

# The Life and Death of Stalinism

## Preface

This book's political standpoint is Trotskyist, based on the views of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) of the United States. Writing it would have been impossible without the stimulation and collaboration of comrades of the LRP and its fraternal organization, Workers' Revolution of Australia. In this sense the editorial "we" is entirely justified. Much of the material was worked out in articles published in *Proletarian Revolution* (formerly *Socialist Voice*), the LRP's magazine.

Some points of usage and terminology:

1. The reader may already be familiar with basic Marxist views. Nevertheless, since Marxism has been so badly distorted, we are careful to explain the fundamental categories and ideas. Marxist terms are printed in bold type when first introduced.
2. We frequently cite translated works. Where possible, citations are taken from standard English translations. Many citations are modernized for punctuation, paragraphing and American spelling and usage.
3. We categorize political writers as Marxist, Leninist or Trotskyist if they describe themselves as such. Rather than use mocking quotation marks every time, we let the context make clear what we think.
4. The word "Soviet" with a capital S signifies the people, society, government, etc. of the Soviet Union. With a small s, "soviet" refers to workers' councils like those created by the Russian workers in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.
5. "Stalinism" means, first, the social system of state property and bureaucratic rule that originated with Stalin's counterrevolution and expanded after World War II to East Europe, China and elsewhere. It is not just the strong-man dictatorship that flourished during Stalin's lifetime. "Stalinism" also refers to political movements and ideologies that defend the Stalinist system.
6. We use "CP" to abbreviate Communist Party, even when the actual name of the party is different (e.g., the Polish United Workers Party).
7. For convenience we use "third world" to refer to the countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia (except Japan). For the most part, these are the former colonies of capitalist imperialism. The term is misleading since it suggests an unspecified fundamental difference between the "first" and "second" worlds; as well, it is often used to conceal the vast differences among, and class differentiations within, the third-world countries.
8. We use "West" and "East" to denote the blocs of (mainly) European and North American countries allied, respectively, to the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II.

Among the geographical oddities that result is that Japan, Australia and New Zealand belong to the “West.” As well, “American” will sometimes refer to the United States alone when this meaning is clear from the context.

9. “Proletariat” as used here is synonymous with working class; “bourgeoisie” means the capitalist class of the traditional capitalist societies. The “petty bourgeoisie” is the class of small capitalists, including peasants, who employ little or no non-family labor. Whereas the “middle class” means not the bourgeoisie, as it did in Marx’s day, but the various layers of professionals, ideologists, bureaucrats, managers and supervisors described in later chapters.

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