

# Behind the 'revival' of Bukharin, Trotsky

by Luba George

Much of the Western media has been in ecstasy lately, commenting on a Soviet media campaign launched under Gorbachov to "rehabilitate" Nikolai Bukharin and Leon Trotsky, Stalin's foes in the 1920s, Soviet power struggle. Moscow has indeed launched a cautious semi-rehabilitation of Bukharin, as a signal to the Western pro-New Yalta "Trust" interests. Bukharin represented the Western Trust component of the pre-Stalin old Bolshevik leadership. On the Trotsky question, the Western media have jumped the gun.

What is missed in the Western coverage, one suspects deliberately, is that side by side with a limited "rehabilitation," Gorbachov's media has, for example, in dealing with "subversion" by non-Russian nationalities, revived the purge and crackdown language of the Stalin era. Parallel with this, has been an ever-increasing play-up of Russian chauvinist themes, rivaling the Stalin era.

## Rehabilitation: the facts

Bukharin has indeed been exonerated from having been termed an "enemy of the people" and a "criminal." But the Soviet TV coverage of Bukharin, so often cited in the West, has always stressed that Bukharin, in his policy fights with Lenin, had been wrong. Second, while there has been very significant Soviet coverage, such as *Pravda* of Aug. 9, supporting the *content* of Bukharin's "voluntary peasant cooperatives" approach to collectivization in 1928-29, in opposition to Stalin's forced collectivization policies, Bukharin himself is not named in the *Pravda* article.

Most important, both the "rehabilitation" push, and the debate raging in the Soviet press over the Stalin period, are an operation directly run by the KGB. This past summer's Bukharin wave was inaugurated by an article in the July 22 edition of the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, which printed a short one-act play by KGB mouthpiece Fyodor Burlatsky. The play deals with two brothers, Pyotr and Alexei, and takes place around 1929. The names Stalin and Bukharin are not mentioned, but Alexei, a professor at the Red Professors Institute, symbolizes Bukharin's "voluntary cooperatives" policy, while Pyotr is a Stalin hack sent in to purge the Institute. Alexei, of course, is the play's protagonist, but all

his attacks on forced collectivization, as well as his attacks on "the cult of one-person leadership," are based on citations from *Lenin*, not Bukharin.

## The language of Stalin

The same Western correspondents in Moscow who researched every word and comma in the Soviet media concerning rehabilitation and "liberalization," were somehow all asleep at the switch on Sept. 11. That day, the Soviet press reprinted front-page, the speech given the day before by Viktor Chebrikov, boss of the KGB. Chebrikov was speaking on the occasion of the 110th birthday of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder and boss of the Cheka, the notorious Red Terror predecessor to the GPU, NKVD, and KGB. The speech was vintage Stalin.

Chebrikov attacked Trotsky and Trotskyism *five* times during the speech. One sample quote: "Bourgeois ideologists are once again shaking up their decrepit baggage for arguments for their insinuations often drawn from the arsenal of Trotskyism and other opportunist circles."

The main theme of the speech was that "Western intelligence services" are "trying to penetrate our society" and "undermine the achievements" of Gorbachov's *perestroika*. Western intelligence is behind the manifestations of nationalist opposition to Russian rule: "They [Western intelligence] are rendering assistance to and exerting negative influence on a certain number of Soviet people, who are afflicted with the virus of nationalism . . . as witnessed by the nationalist protests in Alma Ata . . . [by] the Crimean Tatars and by the provocative rallies of nationalists in the capitals of the Soviet Baltic Republics."

Chebrikov went on to again blame "Western intelligence" for being behind opposition to Gorbachov's *perestroika* among "certain parts" of the "artistic intelligentsia" and other circles. During the 1930s, Stalin had accused his enemies of being "agents of imperialist intelligence services."

As with Stalin, Gorbachov's resurrection of the "enemy agents" line is believed to be directly linked to an expanded party purge about to begin. Readers of *Pravda* did not have to wait long after Chebrikov's speech to find this out. Following Chebrikov's speech, *Pravda* ran an editorial denouncing "toadyism" and "demogoguery" in the ranks of the Party. It declared that the party must be cleansed of the "new demagogues" who are "especially dangerous . . . cleverly adapting to the changed conditions" under the *perestroika*. "They spout for their own purposes all the correct slogans."

On Sept. 14, *Pravda* published letters from "readers" under the headline, "And the People Will Speak the Truth" which included, among many others, the following letter by a World War II veteran: "The people and the party today are rightfully denouncing the Stalin Cult and all the tragic consequences connected with it . . . but . . . we cannot negate the good tradition and principles of the older generation" that helped defeat Fascism.