper how Stalin used to attend the ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre. It seems he would sit in his special balcony, put his feet up on the seat in front of him, eating chicken all the while and throwing the bones down on the audience below. (Laughter) This is what Mark Gayn reports anyway. Perhaps we shouldn't believe it. After all was Mark Gayn there? Was he actually hit by a falling chicken bone? (Laughter) Good shot, this Stalin, eh?

These two funny stories are both made up — though one pretends not to be. One reflects our view of Stalin and Khrushchev, the anti-Stalinist. The second reflects the bourgeois opinion of Stalin.

Stalin, as the theme of tonight's meeting suggests, came from a very common background. He came from a working family. His family was lowly in social standing, very hard working and very religious, apparently. This last characteristic led to their aspiration for Stalin as a youth to get an education and to become a religious official. They sent him to a seminary. Stalin actually studied to be a priest. It's always comical to tell that one to those who don't know.

Stalin never got to be a priest because he was thrown out of the seminary for organizing the seminarians into study groups pursuing Marxism. (Laughter) Stalin started very early rebelling, organizing and upholding his working class heritage in practice.

We uphold Stalin very strongly for his common outlook — not the kind of "common" attitude Mark Gayn writes about but the kind of attitude that comes from being amongst ordinary people, from being in the working class. Stalin always acted as one of the common people. Generally, one does not get the impression that this was what Stalin was all about. One gets the impression from

the main stories promoted about Stalin in our society that he was a leader who was very full of himself, who lorded it over common people as a dictator.

As a young revolutionary, the assignments Stalin took were very run-of-the-mill tasks. He was not always a big important official in the vanguard Party. He was a very hard working basic Party worker for a long time. He worked as an organizer. In this he was willing to venture into places where other people wouldn't go. Where no ground had been broken in terms of organizing revolution, Stalin would go. He built up the influence of the revolutionary organization in these places.

Stalin was a propaganda worker. He worked on the production of educational materials. He founded and worked on the newspaper *Pravda*. During one period some years before the October revolution, *Pravda* came out daily and maintained a circulation of 60,000 copies.

Given our organization's political work, we can relate strongly to these roles of Stalin as an educational worker and as an organizer. The thing we can relate to most strongly of all, though, is that Stalin had close ties with the masses. He came from the masses and he always maintained the attitude of someone who was of the masses. He never forgot his roots. He never betrayed his roots. This is very important: Stalin's roots are with the common people.

In the Russian language *pravda* means truth. These days that name on a Soviet social-imperialist paper is a *misnomer*. However, when Stalin was in charge it was a good name. When Stalin worked at the *Pravda* offices, he had the habit of actually answering the phone there, as was indicated in one of the poems read aloud earlier this evening. *Pravda* correspondents used to phone stories in and Stalin often answered the phone himself. This habit was one Stalin kept up even after the October Revolution and after he became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This habit which Stalin developed early was something he had in common with Zhou Enlai. Zhou was famous in China for actually having a phone in his home with a known number on which people could actually call and speak to him about their concerns.

As a result of coming from the masses, working among the masses, never betraying the masses, always maintaining close contact with the masses, Stalin was dearly loved by the people. The present leadership of the USSR, of course, has nothing in common with Stalin in this. Apparently the ordinary people of the Soviet Union tell a story about a time when Brezhnev was due in a small village for a ceremonial occasion of some sort. Brezhnev, of course, has never done anything useful militarily — he has only oppressed the people — but is known nonetheless by the great title of a Field Marshall. Because of this title the local army unit gave his arrival a twenty-one gun salute. As the guns were popping off, an old peasant woman came up to one young soldier to ask, "What's all the noise about?" The reply was, "Haven't you heard? Brezhnev is coming!"

So the peasant woman said, "Well, what's wrong with those gunners? Haven't they hit him yet?" (Laughter)

People's feeling for Brezhnev is correct. People's feeling for Stalin was actually opposite — they didn't treat him with this great contempt which they reserve for Brezhnev. The people treated Stalin as a leader they actually loved. They felt he was close to them. They actually felt he had their interests at heart and put their interests into practice in the policy of the Party and in the policy of

the Soviet government. The best illustration of this is that when Stalin died, only twenty-seven years ago, and the announcement of his death was made using the public address systems in the streets of the major cities of the Soviet Union, people spontaneously burst into tears. This spontaneous weeping and expression of grief amongst ordinary people at the news of the death of Stalin was reported by the Soviet press, of course, but it was also reported by Western observers who were there. These observers said they were amazed because they had the apriori opinion that Stalin was hated by the people, simply because the Cold War was raging and in the West he was becoming hated. These observers were quite surprised to see the dear esteem with which the Soviet people held Stalin.

A good anecdote illustrates why the people loved Stalin. The story also has an extension which gives indication of what happened in the Soviet Union after Stalin died. Unlike Brezhnev, Stalin was a great military leader. He actually commanded troops and gave military directions. During the Second World War, the Nazi imperialist army invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviet people paid an awful price in lives and lost blood in opposing the oncoming Nazi army — in the Soviet Union, they lost fifteen million people to the Second World War. One hears much of the millions who died in Nazi concentration camps but the fact that fifteen million died in the Soviet Union's fight against the Nazi invasion is very rarely popularized. The Soviet people lost more lives in that war than any country in the world.

As the Nazis advanced they actually occupied huge amounts of territory in the Soviet Union. At one point they came as far as Moscow. When they came to the city, Stalin was there directing the troops in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the Soviet Red Army. Stalin actually gave the army directives on a daily basis. There is a book of his daily directives which people should read. When the Nazi imperialist army was actually in the suburbs of Moscow, the city was evacuated but Stalin refused to have the general staff of the Soviet Red Army or himself evacuated. He said that Moscow would never fall to the Hitlerite fascists.

It came to be true that it was at Moscow that the Nazi army's military campaign was turned around. The Hitlerite army was repulsed. The tide did turn. The Nazi army was driven out of all of the Soviet Union by the Soviet Red Army. Further, the fascist army was driven right back across Eastern Europe all the way to

Germany and Berlin where it was completely annihilated.

This is one of the reasons why the Soviet people held Stalin in such high esteem. He had great courage. He had the practice as an individual of standing unflinchingly face to face with the Nazi army at Moscow. He had the great military victory against the Hitlerite fascists to his credit.

However, after his death Stalin came to be credited no longer with turning the tide in the battle for Moscow, with breaking the siege of Moscow. In subsequent times, credit for all that was given to a character who was little more than a messenger boy in the battle — he actually used to run with messages from the general staff, located in the core of the city, to the Generals actually with the troops at the front, located in the suburbs. This messenger boy who claimed credit for winning the campaign because he carried winning strategies developed by others was Khrushchev. This is the kind of thing that was done to Stalin's memory by these criminals after he died.

Another joke which was told in the Soviet Union during Khrushchev's reign concerns "heaven". There traditionally is a strong religious bent amongst the people of the USSR. Apparently, after Kennedy died — after the assassination — he went to heaven and was greeted by St. Peter who said, "Oh, John Kennedy, the good upstanding Catholic! Come right in." However, Kennedy responded, "No, I'm not coming in there. Look at what's going on there in the corner." Stalin was standing in the corner with a gun in his hand. So St. Peter walks up to Stalin and asks, "Will you put down the gun please? Kennedy's all upset. He won't come into heaven with you threatening like that."

So, Stalin says to St. Peter, "Tell him, he's got nothing to worry about. I'm waiting for Khrushchev." (Laughter)

The sentiment in this joke from the Soviet Union is exactly the sentiment we should have. It was Khrushchev who was mainly responsible for the largescale trashing of Stalin's memory. It was Khrushchev who fed all the so-called "true inside stories", which were all actually incredible fabricated slanders, to the West. Before Khrushchev's so-called "exposure" of Stalin, all the West had was its Cold War mentality. Khrushchev fed the Cold War mentality a bunch of stories to be used as its content. The anti-communists just loved to get these stories.

We uphold Stalin. Despite all the stories, despite all the slanders, we uphold Stalin. We uphold Mao Zedong Thought. Mao Zedong upheld and embraced Stalin, as indicated by his essay which was read aloud here this evening. We could say: If Mao Zedong upholds Stalin, that's good enough for us. However, that's not the only reason we uphold Stalin. We uphold Stalin because he was a great Bolshevik. Stalin was acknowledged by Mao Zedong, a great Marxist-Leninist teacher, but Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist in his own right.

When one uses the word Bolshevik, the common consciousness leads people to think one of three things. People think that's a good thing. Some people think that it is a great thing to be a Bolshevik. Other people think that's an insult, it's a very bad thing — "Bolsheviks eat babies!" Similarly, there are different views of Stalin. Much of the consciousness around the word Bolshevik is associated with Stalin. Stalin was a great Bolshevik. Lenin was a great Bolshevik. These are certainly the people thought of when the anti-communists denounce the Bolsheviks or when revolutionaries uphold the Bolsheviks.

It's good to talk about Stalin and Lenin in the same breath because Stalin was the great comrade-in-arms of Lenin. This is obscured a lot. Some say Stalin came into his leading position by devious means after Lenin died because Lenin wouldn't have tolerated it while alive. However, Stalin was in fact a close working comrade of Lenin. He knew Lenin from the early days of the Bolshevik revolution. For years he corresponded with Lenin. They exchanged ideas. They worked together in the leadership of the Party.

We uphold Stalin because he is a great theoretician. He interpreted and developed Lenin. His works are popular amongst those who know them for being down to earth. His works should

REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM

"Life is exceedingly difficult"
Or so they say.

For a mother whose child starves
In a Kampuchean refugee camp
Life is exceedingly difficult.

For a worker in the auto industry
Laid off without warning
Life too is difficult.

For the child who has no home
No love, no caring
Life is exceedingly difficult.

For the Native people trapped in conditions
Of dire poverty, cultural subjection
Life is indeed difficult.

For us you could say the same
We feel the difficulties of others — class love
Yet we possess an understanding
Revolutionary theory gives us hope.

Life is exceedingly difficult.
Difficult yet bright.

Jean Emery

become better known. Stalin did a series of popular writings and speeches on Lenin after his death. These are collected in an easy to read collection called "Lenin". They give you very good insights into Lenin. They also give, by implication, proof that Stalin was in fact the close comrade-in-arms of Lenin.

Stalin's book "Foundations of Leninism" is very good to read if you are interested in a summary of the basic principles taught by Lenin and their application. Stalin was a highly practical writer.

As mentioned earlier this evening in the introduction to one of the poems read aloud, Stalin actually developed a position which is considered to be a basic tenet of Marxism-Leninism — that is, his position on the national question. Stalin's "Marxism, and the National Question" is a very important work. It is particularly pertinent in Canada because analyzing the situation with the Native people, the Quebecois nation, the Acadian people are all issues in our own society. It is even pertinent to the threats of secession we hear from time to time from people in other parts of Canada — from B.C., from the North, from the Prairie Provinces, from Newfoundland, from the Maritimes.

Stalin wrote some great works in opposition to the Trotskyites. He opposed the Trotskyites in practice, of course, but also on the theoretical front. These works are found in the collection called "On the Opposition".

Stalin wrote a couple of important books just before he died. One was "Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics", which sorted out an area of Marxist theory that had never been addressed by such a leader before. He also wrote "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR" just before he died. This book actually contained self-criticism from Stalin on the directions taken in the Soviet Union at certain junctures under his leadership. He pointed out certain errors he himself had made. People who say Stalin never made self-criticism, never recognized any errors of his own, can read this book.

Stalin wrote a book which many people are familiar with. It's a handbook in the Communist Party of China. It's called "Dialectical and Historical Materialism." This is a very easy to read book. It gives a very good perspective on classes, on the development of human society.

Stalin was a great theoretician. We uphold him for this. However, this is not the common consciousness of Stalin. Stalin is a slandered man. We say it's slander. Some people would say it's not slander but truth. A satirical reference was made earlier in the meeting which pointed to the parallel between slanders of Stalin and slanders of Pol Pot. The big question of the day in the bourgeois press could be put in the following terms: Who is the greatest rapist and butcher, Stalin or Pol Pot? As with the earlier mentioned "Bolsheviks eat babies", these are slanders.

However, they are not just slanders. It is interesting to look into these to see why they are put forward.

Were a lot of women raped in the Soviet Union? Yes, there were. There was rape by the invading Nazi imperialist army.

Was there any content at all to this slogan about murdering babies? Yes, there was. In fact, the Bolsheviks and the Soviet people had a similar slogan themselves: Death to the baby-killers! This slogan was directed at the enemy, it was not a self-criticism.

It is interesting, then to see on looking into these slanders that they are just facile attempts to turn true accusations back on those speaking them. This is just as when one child insults another and the response is: "Oh, yeah? You're one too." That's the content of a lot of these slanders.

A lot of these slanders take facts which were the reality of Soviet life in Lenin's and Stalin's time, under imperialist blockade and attack, and attempt to turn these real facts against the then revolutionary Soviet Union.

Other slanders are well-known. One was earlier mentioned: Stalin came to power by devious means after Lenin's death. Another slander often coupled with that is that Lenin's death itself was devious, that Stalin actually killed Lenin. A third related slander is one which favours the Trotskyites: Stalin was never meant to take power after Lenin died; Stalin was not Lenin's just successor, was not the man appointed to take Lenin's place. Can

you guess the rest? Of course! Trotsky was the man appointed to take Lenin's place. (Laughter)

Did you know Lenin did not leave a "Last Will"? There is, however, a document called "Lenin's Last Will" which was printed early in the 1930s in the *New York Times*. A full page ad was used to print this document. It was paid for by a certain Max Eastman, who is a notorious promoter of Trotsky in the USA. This "Last Will" is still talked about today by the Trotskyites. If the Trotskyites had the courage to hold a literature table here in the city or up at the university, they would tell you, "Oh, yes. Yes, Lenin said that Trotsky should take over after he died." You still hear this nonsense but the fact is that Trotsky himself, later in the 1930s admitted that *he*, not Lenin, wrote this "Last Will". (Laughter) We're not just making it up or just saying we think some Trotskyite wrote it — Trotsky himself admitted it.

Of course, another interesting thing is that this "Last Will" is not an issue, even if Lenin did write it because it is not a norm in the world Communist movement that one leader appoints another as his successor. The people in the Party elect the leader. The members of the CPSU elected Stalin as their leader. A second interesting thing is that they elected Stalin as their Party leader years before Lenin died. Stalin didn't take a new position after Lenin died. Stalin already had the position of General Secretary of the Central Committee before Lenin died. This is the position Stalin held until December 1952 and he was first appointed to the position in April 1922. Lenin had only one official position when he died in 1924, having resigned other positions earlier because of failing health and his feeling that others should take up parts in the collectivized leadership. Stalin didn't take the position Lenin had when he died — this position was never filled, it was always left open to symbolize the fact that no one could fill Lenin's place.

Again, to look into these slanders is to find out quite interesting things.

The biggest slander about Stalin is that he killed millions of people. We always like these slanders, they're so facile. You hear them about China: The Yellow River flowed red with blood after Mao came to power. We heard a good one about Pol Pot the other day. Pol Pot was convicted by one of these ad-hoc international tribunals of raping 8,000 women. (Laughter) He may be a rapist — we don't know he's not with absolute certainty — but we don't think anyone could be that active a rapist. It's about the same level of content to say someone killed millions of people. It's easy to say but there's no science in it. How many millions of people? Where? What people? What documented evidence can be shown? The question is not: Can somebody say Stalin killed millions of people? Rather the question is: Did he actually do it?

Of course, it can be said that these slanders don't mean that Stalin actually killed millions himself or that Pol Pot himself raped these 8,000 women, although that's the way they phrase it. They mean that these atrocities happened under the regime of these leaders. Did these atrocities happen under Stalin's regime? Well, certain people were definitely treated atrociously. A brand of people known as Trotskyites were treated quite atrociously. They were killed, yes. They were jailed, yes. They were put down through suppression, yes.

Was all this done in an illegal fashion? In a fashion not according with international law? No. In fact these people were put on trial. In the 1930s it was a big thing in people's consciousness all over the world — the Stalin Purge Trials, they were called in the popular terminology. "Purge Trials in the Soviet Union", "Soviets Purge Themselves", these were the headlines in the world's press at the time.

The first ambassador to the Soviet Union from the U.S. attended all these trials. He wrote a book called "Mission to Moscow"; his name is Joseph Davies. If people get a chance to read this book, they should take the opportunity. It's quite fascinating. You hear on the one hand about how these trials were a mere formality, they were a rubber stamp process, a kangaroo court, these Trotskyites were treated quite badly in the courts. Joseph Davies was no sympathizer with Stalin and the Soviet Union, he was after all the ambassador of

the government of the United States. However, Davies' firsthand report is a sympathetic account. He says the trials were the most democratic legal process he had ever witnessed. He describes the trials in a good light.

Always the slander is heard that when the Trotskyites were on trial, they did this really bizarre thing — they all stood up to confess to their crimes. Joseph Davies asks: Why shouldn't they confess? They didn't think they were crimes. They had a difference with Stalin. The Soviet government said: What you have done is illegal, you have tried to overthrow the legal authority of the State. The Trotskyite opposition responded: Yes, we tried to overthrow the authority of the State; we agree with you; we admit to that; in fact, we admit it proudly. They did not consider it a legitimate authority — why not stand up and admit it.

The slander is that the Trotskyites were all brainwashed and tortured until they confessed. The Trotskyites were quite ready to confess, quite proud to confess from the very day they were arrested. This is something you find in Joseph Davies book. Again, it is interesting to look into these slanders.

The Trotskyites always tell you, "Oh, Stalin, a terrible, terrible person. Stalin treated us Trotskyites very badly." The interesting thing here is that there are other people who were harder on the Trotskyites than Stalin. What has to be understood is that the Trotskyites were a trend renegade from the Communist trend in the world and they were quite proud to be a renegade trend. They were open about being a renegade trend. Trotsky was open about saying he opposed Stalin. He didn't do what the Trotskyites do today — pretend that he was a Communist. He was just a Trotskyite.

These Trotskyites were openly and proudly opposed to the Soviet Union at the time. They were openly and proudly opposed to the Communist Parties at the time. They had been purged from the Communist Parties. They had founded their own Trotskyite parties. They were quite proudly and viciously in opposition to the Communist Parties. For example, the Trotskyites became famous for a little thing they did in North America, in Asia and in Europe. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, because the split with the Trotskyites was still new, there was not the same consciousness of what the Trotskyite role was as there is today. The consciousness of today comes from the practice in that time. The Trotskyites used to actually betray Communists. In countries where there was fascist rule, the Trotskyites would take advantage of people who still thought the difference with them was just an ideological difference. They would contact friends who were real Communists to set up a meeting, "Very, very important that I meet you at the main intersection downtown at 6 p.m." The friend would agree. Then, the Trotskyite would contact the fascist authorities, saying, "If you go to the main intersection downtown at 6 p.m. you will find waiting there such-and-such a person, a Communist Party member." The fascists would assassinate these people on the street corners where they had been set up. After a while the Communists began to pick up on this practice.

The Trotskyites tried to murder leaders of the Soviet Union. The Trotskyites tried to poison Maxim Gorky to death. The Trotskyites succeeded in poisoning to death Gorky's son and others among his relatives. Gorky was on the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.

Not only did these things go on but the Trotskyites were quite proud to admit their role in them. They said: "Yes, these things went on. Yes, we did these things."

So, in certain countries around the world, especially in Asia, perhaps only in Asia, although it would have been a good policy elsewhere too — well, that's being flip — the Communists took up a policy of which the Chinese Party was typical. The Chinese Communist Party actually took a policy that the contradiction with the Trotskyites was antagonistic. The line for Party members became one of wiping out the Trotskyites on sight. In a matter of only a few years, virtually all the Trotskyites in China were gone. There were no Trotskyites in China after the 1930s. The same policy was followed in countries like Pakistan, etc.

We always hear all about how badly Stalin treated the Trotskyites but we don't often hear how murderous the Trotskyites were to the Communists. We don't often hear how hard other Communists were on the Trotskyites and how widely an accepted policy it was to suppress the Trotskyites for their vicious activity against the Communists.

Another slander about Stalin with regards to Trotsky is that Stalin took an ice pick and drove it into the back of Trotsky's head. (*Murmurs of laughter and isolated applause*) This is not exactly true. (*Laughter*) Trotsky did die with an ice pick in the back of his head. For anybody sympathetic with Stalin, this is an acceptable end for Trotsky. The interesting thing, however, is that it was nothing to do with Stalin that Trotsky got an ice pick in the back of his head. Look into this slander and you find it was one of Trotsky's friends that drove the ice pick into his head. It was Trotsky's aide, a man who had been his chauffeur for five or six years. The Trotskyites say this was a hidden KGB agent sent to infiltrate Trotsky's circle and then kill him. Well, besides the fact that the KGB did not then exist, the story may or may not be true. However, the accepted story at the time was that this chauffeur was a little bit pissed off because Trotsky was sleeping with his common-law wife. The ice pick was placed in the back of Trotsky's head in a crime of passion — common enough.

A glorious story — Stalin travelled all the way to Mexico to assassinate Trotsky. (*Laughter*) However, when you look into the slander you find it's simply a sordid expression of the kind of splits and sectarianism that goes on in the Trotskyite ranks.

We also hear slanders that Stalin did nothing but drink. He would just drink and drink and drink. He would drink all comers under the table. At the time of Stalin's death "Time" magazine found it fit to report that Stalin had been working himself into the books with a record for the number of vodka toasts he could drink at a banquet — apparently he could drink twenty-two vodka toasts at one banquet! Who cares, right? (*Laughter*)

We also hear the slander that Stalin had all kinds of doubles. He had people running around who looked just like him. He wouldn't appear in public places. He would stay in the Kremlin, in fact he never left the Kremlin for years. However, he would seem to put in appearances in these cities outside the Kremlin — it wasn't actually Stalin but a double who looked just like him but the guy wouldn't speak because his voice didn't sound like Stalin's. (*Laughter*) He'd just get his picture taken and then go home. (*Laughter*) Of course, the Western observers knew this was going on because the Soviets weren't too smart about this duplicity and Stalin would appear in as much as five or six places thousands of miles apart in a single night. (*Laughter*) Who cares? We don't know if it's true or not but neither is it an important issue. It's just nonsensical gossip.

We hear a big slander these days about Mao Zedong but apparently the originator of the fad Mao is slandered for was Stalin — the personality cult was first built by Stalin. He built this personality cult around himself. During the siege of Moscow, eh, there were no foodstuffs available in the shops because all the routes of commerce had been cut off. The Moscow people were starving and the only thing you could buy in the stores were copies of Stalin's works and portraits of Stalin. "Personality cult", the bourgeois newspapers tell us. Another way of looking at it is that people weren't buying *them*, that's why they were left on the shelves — they were buying all the foodstuffs, that's why they were out of foodstuffs. They tell you this slander and expect you to respond, "Oooh, no, don't tell me, not portraits of Stalin on the store shelves." (*Laughter*) They never emphasize that the Nazis were on the outskirts of the city, that an invading imperialist army had cut off all the supply of food.

We hear the slander that Stalin was a deranged dictator. Stalin's actual ancestor in Russia was not Lenin but was Rasputin. (*Laughter*)

We hear the slanders about the non-aggression pact that the Soviet Union signed with Nazi Germany in 1939, which was called the Molotov-Ribbentrov Pact. The signator for the Soviet side was Molotov, who lent his name to an interesting little device...

(Laughter)

We hear slanders about Stalin being the first perpetrator of imperialism from the Soviet Union when they took over Finland. The troops were marched into Finland in 1940.

We hear the slander that Stalin was the oppressor of nations. Stalin was the man who razed the Ukraine, burned it to ground.

We hear slander about Stalin being the first big power monger in the Soviet leadership because he went to Yalta, even before World War Two was over, and he was one of the big three with Churchill and Roosevelt and they divided up the world between them.

We hear slander about Stalin being an oppressor subjugating the people of Eastern Europe because the Red Army occupied these countries after the Second World War. He unfairly repatriated the German population in Poland and that was racism and chauvinism, is another slander. The Soviet army in Eastern Europe and in places in Asia was an occupation army; it was there whether the people wanted it or not.

We hear all these slanders and all these slanders can be answered.

The non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany was a tactical manoeuvre. It was a smart manoeuvre. Germany was geared up for war and it was going to invade the Soviet Union. This was well known. It was inevitable. It was known to be inevitable throughout the world, not just known to Hitler and Stalin. Every other government leader knew it and every other government leader knew they were not going to come to the Soviet Union's aid. Stalin knew the Soviet people were going to have to go it by themselves. In order that they could gear up for war too, he knew he had to play for time and the pact was signed.

However, even if that was not the tactical reasoning behind the pact, what's wrong with signing a pact for peace? What's wrong with getting a rapacious beast like the Nazi imperialists to say they won't invade a country? If they then turn around and invade, which is exactly what they did in the Soviet Union, is that Stalin's fault? Is that Stalin being a dictator? Is that Stalin being a military maniac? Stalin was already in the Soviet Union. The Nazis are the ones who came as invaders into the Soviet Union.

Was it imperialism in Finland? It was inevitable that Nazi Germany invade the Soviet Union. Many of the Soviet Union's most populous and most industrialized cities are within striking distance by airplane and by land from Finland. At the time Finland had a pro-fascist government. Finland has a long border with the Soviet Union — the full length of the country constitutes a border with the Soviet Union. So, the Soviet government, feeling threatened, actually made diplomatic overtures to the Finnish government asking for a pact to say they would not allow Nazi Germany to use Finland as a staging ground for attacks on the Soviet Union. In another offer the Soviets proposed that Finland lend, for the duration of the war, portions of Finnish territory to the Soviet Union so that these territories closest to their industrialized

KOBA — THE INDOMITABLE

High in the Caucasus
where samovars grow cold,
it whirls and hurls itself
across sea and plains.
All stand in awe, remembering,
Thick-furried bears annoyedly
add blankets for warmth and hiding.

Roses are dally planted
signifying people's unforgotten feelings.
Petals dance gayly through Gori's streets,
some even travelling further afield
falling on distant frozen lands
rekindling spirits in souls grown cold.
Children bellow: "Koba — the Indomitable — has returned."

George Steffler

centres couldn't be used as strike bases. Reciprocally, the Soviet Union would turn over huge tracts of its lands to Finland for the duration. They offered a trade. You hear about imperialism against Finland, the use of force against Finland but you never hear about this prelude to the use of force. The pro-fascist government in Finland answered the Soviet diplomacy "No!" They also made it clear by implication that if Nazi Germany wanted to use parts of Finland for its military purposes it would be fine since they were allies. Thus, when the threat became imminent, the Soviet military took over Finland.

The Red Army razed the Ukraine? Yes, they did raze the Ukraine before the oncoming advance of the German Nazi imperialist army. They stripped every factory in the area and shipped its machinery far into the interior of the Soviet Union. They removed all vehicles, evacuated people and burnt all crops. They followed a scorched earth policy. A scorched earth policy is one of the oldest military tactics in the world but to talk to reactionary Ukrainian nationalists would lead you to believe it was used by Stalin in the Ukraine for the first time ever. Would it have made sense for the Soviets to feed the Nazis as they passed through the Ukraine on their way to the heart of the Soviet Union? Should they have provided the fascists with steel making plants and machinery to assist the aggressors' war effort? It shouldn't be done. It was sensible, then, to follow the scorched earth military policy. We hear all about how the Soviet government razed the Ukraine. We don't often hear about how after the war they rebuilt the Ukraine, to the extent that today it is again known as the bread basket of Eastern Europe.

At Yalta, near the end of the Second World War, the three big powers did get together. They didn't divide the world up into spheres of influence. Stalin wasn't granted anything. He didn't give, nor was he given, any colonies. Certainly, the Western imperialist powers tried to take colonies and areas of influence for themselves. However, Stalin was only "granted" what the Soviet Red Army already held. Who did he get these territories for? For himself? For the great Russian chauvinist purposes? Did he grab territories for an imperialist Soviet Union? No, he got them for the people of those countries. This was subsequently proved.

The Red Army had a policy, which some say was just a formality, by which it had to be invited in by legitimate representatives of the people of those countries before it entered any of these countries in Eastern Europe or in Asia. Of course, sometimes they said the sitting governments were not as legitimate a representative of the people as were the partisans, the resistance movements. Then again, the Western allies did that too. All this sounds wrong in light of the fact that the Soviet social-imperialists today use this "invited by the people" as an excuse to overthrow legitimate governments. The proof that they only went in when invited is that there were a number of countries in Eastern Europe that they did not go into. Where the partisans said no, the Red Army did not cross the border.

The Soviet Red Army's occupation of part of Korea is a further good proof that they were only in these countries on invitation. In Korea, the Red Army was asked to leave once matters were in good order and it did leave. Of course, it left long before the other occupation army in Korea, which is the U.S. army, because it's still there today!

We have heard a lot of slanders about Stalin from Khrushchev. In the Soviet Union after Khrushchev came to power, common people would ask one another what the difference was between Khrushchev and God. The answer was that God was unlimitedly merciful and Khrushchev was unmercifully limited. (Laughter) Again a religious joke. There is a strong religious heritage in the Soviet Union.

There were working class jokes against Khrushchev, too. One day Khrushchev was visiting a newly opened mining facility and ran into some miners down in the tunnels — of course, he was heavily guarded for this encounter. "Comrade" Nikita wasn't getting very far because the workers weren't at all friendly. So, he thought he might break the ice with a question dear to their hearts. He said, "I hear there are many jokes told to denigrate me. Will you

tell me some of them so I can come to know the people's actual opinion of me?" The miners all refused, fearing retaliation. Khrushchev prompted them again and again, until one said, "I'll tell you the jokes if you come on over here and leave your bodyguards there." So, they went off and sat in one of the tunnels of the mine. The miner began to speak but the big windbag Khrushchev cut him off with his own arrogant speech. He said, "Oh, why do the people tell jokes about me! I've worked so hard. I've tried to give people fair wages, low prices, lots of housing, good clothing." So the miner cuts him off, asking, "Hey, hey! Who's telling the jokes here?" (Laughter)

We even hear slander about Stalin's hours of death. They didn't even let him alone when he died. If you follow Mark Gayn in the *Toronto Star* every couple of years he writes this standard column — the inside story on when Stalin died. (Laughter) We've read it on a couple of occasions over the years in the *Star* already. He names all the people who were in the building where Stalin died. Stalin was dying on his bed in one room and in an adjoining room, guys like Beria and Malenkov were gathered. Apparently, every once in a while one would get to go peek in the room to see if he was dead yet. "No," then they go back and sit at the table, smoking cigarettes with the rest. Everybody knows that when somebody is dying of illness, they go through physical degeneration. Mark Gayn reports that Stalin's bowels failed and he made a mess of himself and his bed. Then, these guys in the other room started *really* hoping that Stalin would die that night because they all knew that if Stalin lived through his illness and knew that they had seen him in such a compromised posture, they would all be purged most viciously. (Laughter) This is the crap they write! Even in the very hours of his death, they can't leave him unslandered.

The bourgeoisie has lots of slanders. We don't accept these slanders. We uphold Stalin. We uphold Stalin for his contribution as a theoretician, for his contribution to practice. We uphold his contribution in exposing and defeating the Trotskyites. We uphold his contribution to defeating Nazi imperialism, for leading the Soviet people in their decisive contribution to the annihilation of Hitlerite fascism. We uphold Stalin for his attitude towards the common people.

Stalin led an oil workers' strike in Baku. There had been lots of strikes before but the Baku oil strike led by Stalin was the *first* successful strike in Russia. People remember this. This sentiment, expressed in the animated short story performed tonight which makes Stalin out as very popular in his hometown of Gori and in all of Georgia is very true. These are reflections of his contributions in practice. They are reasons that we uphold him.

We uphold him because he is a great teacher of Marxism-Leninism. He is such a teacher and he had the spirit of the common people in everything he wrote. This makes him easy to read, easy to study. His works are highly educational and they are easy going.

We don't uphold Stalin in the false way some "uphold" him these days. Enver Hoxha, internationally, Hardial Bains, in this country, and Shotgun Bob Cruise, around Guelph, "uphold" Stalin in a uniquely ridiculous fashion. They say, "Stalin never made any errors. He was one hundred percent Marxist-Leninist." Brezhnev says Stalin never did anything but make errors. Enver Hoxha says Stalin never made any errors — he was a unique man on the face of the earth, he did not make even one error. (Laughing)

We say that Stalin definitely made errors. He made some big errors. In terms of the slanders we refuted earlier about the purges, we do not reject everything said about this. There is truth there. Stalin made mistakes in these purges. We acknowledge that Stalin did make mistakes. Under Stalin's leadership people were killed who shouldn't have been executed; people were jailed who shouldn't have been jailed; people were prosecuted who shouldn't have been prosecuted; people were removed from their posts in the Party who shouldn't have been removed.

We acknowledge that Stalin made mistakes in terms of his analysis of the class situation in the Soviet Union. He analyzed that after the collectivization of agriculture during the 1930s, there were no longer classes nor class struggle existing in his country, because

socialism was fully consolidated and classes or class struggle did not continue to exist after the success of socialism. Mao Zedong later contradicted this. He identified this as an error. He said that classes and class struggle exist all throughout the period of socialism. This led to Mao Zedong's brilliant theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Presently there is a debate going on once again around this thesis of Stalin's in the world revolutionary movement. In China there is a debate centering around the idea that certain classes don't continue to exist wholly intact all throughout socialism, that Stalin was correct about that, but class struggle does continue with the remnants of those classes which still exist, even though they aren't consolidated, even though they no longer have a social basis. The idea is that though these remnants no longer constitute a class, they still constitute a threat to the people's power and to the socialist system.

Thus, it is still under debate exactly what Stalin's error was in this regard. A few years ago we would have told you we could tell you exactly what his error was. Today we don't feel we know so clearly. This is a sign of political maturity. This isn't something that either trashes Stalin or trashes Mao Zedong or trashes anyone else. This shows the vibrancy of Leftist thought, the vibrancy of revolutionary people and the revolutionary approach to problems.

This is the very vibrancy Stalin himself had. Stalin admitted that he had made mistakes in analyzing the economic conditions in the Soviet Union. He admitted this shortly before he died. Of course, he also admitted that he had made other mistakes. Stalin was a very humble leader. This is one of the things we uphold him for. There are many things we can apply from Stalin to our work quite directly — one of these things is his humble approach to leadership. They tell stories of him sitting in meetings hearing other people's opinions, hearing others talk for hours on end. People are quite familiar with the type of leaders who just hold forth all the time. They dominate any meeting they sit in. The leader's own thought, own opinion, own voice dominates the whole time. Stalin was the opposite of this. It was common for Stalin to attend Central Committee meetings or Political Bureau meetings, in which he held the post of General Secretary, but to sit there listening for six hours and to speak for only twenty minutes of the total time. Stalin listened to others' opinions. We can learn from Stalin's humble approach to leadership.

Stalin took a very humble approach towards criticism too. He not only practiced self-criticism but he accepted criticism from others. Stalin is known for this statement that Party members and Party leaders should listen to people's criticism and even if the criticism is in the main unfounded, even if there is only five percent in the criticism which is correct, which is just, that five percent should be listened to. The five percent that is just criticism should be taken into account and should lead to rectification of mistakes. This is Stalin's humility in terms of criticism. Stalin was a humble man.

For these reasons: because of Stalin's unity with the people, because of Stalin's love of the people and the people's love of Stalin; because of his grasp of Marxism-Leninism, his development of Marxism-Leninism, his continuing of Marxism-Leninism; because of his humility towards comrades, towards criticism, towards the fact that he held a leadership position; because of all the rest of the facts we've covered here tonight; and, because of many, many other things we left unsaid due to lack of time; because of all this we uphold Stalin. We uphold Stalin as one of the five great teachers of revolutionary theory and one of the five great leaders of the practical development of revolution. Thus, we say:

The spirit of Stalin.

Unity!

The spirit we need.

Unity!

The spirit we'll build.

Unity!

(Applause)