

“A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ACP[B]”

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A Stenographic Report of a Meeting of Propagandists in Leningrad, 1938. Published in the Russian Journal “Archives of Leaders”

In September of 1938 in numerous issues of the newspaper "Pravda" and later on in the theoretical journal of the CC ACP[B]* "Bolshevik" there was published the text of the new, just written text book about the history of the party which officially was called "History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Short Course", but unofficially – "Short History of ACP[B]†". The appearance of this textbook was given much publicity in the press. These articles stated: "As a result of the enormous theoretical work, accomplished by the Commission of the CC ACP[B], and personally by comrade Stalin, our party, Komsomol, all workers received a studied work, deeply etched in the struggles of our party and the victories of the party of Lenin-Stalin".¹ "Pravda" newspaper called upon "serious understanding and dedication to learn from this history" ... recommended it as of "the highest quality of historical analyses and documented to have a world-wide significance".²

At the end of September - beginning of October - 1938, after very extensive and positive publicity in all of the press, ACP[B] called a meeting of the propagandists of Moscow and Leningrad and workers in the ideological fields of the party. The meeting, according to its organizers, should be able to adopt this "Short Course", adopt its format and thoughts and its utilization in the party schools.⁴

During this meeting, which was chaired by the secretary of CC ACP[B] in charge of ideology, A.A. Zhdanov, Stalin took an active part in this meeting. He attended all of the sessions (the meeting lasted 4 days, from September 28 to October 1). He asked questions, encouraged discussions, asked questions and held dialogues with certain speakers, and in the end – this is without precedence – spoke twice at the meeting – during the first day in order to guide a departure from the program, which went against the adopted policies of CC, and with a more detailed speech at the end of the meeting, on October 1. Both of these speeches were never published. His second speech dealt with some criticism of the "Short History" and pointing to the fact that the CC is the authority in making this textbook serve a purpose for cadres, and thirdly, to deal with some problems in this textbook which he wanted to discuss further and change its wording. He touched on some theoretical questions also, dealing with the theory and safeguarding of the socialist State in case the capitalist encirclement of USSR continues. Because the speech of Stalin was held in a narrow circle of propagandists and ideological workers and not publicized widely to the general public, this meeting contains some bitter truths which otherwise would not be made public.

There are two documents: one is in the Russian Archival Centre, while the following

* ACP[B] – All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) is also known as CPSU(B)

† Also known as the "History of the CPSU(B) Short Course."

full text is in the personal archives of President Yeltsin. The full text is 15 pages typed, while the other is 48 pages long. There are some steganographic mistakes made in this text and it is published as is.

This document is prepared by Doctor of Historical Sciences N.N. Maslov.

SPEECH BY J.V. STALIN AT A MEETING OF PROPAGANDISTS

October 1, 1935

STALIN: Comrades, I thought that the comrades present will help the CC and will give us something of a serious criticism. Unfortunately, I must say that the criticism heard here was not serious, not deep enough, and in some places, unsatisfactory. A more serious criticism would have been more of a help to the Central Committee, because the CC does not always see everything. You are working in your locality, you see more and from one side, we at the top – we see things from another side, but if we are able to combine the two points of view, can you imagine the results that we could achieve? Unfortunately, this unity, we did not achieve. We just skated over the top.

Too little was said about Moscow – some comrades complained. This is correct. Of course, too little was said. More could have been said. Workers are saying: "Why did you say so little about Moscow?" Since among us at this meeting, there are no comrades from Ural, Baku or Kharkov, they would also complain that not enough was said about the work in their cities. If we are to continue as one comrade stated here, then we must say more about the Ural, Moscow, Leningrad and Kharkov, Rostov, and others. What would this accomplish? This would not be a history of the ACP[B], but a guide to what transpired in all of the localities of our country. This would be what the CC did not want to give, because we have enough of these historical documents about every region where revolutionary activity took place. More than enough. We need an overall history of the party's activities, taking the experiences from all parts of the country and have a history which will show the growth of the party.

It is unfortunate that those comrades criticized this Short History only from a narrow point of view – they are wrong, they somehow did not realize what is meant by a Short History of the ACP[B]. The easiest thing for us to do, according to these comrades, is to add a bit more about Moscow, something else about the Urals, Kharkov, Baku, but this will be wandering off all over the place, not a history of ACP[B].

Others state: "What's this, not much is said about the agrarian question? At the 2nd Congress and the 3rd Congress, something was said about this question, but in this Short History, nothing is mentioned." The CC looks at this question in this way: if we are going to mention the agrarian question, then we must go into the complete history of this question. At the Second Congress, Bolsheviki asked for the return of private plots to the peasants. Is this characteristic of a Bolshevik party? No, it is not. Our policy was correct, when we demanded that all property be nationalized into cooperatives, collective farms or state farms, leaving a private lot around homes. This point of view was decided upon at the 4th Congress. This was stated in the Short History of ACP[B].! What else do we need to State?

There is not enough said about the national question, some stated. A full resolution

of this question which was adopted at the April Conference is included in full.² What else do you want from us? We should not allow this Short History of ACP[B] to become so long as to contain the full text of articles by Lenin and other theoreticians – this is not needed.

The third criticism is that the history textbook does not say enough about the international situation as it was then and how it affected the composition of the first paragraph of our constitution. Am I correct that some comrades brought this up?

VOICES: Yes, that's correct.

STALIN: To this day, I cannot see what kind of effect on the international situation was had by our discussion on the wording of the first paragraph of our party constitution. I cannot understand this. This is small talk, comrades. Our first paragraph of our party constitution did not have any influence on the international workers revolutionary movement. What did this comrade want to say? Where is he? Let him repeat his question again.

Facts are such that the Bolsheviks struggled for the composition of the first paragraph of our constitution, while the best people of the Western social-democrats, the left, were against the Bolsheviks: Rosa Luxemburg,³ Pavlov, against. Not one person of the Western revolutionaries supported the Bolsheviks on this question. If this is called an influence on the international revolutionary movement for the first paragraph of the constitution, then I do not know what is called a non-influence? (Laughter)

Regarding this question of the first paragraph of our constitution in the textbook of this Short History, I feel that it is said correctly, clearly.

Some stated that not enough was said about the influence of the 1905 Revolution on the international movement. Yes. But even less is said about the influence of the 1917 Revolution on the international revolutionary movement. But if we want to include the three revolutions that we had and their influence internationally, then we should enlarge this Short History three or four times in volume.

Here, we talked about what should be in this Short History of the ACP[B] as a textbook⁴ – writings about the 1905 Revolution are mentioned, then for 3-4 pages, but they do not contain anything about the actual influence on the international movements and they do not mention the effects and influence of the 1917 Revolution, which was a more serious revolution than the one in 1905.

It is interesting to ask the question of the authors of this Short History of the ACP[B] as a textbook, as to why they give such prominence to the 1905 Revolution and its influence on the international scene, while glossing over the tremendous influence of the 1917 Revolution? Am I correct or am I not? Are they correct or not? No, they are not correct. This is not, it is disproportionate – disproportionate in all proportions.

If we are to talk of the effects of all of our revolutionary steps, they all had some more, some less, international influence, and if we would follow this line of thinking, then we should write a textbook on only the influences of our revolutions on the international situation of our three revolutions. This then would become a separate theme, a separate book. In this textbook, we cannot depart from the main theme as to

how the revolutionary process took hold of the people, how our party developed and grew, and change horses in mid-stream and start writing the influence on the international revolutionary movements of the working class.

There is discussion to the effect that hardly anything is stated about the work of the Comintern and its congresses. I know about many of our textbooks about the history of ACP[B] where this subject is covered extensively. This way of thinking is incorrect. Either we write the Short History of ACP[B], or a history of our congresses. It's either one or the other. We cannot mix the two together - this is nonsense, this is chopping chips of wood. The CC cannot support such comrades who are thrashing all over the woods.

The Central Committee has a task to publish a textbook about the history of the ACP[B]. The criticism that was given here, did not give substance - it was not serious criticism; it was just skimming over the surface of the problem.⁴

The question remains - what was the idea of the Central Committee in promising the publishing of the Short History to act as a textbook on the history of ACP[B]? The CC knows that we have literature in the hundreds about the short and not so short histories for our party cadres and our party schools - from all points of view. We also know that all of these publications are doing more harm than good, because they befuddle the people. Some members of the party do not know which textbook is correct. None of the previous textbooks, histories, reminiscences, etc., ever had the sanction of the Central Committee up to this time, permission to publish or to write on behalf of the Central Committee. People and our party cadres did not know whom to believe or learn from - was it Yaroslavsky,⁵ Pospelov,⁶ Knorin,⁷ Bubnov⁸ or Popov⁹ or someone else? From all these textbooks, none of which were sanctioned by the CC, all this confused our cadres, so that our party cadres don't know which author to read and study or which author is correct or represents the thoughts of the Central Committee. The cadres looked at the situation in this way: if the textbooks by Yaroslavsky or Pospelov was given to them, that meant that the CC is in agreement with these authors. There was NO agreement by the CC. These comrades got the assignment to write the history, they wrote, while we in the CC had not time to study it, analyse its contents - this was a weakness on our part, comrades. This could be explained away by the fact that the CC was and is over-burdened with serious internal and external problems. This was the situation. Unhealthy as it was, but it existed.

How do we get out of this situation? The Central Committee made the decision to give leadership to the publishing of this Short History textbook, to show our cadres that the CC of the party is in agreement with the textbook, has sanctioned it and that it recommends this textbook to the party members, cadres and party schools.

Our first task is to look over all the books we have, eliminate inaccuracies, pick out the important, truthful aspects of the history, get out from under this chaos, give our party activists one leadership about our history, that will not confuse the cadres - this is what the Central Committee officially recommends - how to project, promote and put across the thoughts of the party - this is our first task.

The comrades who wrote the previous textbooks, study materials, wanted it best for

the party. Of course they did, but this did not happen. Instead, we found ourselves in a quagmire of information, misinformation and different interpretations.

The question is not to write about everything, explain all happenings – the question is that this Short History should show the birth and work of the party, first steps and goals achieved, around which all other events evolved and above all, what characterized these moments in our history.

What were or are these events? I would suggest that there are such stages.

First stage, I would call: "Struggles for the birth of the Bolshevik Party", or "Preparing for the Birth of a Bolshevik Party" – this should be in four sections. The question is not to write about all the insignificant things – the question is to make certain that under these four sections, everything else should be concentrated, period of 1900-1912, to the Prague Conference. This should be the stage in the birth of the Bolshevik Party. This is how the work of writing should be divided into sections.

From here, this short textbook should analyze, condense the essence from books by Lenin such as: "What is to be done?", "One step forward, two steps back", "Two tactics",¹⁰ "Materialism and Empiro-criticism". These four books and that is all, they in detail describe the birth of the Bolshevik Party, that the party was formed from political groups into an independent party. From all of this, there are enough materials for the 4 sections. The questions raised here that nothing too much was said about Moscow, about the agrarian question – this is nonsense. The idea is to give in these four sections the best characteristics of the fight of the Bolsheviks for the birth of an independent Bolshevik Party. This is the first stage.¹¹

The second stage should contain the following sections: 1905, starting from the Prague Conference, ending with 4-5-6 and 7th Conference-section.¹²

This stage, or this period, could be called: "Struggle of the Bolshevik Party to Win the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, for the Victory of the Proletarian Revolution". This is a separate period. The party was formed, is working among the population as an independent political entity fighting to clear the road towards the workers' revolution. I still feel that it would be headed as: "Struggle of the Bolshevik Party for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and the Victory of Proletarian Revolution".

All other inconsequential matters, small details are not necessary. Concerning this time, there should be only facts and quotations.

All other small details, they will detract from the main aim of our task – to get the facts, the ideas, to show how these ideas and facts accomplished the dictatorship of the workers.

The third section – 8-9-10-11-12 congresses can be the conclusion. This section could be titled: "The Party of Bolsheviks as Head of the State". Yes, I think that this heading would be correct.

Well, this is the proposal, the contents, which the authors worked around for the textbook of the Short History of ACP[B].

Now, judge for yourselves as to the importance and suggestions of the comrades who, instead of a Short History, wanted to insert all sorts of local events, instead of a

concrete history of the Bolshevik Party. A textbook cannot be made to cover every district, every city, every episode, which I have mentioned, contained in numerous books, publications and journals. Comrades should realize that if we start with one city, then every city, district will be complaining that there is not enough about Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Ural and others. Some would say to their children - "See youngster, how little is said about our city, our movement, our history?"

Either we adopt a direct, concrete, historical approach of the most important aspects of our work, or we shall be chopping wood and tracking all over the forest.

Thus, the CC is responsible for this textbook, everyone will know that it is the official book for cadres, and no questions will come into the mind as to the fact - is it a book by Popov or is it Ingulov?" No, this is a book by the Central Committee. This is our first task.

Our second task is to remedy and eliminate the gap that is being promoted in the last few years between Marxism and Leninism. You see, I have in front of me the program about Leninism for study groups of the party and look, there are 11 themes. Maybe you are aware of this. First theme: lectures about Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin. Why is there Stalin here, I cannot understand this to this day. Here are the themes of the historical beginning of Marxism, Marx and Engels - they are the founders of scientific communism, "Communist Manifesto" - first, document by Marx and Engels; all the works by Marx and Engels; the works of Lenin in three different periods - from the revolution of 1848 to the Paris Commune, second from Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution in 1905, and third from the Russian Revolution and onwards; also, the formation and growth of opportunism of the 2nd International; Lenin and Stalin are just followers of Marx and Engels.

This is all that is necessary. These are the formulations. These were the foundations for Lenin. The book written by "Stalin about Lenin" was to show the progress made by Lenin by proceeding from Marx to the present. The term "Leninism" is being used. If Lenin did not add to the theory, practice and revolutionary practice in building socialism, then there would not exist the term 'Leninism'. I am stating that in the book by Stalin, not everything is covered in detail. You will, if you read it 3 or 12 times, you will see the brilliant ideas, words of Lenin, new thoughts, new ideas and we must understand that the new thinking of Lenin is necessary to learn and to teach to others, because Lenin lived in a different world than Marx and Engels - Lenin brilliantly developed the theory and practice of Marxism to meet the needs of that time and our present situation. We cannot just study Lenin without studying Marx and Engels.

In order to understand Lenin, you must also read and understand Marx and Engels. Lenin always considered himself a pupil of Marx, and he was correct. This is not just his modesty - it's a historical fact. We must read and re-read "Capital" again and again. Many of us now think: what - read "Capital"? We have finished with capital in the USSR, is it necessary just to carry the book "Capital"? This is incorrect, comrades. The truth is that what is contained in Marxism and Leninism is all given in the work "Capital" by Marx.

Those who want to study Lenin must also study Marx and Engels. Lenin came up with new thoughts and theories because he was standing on the shoulders of Marx and Engels. New thoughts, brilliant as they are, but the shoulders are also great, on which Lenin stood, this was the foundation, dialectical materialism, historical materialism. Without understanding the political economy of capitalism, all these problems cannot be understood and Leninism cannot be understood, comrades. It is all interconnected and intertwined. In our program, we have let develop a break, bluntly saying – we let develop a chasm between Leninism and Marx.

We are all – or should be – students of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Our second task: we must make certain that the "Short History" tackles the question of the gap between Marx and Lenin, that this gap be absolutely liquidated, and that the "Short History" unite what was contributed by Marx with what was contributed by Lenin. This problem should be resolved by the Fourth Section of this textbook. This is tackled in this "Short History of ACP[B]".

Therefore, the task of the textbook is to liquidate the lies which were allowed to develop regarding the teachings of Marx and Lenin; meaning that what was contributed as a foundation by Marx and Engels, and what has been developed by Leninism, is a logical continuation. It is necessary to talk about Marxism-Leninism together in order to breach this gap between the founders and the builder of socialism.

Third task of the textbook is to show Marxism-Leninism in the work of the ACP[B]. There are two ways of looking at Marxism-Leninism. One way is to lecture on this or that theme, taken out of context – or you could base yourself on historical facts, which are not only theoretical, facts that happened, which were demonstrated as the result of Marxism-Leninism and to show how Marxism-Leninism was existing and helping the ACP[B].

This means that the third task is to teach the beginnings of Marxism-Leninism in short historical contexts, but not a lecture, or theoretical thoughts, but, combining theory and showing facts together as facts of history of the ACP[B].

The CC thinks and is absolutely correct, that writing this textbook in a lecture manner would not produce the desired result. Facts are needed, and by these facts, you can judge Leninism, when history confronted us with numerous problems, and how we utilized Marxism and Leninism to gain victory. History – this is the best school, this is higher learning. If the theory was proven correct in life in a period of let us say ten years, it means that this theory is worth something. This is our third task.

The fourth task in publishing this "Short History of ACP[B]" is to show, to demonstrate the theory in practice, with results. If there are not enough old laws to come up with answers, we must enact new laws. This is an absolute truth. It works.

Many comrades think that theory is a very difficult problem to learn, to adopt, to utilize in practice. Theory is like any Science – the task is real, you just have to have the will and conviction to solve it, not to retreat at the first problem and to dilly dally in making decisions, but attack it directly, and where you cannot attack it directly, find other paths around the problem, because theory is in your hands.

This is the way it should be done, presented. To my mind, this is exactly what the concluding remarks in this "Short History" do.

Think about the period when Lenin, and those that were around him, they were few, if they, in April of 1917, did not give new orientation to the party regarding the fact that the road from the "democratic republic" must become a Soviet Republic the party would have been disoriented, lost in the dark. I clearly remember our situation at that time in Leningrad – we were nearly lost as to what must be done. But when Lenin arrived and gave a new orientation, everyone saw the light: the party knew where to lead and the goals to be achieved. Suppose that the new thesis by Lenin would not have been put into effect, we would have been disoriented, wavering from one side to another, trying to cooperate with that helpless democratic republic and eventually we would have lost the revolution. There you have it – this is the strength and effectiveness of proper theory, find new methods, new roads that were closed or not thought of – focus the projector on this road to show the masses where to go and what to do.

Or the question of the victory of socialism in our country is an interesting episode. Well, we threw the Tsar out, Kerensky¹⁶ just managed to hold on with the premier Lvov.¹⁷ Further on, no one knew where to go or what to do. Our party was small, not fully developed, Russia was backward in the political struggles, culture was very low – what kind of socialism is that? People were talking in this way: what kind of socialism is this, God gave you some freedom, hold on to it and wait. And these were the thoughts of the masses at that time. From this, Lenin was able to state: "No, this is not correct. Russia has matured for a socialist revolution, we must take the next step towards socialism."¹¹ He showed us the road and he accomplished it. Let us suppose that there had not been this small group around Lenin who heeded his advice and started to plan the revolution – they understood the theory and proceeded onwards, overcoming all odds and opposition. If this was not done, I do not think that we would have been able to save a Soviet State. Here, you see the meaning and strength of a forward looking theory!

In speaking about those events, I wanted to show our cadres that the meaning of theory is tremendous, that without theory, the party would have been wallowing in uncertainty, going from one situation to another: today, you are pulled by your nose here, tomorrow, you are pulled to another side, you would be going like a blind man. There, you would have a leader. What kind of a leader are you? In order to lead, you must know the situation, you- have to predict the situation ahead, but in order to be able to see ahead, you must know your theory, meaning, you must know the laws of economic and political development of a society. This is in fact, theory.

Or, let us take the question of the Narodniki (Populists) and Marxists. Where did these poor souls slide off the path of the revolutionary process? – it is when they suggested and fought for the idea to base the revolutionary movement on the peasants and not on the working class. They thought so because the peasantry constituted the majority of the population. That is why they looked down upon the workers or the working class. Why, because they stated that you cannot find workers even with candles in your hands. They did not understand the class struggle or the law of

development, that the peasant class, as a class, does not develop but falls apart – it is tied to such a form of production that there is no way for the population to grow because industrialization of farming eventually decreases the number of farmers rather than increases, as does the working class.

Only the theory of development allowed the Marxists to tie in their future to the working class, even though at that time the working class was in the minority. This means a lot, what class the Marxists should support. The future of the party depends on this. This is why the "Narodniki" lost their influence.

Or this fact, that these "Narodniks" wanted socialism, yes of course, but they stated that socialism must be started from the farming villages, not understanding the basic laws of economic development, not understanding that it is not the village but the city that governs the development, and if the question of building socialism is on the agenda, you must start from the city and not the village. They on the other hand stated that the cities will die while the villages will live and grow. They did not understand the elementary law under capitalism, that the city rules the future of the village.

There you have it: One side, the "Narodniki" who did not understand the theory, the others – Marxists, who learned the theory, knew the laws of historical development and are leading and following the line which is giving results.

This, then is the essence of the Four Sections of this textbook. Our cadres should understand the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Theory is a living thought, you should not be afraid to learn it. You must understand that the Marxists before were just ordinary people, did not finish schools as you did, did not read as much as you are reading now. You have books, while before, we did not have them. I remember in 1898 that in order to rent one copy of the work by Marx, "Capital" in Tiflis (Tbilisi, Georgia – Editors) we poor people used to collect from everyone 5 kopeks, from over 100 people, gathered 25 rubles and had the book "Capital" for two weeks, copying it numerous times. While you have all the books that your heart desires. The State is yours, the press is yours, the books are yours. You can learn and follow the theory much more readily than we did before. But, if you do not want theory – that is up to you.

Fifthly, the CC, in writing this "Short History" wanted to do away with some of the baggage, vulgarization of Marxism-Leninism from our ranks.

Here's an example as to some thoughts that are allowed to be prevalent and circulating on the question of war and the position of Marxists: "Yes, Bolsheviks are against war, we should be pacifists, but of course, if we're attacked, this is something different."

We should explain to the people that it is not correct that the Bolsheviks do not see differences between different kinds of wars, but it is not impossible that under a grave danger to our Motherland that we would not attack first in order to prevent war.

Let US remember the article by Lenin about the "United States of Europe".¹⁹ Lenin stated that having won victory of socialism in one State, it will have to militarily defend itself from attacks, drive the invaders from its soil and if requested, help the working class of other countries to defeat the exploiters of their own country and thus help stop the future danger of further attacks on Russia.²⁰

It was necessary for Bolsheviks to explain all the details, all the nuances and fine points as regards the question of war and our policy towards it. It is not enough to be a pacifist, some of whom dream of eternal peace, and then on the call to arms by their capitalist masters, they DO take up arms and DO attack the first socialist country in the world, or their own working class. There are justifiable wars and there are Imperialist wars, colonial and nationalist-chauvinist wars ... they cannot be looked upon in the same way.

All governments mask their deeds: "you live with wolves, you must be and act like a wolf and howl like a wolf." (Laughter) It would be foolish on our part to put all the cards on the table, while surrounded by enemies. They would look at us and call us idiots.

Another example. The question of victory of socialism in one country also was understood differently. Our comrades looked at this question under the edge of outlook: is it possible for one country alone to build socialism, but they did not look at the other side, that the victory of socialism in all developed countries at the same time is impossible. Lenin not only taught us about this, that victory in single countries under conditions of uneven development is possible, because the uneven development of capitalist countries, some lag behind, others surge ahead, but Lenin also came to another conclusion, seeing that some are behind, others are going ahead, others just biding their time, therefore, spontaneous revolution is impossible.

This basically is in some opposition to what Engels wrote about principles of Communism. This question is being somehow hidden. What is meant by uneven development? If the question of even development of all countries was the truth and they were ready for one world revolution, we could state that one world revolution would be possible. Lenin stated; "Development is proceeding unevenly." Today, one country surges ahead, tomorrow another, others are also racing ahead, while still others are left far behind - development goes in different tempos and still others are standing still. How can we talk about the possibility of all countries ready for a world socialist revolution? This is nonsense. This was impossible before, and it is impossible today.

This question is not handled correctly in our publications, books and schools. We must remedy this situation.

Another question as an example. The boycott of the Duma by Communists/Bolsheviks. All our textbooks write that in boycotting the elections to the first Duma, the Bolsheviks were wrong. Looks as if they're hiding something. What are they hiding? The boycott of the Bulyginsky Duma, which was at the start of this Duma, was correct, because we were able to defeat it by a boycott, we did not allow it to be even born, with the help of the All-Russia strike of workers.

The later Vitevsky Duma, after it came into existence after the December Moscow uprising was defeated, we also boycotted this Duma. At the Tamerforsk conference we decided to boycott this Duma. This was a mistake. Lenin himself said that it was a mistake, not a big mistake, it could have been corrected quickly, but nevertheless, it was a mistake.²²

And how do you think that we can change history? History has to be reported correctly, successes and defeats ... not take anything away or add anything to enhance it. We seem to be now in the ditch of criticizing even things that happened 500 years ago! We can't do this chronologically.

Religion had a positive influence during the reign of Saint Vladimir, during that time it was heathen, while Christianity was a step forward. Now our wise men from the point of view of the new situation, in the 20th century, say that Vladimir was bad and heathens were also bad, and religion was also very bad – meaning, that they do not want dialectically to credit the situation, that everything has its own place and its own time.

This is also the case with our present history, you should not enhance it or condemn it, history is history. So that in boycotting the second Duma, Bolsheviki made a mistake and that is the way history should be written.

Another example. Our so-called wise men debase, vulgarize the role of peoples' ideas, in the growth of society. They think that the economic growth is the basis, while other movements or developments, what kind of role other events play is considered as inconsequential, and thus find themselves in the mud of vulgarizing historical facts. Marx and Engels, and especially Lenin, underlined this mistake. He was the first Marxist who especially developed the question of the role of the foremost ideal, developed the peoples' ideals. Lenin thus organized people, mobilizing them and leading them to remake the old society into a new one. New ideas are developed on the basis of economic path and without this, you cannot organize a revolution. New ideas are also absolutely necessary, as also are the methods of development, even though on the new methods of development, there could also appear new ideals or ideas. This question is being vulgarized. This policy led to the vulgarization of materialism which has nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism – this was the fifth task of this new Short History of the ACP[B]. This is meant to cleanse the brains from the vulgar understanding of Marxism-Leninism and to raise in full the ideas, the ideals of Bolshevism thus liberating it from slag and vulgarism.

The sixth task of the textbook – have one textbook, one course of learning, where all aspects of Marxism-Leninism would be all gathered together, which will help our propagandists rejuvenate themselves, help to teach more constructively and give more quality in our propaganda.

For us, for the CC, it is clear that our methods seem to be geared to quantity of propagandists and not their quality, that there should be more study circles, a bigger net of propagandists that we can just speed ahead: that we should have more departments: we have over 1,000 different departments working within the Central Committee, how many departments have you put into life? Fewer than nine, you think that you are a loser. But, if truth should be told, where there are fewer departments, the overall quality is better and more productive!

Therefore, this Short Course textbook should be able to help our propagandists to reorganize themselves from quantity to quality, to become better propagandists. These

were the tasks that the CC had before itself when we took the decision to publish this "Short History of ACP[B]'s Textbook".

Now, please allow me to touch upon some theoretical questions. You, as propagandists sitting here, of course you feel, that with learning and studying this new textbook, you will encounter many questions. What kind of questions will they be – you surely know what questions the people will ask, but somehow, you are keeping mum on this. You will say this or that, but it is not in this textbook! Will there be such questions asked? Of course, you will say that there shall be such questions asked. Why do some of you feel you cannot answer or should not answer? You see fit to hide away from such questions, but I want to put them on the table, into the open and into clear water. (Laughter)

Let us take Engels. In the short course on historical materialism, it states that methods of production are governed by society's attitudes and the political situation, intellectual development of society. This is said without limiting or saying what period is being dealt with. Then you will be asked: "excuse me, Engels did not write about this." (Stalin reads the passage by Engels here.)²³

What do you say about this passage, comrade propagandists? Is this correct or is it not? I feel that it is incorrect. Forms always under all circumstances are put into effect by the method of production, always under all of the conditions existing at this time. Engels based himself on group marriage, on the matriarchy. But the same matriarch was the continuation (as now numerous materials show this to be true) – when men were hunters, the hunted animals did not represent the stationary element for gathering food, the women were busy with agriculture, sowing different seeds, took eggs from the nests, domesticated fowl. Women became the first ones to domesticate the animals, grow food. The women always found ways and means towards better and easier production of food. What do these facts prove? Men only hunted, did not produce anything property wise, they asked the women, "give me food!".

After this period passed, from the first agricultural workers and the coming of animal husbandry, the ruling matriarch fell away and society changed.

There are facts that the study and theory by Engels to put on the same pedestal the forms of a family and the forms of production as two equal steps. You know that this work by Engels – "Origins of the family, private property and the State" – was published after the death of Karl Marx.

We must realize that Marx and Engels, the founders of revolutionary thought, could not have foreseen all of the developments in society in all of its details. They laid the foundations for socialism-communism. It is up to us now to use this basis, enlarge upon it, add to it in a scientific manner and proceed to build the society that was envisaged by these two great thinkers and Marxists of the world.

(Here, Stalin reads from the works of Engels about blood relations and family ties, production, the family unit and society.)²⁵

What Marx and Engels wrote was not meant as a dogma, absolute truth ... it was a basic scientific analysis of society, production, relations and all aspects of developing society in different stages of development.

This problem is full of risks, but we must not be afraid to state that ideas are not static, they evolve, they develop and it is up to Marxist-Leninists to see this development and scientifically analyse these problems and come up with solutions of moving society from one stage to another.

Lenin, in a very detailed analysis of the world of Marx and Engels, presented the logical conclusions as to the need to not only study Marx-Engels and Lenin, but to keep in mind the facts that since Marx-Engels wrote their tremendously important works, the situation has changed, development has turned many comers, new problems appeared, new ideas had to be put forward, new solutions had to be put into life ... in other words, Marx and Engels never regarded their works as "sacrosanct" at all. They, as scientists, knew that theories are practical in different situations in the revolutionary movement and they cannot have considered them as absolute remedies for all situations.

You, as propagandists, will surely be asked this question: How is it with you communists, is there nothing permanent? Today, you say one thing, tomorrow something else. How can we live? You will or should explain it in this way: "If you want to be Marxists, you will have to understand that the basis of the theory of Marxism does not change, but some situations, events do; in other words, you should think with your heads."

Now, let us turn to practical questions.

How can we improve our propaganda work? That our propaganda work is somewhat weak is a fact, because we think that we have won a victory, we are building socialism. There is no need to concentrate on propaganda in full force. Even our Central Committee is to blame for this. The CC looks at this question badly, very badly. This is our fault, the fault of the CC and mine also plus the fault of the departments that are in charge of this important work. We were so busy. But this cannot be used as an excuse. But we must realize that if we started this work, we must finish it to the end. Our organization of this question was haphazard, it was broken up into sections, it was a mess. All of you try to be present at more and more study party circles. It seems that our attitude is to organize as many circles as possible, but how the circles are studying, what they're studying is not looked after properly. This shows lack of organization and also the idea that there are more important tasks waiting to be done than propaganda. The quality of these study circles is to be deplored. There is no control or follow up. This is the main weakness — we organized far and wide, but not deep enough.

This is not the right approach to these study circles. Why do we have to have so many of these study circles? I do not understand. People can read, can't they read themselves? These courses are written in Russian and other languages. If something is not understandable, there is always a dictionary or help can be asked from the propagandists. Do we really need a thousand study circles in our two cities? I do not understand this. We must utilize our press more, our journals and newspapers, but we always seem to talk just about study circles. But when we did not have the State in our hands, we did not have the media in our hands, then there was a need for such study circles, but now the press is ours!

If there are very good propagandists working in these study circles, then his or her

lectures could be written up, published and thus, able to reach everyone, but it seems that his or her talents are only for the narrow circle of people. This is individual handcrafting. This is unproductive. This is an elementary organization since we have wonderful and talented propagandists and lecturers. They are dying in their own narrow circle. Our Ministry in charge of this work should listen to about 20 top propagandists, their method, their materials and then proceed to publish this material for use all over Russia. State proposals are one thing, but fulfilling this proposal by individual handicraft method is another. There are too many study circles!

Also, there are too many party organizers' offices. This is not correct to my way of thinking. This is a very interesting question. Listening to people, I realize that there are too many organizers of propaganda offices, everyone does as he pleases, there is no centralized plan or control. No centralization means full freedom to preach and lecture what you wish, wrong or right, as long as you propagandize. People are under-utilized and this way, we look at them, they die politically, die to this mania of making your office full of comrades that just sit there, their skills and dedication is not utilized, because some heads of these departments want to build their own "little kingdom" at the expense of the State.

Whether they are working well or working badly, no one knows and no one cares. If this person would be asked to meet, discuss, help and encourage but not get the job done, he sits there and no one is interested in what he or she is doing or what kind of results are being achieved. If this is allowed to continue, it will produce different ideas, different feelings, no one will be followed, thus making the situation worse instead of better. This work should be centralized but centralized in such a manner that it does not stifle individual initiative. This is a very important question: the initiative of people. The ways and means should be found to remedy this situation quickly. We must control the situation and analyze the work of our workers in the propaganda field.

We do not utilize the newspapers enough to publish the results of consultations that are taking place in the propaganda field. Answers to questions could be utilized to inform a much wider circle of people than just individual or group consultations. These materials should be gathered, edited and published ... so that everyone would benefit from them.

Why should we have come to rule the State, if we are going to work in old craft methods, instead of far and wide. The proven methods of propaganda, the excellent interpretations of these methods, must be published – our press must be utilized more fully.

The number of circles should be made smaller. Maybe in Moscow, we could abolish some circles and have these comrades work in other departments of the government, in the CC or in the Ministry of Culture.

What is the Section on Propaganda doing? Is it in existence, I do not see it. Is there a Section of Propaganda in your Ministry, comrade Ugarov?³⁹

UGAROV: Yes, there is.

STALIN: There is? We made a great mistake by closing off the Higher Party Schools, dispersed the Red Professors,⁴⁰ what other course did we have?

MOLOTOV: Course of Marxism-Leninism.

STALIN: I would not say, that the question there was presented well. We closed them because the school was graduating very loose people.

VOICE: Yes, that is correct.

STALIN: But, we should and could have improved the situation, but you immediately closed the school. We must have the Higher Party School, not only Leninism, but Marxism-Leninism. These should never be allowed to be divided. A situation is allowed to develop where a program where Leninism is taught, while the foundation of Marxism on which Leninism exists is not there. We need to organize not one, but many Higher Party Schools devoted to teaching Marxism-Leninism, because without such Higher Party Schools, we cannot exist. Whether we combine these schools with others, you will have to decide, but we must immediately have such Higher Party Schools.⁴²

Should we have a definite program on how to proceed to teach this "Short History of the ACP[B]?"

VOICE: Yes.

STALIN: This "Short History" textbook is designed to bring up our cadres theoretically onto a higher plane, I mean the party cadres, not those who are employed in specific departments of the Government – we want to develop communists in all spheres of our state, bring up their level of understanding and dedication. We must understand that the present employees of the party and government are – or were – former workers. We have raised their understanding in schooling so that they are intellectuals and the leaders of our party and government. Comrade Shkiriatoev went from his factory machine and is now heading the CC. We consider you now a working intelligentsia.

SHKIRIATOV: That is correct, comrade Stalin. I agree with you.

STALIN: All of our cadres should become the salt of the earth, but in order that they actually become the salt of the earth, we must make certain that they fully study and understand the "Short History of the ACP[B]". They must expand their political understanding.

The negative part of this intelligentsia question is that they were spoiled by foreign secret services – this is not a coincidence. We bring these intellectuals up in a political way. We unfortunately did not bring up our intellectuals in a political way as we should have. I want to repeat what I said previously, that we had a stupid approach before towards the intellectuals, the "intelligentsia". We all went to the working place, to factories, to the collective farms, forgetting that at that time, there were not enough people who would find some spare time to learn theory, there were very few such people. For eight hours, the worker worked – he was not accustomed to study, to books, he had to learn this by himself. Our propagandists went into the factories, forgetting that in the first days of the building of socialism we had hundreds of thousands of dedicated communists who were in fact the government, helping to put this country on its feet, helping to govern it and sacrifice for the Motherland. But we have brought up the working class, the peasantry, made them intellectuals – they now govern our

country, our party, our State.

Don't just think that to govern a country is just knowing how to write directives. To govern is to lead, knowing what to do when and how, give directives, but sometimes improve the directives you have given. If they are unworkable or if life itself proved them to be impractical, not always do we make the correct decisions – there are mistakes made also. We depend from time to time on having input from below – we do not always see the whole picture. We cannot know what is going on all over our country. This is impossible. We depend on people there, on the spot. These people in the localities are helping us, and sometimes our comrades, lacking the necessary skills, do not listen to them or appreciate their concerns or follow their suggestions.

There are cases that a worker, who just yesterday worked in a factory, brought by the party to school, learning what must be done. He gets his new assignment in the party apparatus or government and what do we find sometimes happening? He finds that these newly baked "officials" look down upon him, since he just came up from the factory floor. This is hooliganism by one of the "intelligentsia" and it also works both ways. This must be eliminated, abolished quickly.

Sometimes workers and peasants themselves, brought up in the old days when the intelligentsia was fulfilling the wishes of the ruling class, capitalists, kulaks, etc., this attitude dies hard.

We sometimes pushed these intellectuals aside, did not take the trouble to teach them, to bring them up in the socialist way – so they were the perfect section of our people to be preyed upon by foreign secret services – German, Japanese, American, English, French and other services. We lost quite a few of these people to our lack of foresight and our attitude towards the intelligentsia.

That is why this textbook should be given and taught to these intellectuals who, for one reason or another, stand apart from our society ... this book should be given to all party comrades, and to non-party comrades also, who are no less dedicated to our country. They should be made to see their own horizons, increase their political knowledge.

What kind of program? I would suggest that three stages and sections be utilized to have people read this textbook and those that will attend political circles.

FIRST – this should be given and taught to the people who still have a low level of political understanding, those who are willing. I would divide the textbook into 3 parts: first - 4 sections, "the birth of the party of Bolsheviks, before there was yet a party"; second – three sections, "party of Bolsheviks in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat"; and third part – "party of Bolsheviks in control of the State, when did it take power and what does it do.

This must be at first difficult, but after a year, they would understand.

SECOND – the most numerous and to my mind the most interesting to cadres. They should be taught the 12 sections. Only the 12 sections and nothing more.

THIRD – top comrades, who had schooling and have already mastered some Marxism-Leninism. This section should be given in more details, give examples, make

them write their versions, their opinions and their answers. They should get more out of this textbook than the textbook states. Different themes should be discussed, debated and argued about, based on Marxism-Leninism.

I would suggest that this is the way it should proceed. In other words: Second proposal – all of the textbook; more thought given to details, examples, available materials, they should get more than the textbook offers – each section to be discussed, analyzed and brought into the context of life itself.

This is all, comrades.⁴⁶

(Prolonged applause.)

ZHDANOV: What is your pleasure or suggestions for further discussion?

VOICES: Stop the debate.

ZHDANOV: Who is for stopping the debate, please raise your hands. Who is against? No one. Debate is being dosed.

APRF F. 45, Op. 1, ID. 1122, L. 28-111.

1. History ACP[B]. Short Course M. 1938, S. 8, p. 82.
2. Same as above. Pages 182-183.
3. LUXEMBURG ROSA (1871-1919). Leader of the German and Polish movement, representative of the left social-democrats in the 2nd International.
4. These were the tasks of the composition of the textbook as Stalin visualized it, in order to correct the wrong approaches and weaknesses that were encountered in the propagandist materials and methods of teaching.
5. Yaroslavsky E.M. (Gubelman) (1878-1943). Historical publicist, member of Commission for Party Control. Member of Commission that wrote the Short History of ACP[B].
6. Pospelov P.N. (1898-1970). Member of CPSU since 1934. Historian, also member of Commission writing the Short History.
7. Knorin (Knorinsh) V.G. (1880-1938). Party member from 1928, part of Russian representation in the Comintern, one of the authors of the Short History.
8. Bubnov A.S. (1883-1940). Author of many party books. He was arrested in 1938 but was rehabilitated by Khrushchev after the 20th Congress.
9. Popov N.N. (1891-1938). Member of party apparatus of Ukraine, historian. He was demoted and arrested 5 times. Khrushchev rehabilitated him after the 20th Congress.
10. This is the book by Lenin: "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution".
11. Four sections of the "Short History" about the Prague Conference were written by Stalin.
12. Ingulov S.B. (1893-). Head of the Press Bureau of the CC.
14. Stalin. Works. Vol. 6, pages 69-188.
15. This is about the April theses by V.I. Lenin, pages 149-183.
16. Kerensky A.F. (1881-1970). Member of the temporary committee of the State Duma, Chairman of the Government overthrown in Nov. 1917.
17. Lvov G.E. (1861-1925). Minister of Kerensky's government from March-July 1917.
18. Lenin and his works about the readiness of Russia for a socialist revolution.
19. Correct name of this article by Lenin is: "On the Slogan of the United States of Europe", pages 351-355.
20. *Ibid.* – pages 354-825.
21. *Ibid* -- page 133.

22. *Ibid.* - pages 17-19.
23. Engels. The origins of the family, private property and the State, published in 1947, page 11.
24. This is meant as the article by Lenin: "Who the 'Friends of the People' Are," pages 125-346.
25. Belton - pseudonym of Plekhanov.
26. Stalin talks about Lenin and Plekhanov and analyzes some of the works by Engels.
27. Mitin M.B. (1901-1987). Philosopher, academic who praised the publication of the Short History of the ACP[B] and compared it to the "Communist Manifesto".
28. Engels in the work Anti-Dühring, page 202.
29. This is not explained in the stenographic version.
30. Papanin I.D. (1894-1986). Director of the first hydroelectric station, "CP-1". Hero of the Soviet Union. Deputy to the Supreme Soviet.
31. This theme of preserving the State under Communism in case the capitalist States still exist. Stalin elaborated on this theme: Stalin-"Questions on Leninism".
32. This question is about the trials of the enemies of USSR in 1937-1938, including some of the members of the CC of the CPSU.
33. This is the same theme by Stalin at the 18th Congress of ACP[B], pages 604-606.
34. Karl Marx on philosophy, pages 65-185.
35. Stalin explains the questions of the production of workers as the most important factor in society.
36. Marx and Engels - Communist Manifesto.
37. Same as above.
38. Same as above.
39. Ugarov A.I. (1900-1939). First Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, member of CC. Rehabilitated by Khrushchev in 1956.
40. This refers to the Institute of Red Professors which was closed by persons who were later taken to task, and the Institute was re-established.
41. Molotov V.M. (1890-1986). Member of Politbureau of the CC since 1926, then Foreign Minister, then dropped by Khrushchev after 1953.
42. This proposal was put into effect in later years when Higher Party Schools were established by the CC of the CPSU, plus 177 two-year schools in 1947. All these schools were taught from the "Short History of ACP[B]", plus the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.
43. Shkiriatov M.F. (1883-1954) was a leader of the CPSU from the peasants and worked in the CC from 1921-1934, was member of the Commission for Party Control.
44. This term "intelligentsia" is in reference to the fact that between 1930 to 1942, there was not one member of CC CPSU who had completed university or college. In 1939-1971, 4% of the Secretaries of regional districts and 41% of the secretaries of republican districts and republics did not have secondary school education*
(The author of these facts sneers at these figures and quotes Solzhenitsyn as to the "low level" of the cultural upbringing of communists in the Soviet Union. But these "uneducated functionaries" built the USSR and did not sell it out as did the so-called "intelligent intellectuals of the 1990's" - Editors)
45. This refers to the textbook of the "Short History" which became the textbook that was studied by all Communists.
46. Zhdanov A.A. (1896-1948). Secretary of the CC CPSU from 1934, also First Secretary of the Leningrad District, member of Politbureau from 1935. He was assassinated in Leningrad by

counter-revolutionary forces.

OUR COMMENT:

After reading this extremely revealing document, you marvel at the knowledge, perception and analytic skill of J.V. Stalin.

Can you imagine to yourself if all of these proposals, plans, well thought-out human analyses of cadres had been put into practice, what kind of Soviet Union it would have been now?

Stalin had a manner of speaking without empty phrases, embellishments – he cut right to the core of the problem, repeated it.

Translator and commentator: Michael Lucas

Ed. Michael Ukas, Secret Documents, Northstar Compass, Toronto, nd. pages 144-182.