

USSR was fascist under Stalinism: Red Fascism is not a slur

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Historically, the “classical fascism” as an ideology has its Marxist roots and its messianic relationship would be like the following:

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel → Karl Marx & Engels → Georges Sorel → Giovanni Gentile → Benito Mussolini

Fascism is a philosophical movement that came out of a revisionist Marxism called “Sorelian Marxism” or “Sorelian syndicalism”. While Karl Marx invented dialectic materialism out of Hegelian thoughts of tradition, Giovanni Gentile invented the Absolute idealism out of Hegelian thoughts of tradition. He called it neo-Hegelianism. In one of his works “Fascism and Its Opponents”, Giovanni Gentile wrote the following:

It is well known that Sorelian syndicalism, out of which the thought and the political method of fascism emerged—conceived itself the genuine interpretation of Marxist communism.

He was telling that his ideology “fascism” is a product of a revisionist Marxist tradition called “Sorelian syndicalism” and he considered fascism to be the genuine interpretation of Marxist communism. Even though his version of revisionist Marxism or socialism, which later was called fascism, is almost totally different from the Marxism of Trotskyists, or left communists or anarchists, it has a lot of elements similar to Stalinism, Maoism, and etc.

Historically, the “Marxism-Leninism” as an ideology has its Marxist roots and its messianic relationship would be like the following:

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel → Karl Marx & Engels → Lenin → Stalin

Maoism would include Mao Zedong after Stalin, Titoism might include Tito after Lenin, and so on.

Conservative Revolution & National Bolshevism

People normally confuse fascism as the far-right ideology. However, fascism is not a far-right ideology. Classical fascism is a philosophy or ideology that unite the far-left elements and far-right elements under one populist umbrella. It’s a third position of internationalist anti-capitalist Marxism and capitalism.

However, in Germany, there was this genuine far-right tendency which was neither national socialist nor classical fascist. That tendency was mainly composed of thinkers such as Edgar Jung, Carl Schmitt, Julius Evola, and Martin Heidegger. Most of them were totally unique from the original Nazism (Strasserism) and classical fascism not only on the political questions and economic questions, even on the philosophical questions. Even though they’re united under the term “conservative revolution”, they’re not monolithic. For example, a prominent thinker Edgar Jung was murdered by the Nazis during the Night of the Long Knives whereas Carl Schmitt was appointed as a chancellor under Nazi party regime. “Conservative Revolution” as a movement was united under the banner of these values:

- Rejection of Liberalism (opposed democracy, individualism, and capitalism)

- Authoritarianism
- Nationalism (Anti-Internationalism/anti-Marxism)
- Cultural Conservatism (Anti-Enlightenment)

Some of their thinkers like Martin Heidegger have suffered from antisemitism and was never taken into accountability for their racism even though they're tremendous influence on mainstream philosophy. The nowadays far-right movements such as Identitarian movement and Solidarist movements were the descendants of this far-right tendency which is totally unique from the classical fascism. However, they indeed merged after Hitler targeted them and Strasserites along with National Bolsheviks. It seems like they're the most influential form of far-right politics over the literal fascist movement nowadays. This far-right "conservative revolution" groups were later labelled as "neo-fascists". That's where the label "fascists" got messed up.

The founders of National Bolshevism such as Karl Otto Paetel, Heinrich Laufenberg, and Ernst Niekisch were from this tradition and later flirted with Strasserites against the Hitler. A lot of the National Bolsheviks collaborated with Stalinists and even some of them were recruited to Communist Party under Stalin. D. Grekov's National Bolshevik school of historiography was accepted and even promoted under Stalin after embracing the core ideas of Stalinism. Historians like Evgeny Dobrenko, David Brandenberger, and Andrei Savin all agreed that Stalin's policies moved to National Bolshevism.

So, it would be factually correct to conclude that National Bolshevism is a genuine fascist movement whereas all these identitarian/solidarist movements are merely far-right pre-fascist movements. They need far-left to join them to become populist movements which will later transform into fascism.

Stalinism vs. Trotskyism — Nationalist or Internationalist

Stalin founded the ideology called "Marxism-Leninism" in his interpretation of what Lenin wrote. Leon Trotsky founded an ideology called "Bolshevik Leninism" in his interpretation of what Lenin wrote. "Bolshevik Leninism" was later called as Trotskyism.

In the text "Concerning Questions of Leninism", Stalin called for "Socialism in One Country" by claiming "the proletariat can and must build the socialist society in one country" while Leon Trotsky called for "World revolution" and "Permanent Revolution".

Socialism in one country (State Capitalism)

In order to establish and maintain socialism in one country, Stalin had to use certain extent of class collaborationism. Stalin was aware of that inevitable consequence at first.

During an exchange of letter between Stalin and Ivan Philipovich Ivanov, Stalin answered the following questions to Ivan.

The problem of the internal relations in our country, i.e., the problem of overcoming our own bourgeoisie and building complete Socialism; and the problem of the external relations of our country, i.e., the problem of completely ensuring our country against the dangers of military intervention and restoration.

We have already solved the first problem, for our bourgeoisie has already been liquidated and Socialism has already been built in the main. This is what we call the victory of Socialism, or, to be more exact, the victory of Socialist Construction in one country.

Stalin himself confirmed that the bourgeoisie class doesn't exist or at least doesn't hold political power in USSR. However, class collaboration can be seen between the peasant class, and the working class for establishing the socialism in one country.

The class structure of USSR was precisely reported or analysed by Bruno Rizzi in his famous text "The Bureaucratisation of the World" as follows:

The bourgeoisie is no longer the exploiting class that receives the surplus value, but it is the bureaucracy which is granted this honour.

The concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucracy and even the encroachment upon the development of the productive forces does not of itself alter the class nature of the society and of its State.

Within this bureaucracy there is simply a division of labour which, taken as a whole, has the aim of maintaining political domination and economic privileges. The bureaucrats with their families form a mass of about 15 million people. There are enough of them to form a class and, since Trotsky assures us that 40 per cent of production is grabbed by the bureaucracy, we can say that this class is privileged too!

Just as Stalin himself confessed: the bourgeoisie class didn't exist, thus didn't receive the surplus value but it is the bureaucracy which is granted this honour.

Similar thing was said by Milovan Djilas in his famous book "New Class" too.

There is no doubt that a national communist bureaucracy aspires to more complete authority for itself.

Just as Lenin predicted (on different context) in one of his texts "The Significance Of The New Policy And Its Conditions", "state capitalism" indeed became a step forward for the USSR under Stalin. There were a lot of Marxists (mostly Trotskyists and left-communists) who analysed USSR under Stalin as a "state capitalist" country while most Stalinists claimed it to be the genuine "socialist state (socialism in one country)". The mistake of both Lenin and Stalin was that they thought of it was a socialist gain. In fact, "the state ownership of the productive forces is not the solution of the conflict but concealed within it are the technical conditions that form the elements of that solution" according to Engels.

Anarchist thinkers such as Volin had noticed that since the beginning and equated the USSR as a totalitarian state as well as an "example of integral state capitalism". Volin also used the term "red fascism" correctly against it. Pro-Soviet communists were referred to as "red-painted fascists" or "red-lacquered Nazis" by Kurt Schumacher, the first SPD opposition leader in West Germany after the war who survived World War II.

CLR James, a Trotskyist theoretician who played a vital role in post-Trotskyist Marxist-Humanist tendency, brought the analysis to next level by claiming the Soviet Union under Stalin as a fascist state:

This is the main aim of production in Stalinist society, a capitalist society. All other societies produced for consumption and enjoyment.

If the relations of production in Russia are capitalist, then the state is Fascist. Fascism is a mass petty-bourgeois movement, but the Fascist state is not a mass petty-bourgeois state. It is the political reflection of the drive towards complete centralization of production which distinguishes all national economies today.

That is the obvious economic basis of Stalinist imperialism. Like Hitlerism, it will seize fixed capital or agrarian territory, tin-mines or strategic ports and transport manpower. Within its own borders the bureaucracy mercilessly exploits the subject nationalities. Should it emerge victorious in the coming war, it will share in all the grabbing of its partners, and for the same reason.

CLR James used Marxist analysis and concluded that USSR was a fascist state for the following four reasons:

- **Wage-Labor as the Foundation:** Regardless of the ownership structure of the means of production, CLR James highlighted that wage-labour is what distinguishes capitalism society. He contended that despite state control, the Soviet Union's workers were still treated as wage labourers and were taken advantage of by the bureaucratic government. He argued that there were basic similarities between this exploitation and capitalist exploitation.
- **Bureaucracy as a Ruling Class:** Similar to the bourgeoisie in capitalist civilisations, CLR James saw the Soviet bureaucracy as a new ruling class. He contended that even though the ownership structure was changed, this class kept its power by controlling the means of production and taking advantage of the working class.
- **Planned Economy as a Tool of Exploitation:** According to CLR James, the Soviet Union's planned economy was largely utilised by the bureaucracy to hold onto power and syphon off surplus value from the working class, not to further the interests of the people. According to him, this is a type of state capitalism.
- **Focus on Class Struggle:** CLR James frequently highlighted the significance of class conflict and working-class exploitation as characteristics of both capitalism and the Soviet regime. He contended that the Soviet Union had devolved into a state capitalist exploitation regime in spite of its self-claiming socialist label.

Mao Zedong also shared the analysis that USSR under Leonid Brezhnev was a fascist state by stating as follows:

The Soviet Union is today a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a dictatorship of the big bourgeoisie, a dictatorship of the German fascist type, a dictatorship of the Hitler type.

In "Ayn Rand Letter (Nov. 8, 1971)", Ayn Rand characterized fascism as "socialism for big business". Ayn Rand also said the following in her text "The New Fascism: Rule by Consensus",

Observe that both “socialism” and “fascism” involve the issue of property rights. The right to property is the right of use and disposal. Observe the difference in those two theories: socialism negates private property rights altogether, and advocates “the vesting of ownership and control” in the community as a whole, i.e., in the state; fascism leaves ownership in the hands of private individuals, but transfers control of the property to the government.

Ownership without control is a contradiction in terms: it means “property,” without the right to use it or to dispose of it. It means that the citizens retain the responsibility of holding property, without any of its advantages, while the government acquires all the advantages without any of the responsibility.

In this respect, socialism is the more honest of the two theories. I say “more honest,” not “better”—because, in practice, there is no difference between them: both come from the same collectivist-statist principle, both negate individual rights and subordinate the individual to the collective, both deliver the livelihood and the lives of the citizens into the power of an omnipotent government—and the differences between them are only a matter of time, degree, and superficial detail, such as the choice of slogans by which the rulers delude their enslaved subjects.

It is somewhat ironic that even a staunch advocate of free market capitalism like Ayn Rand recognized the similarities between fascism and state socialism (state capitalism). This observation highlights a nuanced understanding of political ideologies that transcends conventional ideological divide.

Stalinism, USSR, Racism, and Xenophobia

Almost the entire Soviet population of ethnic Koreans were forcefully moved from the Russian Far East to unpopulated areas of the Kazakh SSR and the Uzbek SSR in October 1937. About 24,600 Chinese resided in the Russian Far East by the 1930s. As Soviet policies targeting diaspora nationalities grew more oppressive, they were singled out for deportation and exile. Stalin ordered the forcible expulsion of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea in 1944, which was considered ethnic cleansing. The Cossacks were a social and ethnic group in Russia that the Soviet Union eradicated through a decossackization effort. Chechens and the Ingush ethnic groups were also targeted under Stalin’s USSR too. More than 90,000 Meskhetian Turks, Kurds, and Hemshils (Armenian Muslims) were forced to flee from USSR.

Stalin and Antisemitism

It was stated by Nikita Khrushchev that Stalin had harboured anti-Semitic views throughout his life and that these views had been expressed before to the 1917 Revolution. Stalin’s anti-Westernism served to further solidify his antisemitic policies. The USSR used the antisemitic epithet “rootless cosmopolitan” to refer to Jews, and this was the explicit beginning of antisemitism in the USSR.

According to the Soviet press, Jews were encouraging “American imperialism,” “slavish imitation of bourgeois culture,” “bourgeois aestheticism,” and “grovelling before the West.” Stalin’s antisemitism was made more apparent on August 12, 1952, when he ordered the killing of the most well-known Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union—a situation known as the Night of the Murdered Poets. The “Doctors’ plot” was an antisemitic campaign orchestrated by Stalin in 1953. Stalin’s communist antisemitism was similar to Nazi and fascist antisemitism in that it believed in a “Jewish world conspiracy.”

Stalinism, USSR and colonialism

The Soviet Union started suppressing the institutions of the old Polish government after invading Poland in 1939. The Soviets incited and promoted violence against Poles by taking advantage of historical ethnic tensions between Poles and other ethnic groups residing in Poland. Other USSR’s satellite states and its imperialist wars are known to the public.

Stalinism, USSR, and Sexism

Following the Revolution, the Bolsheviks were determined to develop a new kind of individual who would be prepared to put the needs of the rest of society ahead of their own. This was especially true for women, who were in charge of forming and influencing the Soviet Union’s future generation. The original goal of the Bolsheviks was to reimagine the family as a more social neighbourhood setting. This eventually shifted, and more conventional family roles reappeared. Stalinism wanted to confine womanhood with binary gender roles, thus putting them under the men.

Fascism as Socialism with Ethnic/National characteristics

In China, nationalist Marxist-Leninists such as Mao, Deng, and other CPC leaders described their “Chinese way to socialism” as “Socialism with Chinese characteristics”. In Burma (Myanmar), Ne Win, the leader of Burma Socialist Programme Party, described his “Socialism with Burmese characteristics” as “Burmese way to Socialism”. Both of the socialist leaderships from China, and Myanmar founded the unique forms of Marxism-Leninism with nationalistic identity based traditional and cultural values. Similar history can be seen in Arab socialist movements such as Ba’athism and Nasserism too.

Similarly, Oswald Spengler, a philosopher behind “conservative revolution”, claimed that his version “German socialism” is distinct from the “English socialism” and called for the liberation of “German socialism” from the “English socialism” in his book *Prussianism and Socialism* as follows:

“Prussindom and socialism stand together against the inner England, against the world-view that infuses our entire life as a people, crippling it and stealing its soul...The working class must liberate itself from the illusions of Marxism. Marx is dead. As a form of existence, socialism is just beginning, but the socialism of the German proletariat is at an end. For the worker, there is only Prussian socialism or nothing... For

conservatives, there is only conscious socialism or destruction. But we need liberation from the forms of Anglo-French democracy. We have our own."

In a hypothetical scenario where Oswald Spengler were alive today, he might rebrand his controversial "German socialism" as "German decolonial socialism" and engage in a polemic against what he would likely term "English colonial socialism." This satirical reimagining of Spengler's thought highlights the potential for ideological contortions and the enduring appeal of nationalist narratives, even when repackaged in contemporary jargon.

State, Class, and Economy

Even applying the relatively limited definition of fascism often employed by certain leftist circles, which primarily associates the term with racist, authoritarian, and xenophobic right-wing politics, Stalinism and the Soviet Union under Stalin exhibit strikingly similar characteristics, arguably to a more pronounced degree. This analysis suggests that, by this standard, the Soviet Union under Stalin can be considered a fascist regime.

While the role of the national bourgeoisie in Mussolini's corporatist state may appear diminished due to the state's claim to represent all individuals, the argument can be made that fascism emerges when a fringe socialist ideology replaces class struggle with a focus on national unity and seeks to establish a socialist system within a single national state. This concept of a mixed economy bears some resemblance to Mao Zedong's theory of "new democracy," which advocated for a united front of four national classes to resist foreign imperialism. In essence, Mussolini's ideology prioritized the interests of Italian national classes against foreign powers, while Mao Zedong's focused on uniting Chinese national classes to achieve the same goal.

This pattern, characterized by a blend of nationalism, socialism, and authoritarianism, is evident in both Marxism-Leninism (Stalinism) and Mussolini's classical fascism, despite their minor differences. Both ideologies exhibit significant similarities in their manifestations of racism, xenophobia, sexism, state worship (statolatry), totalitarianism, and the pursuit of a nationalized socialist system. It's important to note that unlike Stalin's red fascist USSR, Mussolini's classical fascism at first was immune from racism (at least antisemitism). Besides, another key distinction between Stalinism and classical fascism, such as that practiced by Mussolini, lies in the differing roles of the bourgeoisie. While classical fascism often involved the co-option of the bourgeoisie within a corporatist state, Stalinism sought to eliminate the bourgeoisie's political power. In Stalinism, the role of bourgeoisie is carried out by the state entirely.

Summing up

Trotskyist theory differentiates between the Stalinist USSR and Mussolini's Italy. It categorizes the USSR as 'proletarian Bonapartism,' a totalitarian regime that claims to represent the working class despite lacking genuine mass support. In contrast, it defines Mussolini's Italy as 'fascism,' where all national social classes collaborate for the benefit of the state's corporatist economy. However, even within the Trotskyist framework, some dissenting voices, like CLR James, argue that the Stalinist USSR should also be classified as a fascist state. So, it could be concluded that Mussolini's state corporatism is the classical fascism while Stalinist state capitalism (proletarian Bonapartism) is the red fascism.

While this is the accurate definition of fascism, many on the left apply the term broadly to anyone they perceive as racist, authoritarian, xenophobic, or sexist, regardless of whether these individuals adhere to the actual tenets of fascism.

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