

# The Daily Worker And the Stalin Cult

By Daniel Roberts

The American Stalinist newspaper, the Daily Worker, has finally broken its silence on the repudiation of the Stalin cult by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

On March 12, Joseph Clark opened the discussion by endorsing in effect a statement made by Walter Ulbricht, East German Stalinist leader. Ulbricht had praised Stalin for persecuting the "Trotskyites and Bukharinites" but said Stalin had done "considerable damage" to the Communist Party "when [he] later placed himself above the party and fostered the cult of the individual." Says Clark: "Ulbricht also said, what was implied by the entire 20th congress, that the Soviet Communists no longer consider Stalin one of the 'classics' of Marxism."

Thus American Stalinism has demoted Stalin in conformity with present-day Stalinist policy throughout the world. But Clark knows he cannot leave matters at that. "What we'd like to discuss here," he says, "is how it was that Stalin had played both a positive and negative part in history. . . . We are searching here for an explanation of just one aspect of the criticism made by the Soviet Communists — the abuses in the security system."

Clark's explanation runs as follows: In the course of defending itself against the attacks imperialism launched on the Soviet Union, "stern and vigilant security" was required. Evidently for Clark this included the struggle against "Trotskyites and Bukharinites." However, "This did not mean that the security system could become a power unto itself." Nor does it excuse "exaggeration and misuse of the whole system of security" and "abuses which included the invention of enemies."

For Clark, the Stalin cult arose out of "exaggeration" of the blood purges Stalin conducted against the Trotskyist opposition. Frame-ups ("invention of enemies") began only where the Moscow trials left off according to his reasoning.

This is weasel-worded apologetics designed to cover up for the Kremlin dictators. By repudiating the Stalin cult, Stalin's heirs hope to appease the Soviet working class now insistently demanding economic improvements and political liberties. The dictators want to get rid of the onus of Stalin's crimes but without relinquishing the bureaucratic rule he headed. This rule was consolidated from 1923 to 1928 in the bloody struggle against the Trotskyist Left Opposition in the Bolshevik Party. They do not want to repudiate Stalin's fight against Trotskyism.

The Stalin cult arose as an inevitable counterpart to the struggle against Trotskyism — and not as an "exaggeration," as Clark maintains. On Stalin's part, the fight had nothing to do with defending the Soviet Union from capitalist restoration. It had everything to do with establishing the power of an economically privileged bureaucracy over the

Soviet toilers. This meant destroying the revolutionary party of the working class — the Bolshevik Party — and transforming it into an instrument of the bureaucratic caste.

A civil war was required to crush the working class and dispossess it politically. (See article by M. Stein and J. G. Wright on page one.) The civil war took the form of a ruthless purge begun in 1923 against revolutionists organized in the Left Opposition and led by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Revolution. Stalin's weapons included slander, re-writing of party history, jailings, beatings, frame-up trials, deportations to Siberia, executions and GPU assassinations. The bureaucracy established its position as a ruling caste by enthroning Stalin and his police apparatus. That is how the Stalin cult came into being in the Soviet Union.

It was extended into every Communist Party of the world by the same bureaucratic methods as in the Soviet Union. "We went overboard [in the U.S.] in defending things like the idea of Stalin as infallible," says Alan Max in the March 13 Daily Worker, and "in opposing any suggestion that civil liberties were not being fully respected in the Soviet Union." He reports being "jolted" by the 20th Congress and "embarrassed" for having defended "certain aspects of life in the Soviet Union which . . . the Soviet Union now says were wrong." "All this would have been avoided . . . if we Marxists [he means Stalinists] had stood more firmly on our own feet on these matters."

Max is silent, however, about the authentic Marxists in the U.S. who did stand firmly on their own feet and denounced the Stalin cult in 1928. These were Communist Party members led by James P. Cannon who declared themselves for the program of the Trotskyist Left Opposition and against the Soviet bureaucracy. (They later established the Socialist Workers Party.) For their courageous stand against Stalinism, they were bureaucratically expelled from the Communist Party, slandered, ostracized and made the targets of goon-squad attacks. That was how the Stalin cult was established in the American C.P.

"Many things bother a person like myself [about the repudiation of Stalin]" says Max. ". . . For the answers to such questions, one must either speculate or await further developments." Those many members of the American C.P. genuinely bothered by the problem of the now repudiated Stalin cult do not need to speculate or wait. What they need is freedom of discussion in their own party, and that means, in the first place, the right to study the writings of Leon Trotsky and the revolutionists in the U.S. who defend his program.