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In Defence of Democratic Socialism
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In Defence of Democratic Socialism

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of the people from the bottom up'. A revolution which survives is worth nothing if its revolutionary ideas cannot be sustained; in fact, although the U.S.S.R catalyzed a great chain of social-material progress in the 20th century, both domestically and internationally, it (and the dogmatic defence of it by certain groups on the left) managed almost single-handedly to destroy communism's viability as a social, economic and political alternative to capitalism in the eyes of the people. It is a grave mistake to let a revolution die by allowing it to be perverted by evil, no matter how 'necessary' one might consider that perversion.

These mistakes must not be repeated by those who possess 'power-in-waiting'. Marxist-Leninist organizations, and the people leading them, need to recognize this. And they need to recognize that there is no socialism without freedom; socialism will be free, democratic and humane or it will not be at all. As such, our organizations should abandon Marxism-Leninism, admit the crimes of the past and stop supporting the ruling classes of brutal regimes simply because they are opposed to Western imperialism.

tion in order to forcibly mould society into the image of the elite's choosing, this itself is counter-revolutionary.

Rejection of vanguardism is not a refusal to recognize the need for legitimate leaders. Rather, it is based on historical observation that the idea of an elite caste of revolutionaries does not lead to sustained revolutionary conditions. Shock-therapy-style 'socialism from above'[10] and, as such, the Marxist-Leninist method of organization, are ultimately bound to fail, as the example of the U.S.S.R shows. It degenerated from the world's most democratic state in late 1917, to a dysfunctional bureaucratic-dictatorial system by the end of 1924, and a totalitarian empire by 1930. (The degeneration started long before the Whites attacked, with the dismantling of autonomous workers' councils and the move from socialist pluralism to a one-party state by the creeping Bolshevik takeover, which went against the principles of the October Revolution, and which was not reversed following the end of the civil war.)

This is no judgement on Lenin or others. Rather, it is a plea to break with the past. Material conditions have changed since 1917. More than a hundred years have passed. Blind celebration and obedience to a doctrine, which failed to bring about socialism (and eventually ended in its own collapse due to its inherent bureaucratic inertia, with catastrophic consequences), is absurd. Marxism-Leninism is nowadays irrelevant. It was not written as a universal bible for organizing, and it belongs in the 'dustbin of history'. Being apologists for a far distant past is even more absurd.

As Mikhail Bakunin, the father of anarcho-collectivism, wrote in 1873, 'all dictatorship has no objective other than self-perpetuation, and that slavery is all it can generate and instill in the people who suffer it. Freedom can be created only by freedom, by a total rebellion of the people, and by a voluntary organization

[10] The proposed shift of humankind under socialism from 'selfish' to 'cooperative' was forced upon the Russian people by instruments of (red) terror and destruction in the short-term, rather than allowed to develop voluntarily in the long-term.

Editor's note: László Molnárfi is a 20-year-old student at Trinity College Dublin, where he is active in the student movement. A native of Hungary, he grew up in Brussels.

Tankieism, Then and Now

Contrary to common belief, the Hungarian uprising of October 1956 was not anti-communist in nature. It started out as a reformist movement. As shown by the sixteen demands of leading revolutionaries, and the spontaneous setting up of workers' councils, it was a rallying cry against the perversion of communist thought by Stalinist ideas, with many of its participants calling for the establishment of a democratic socialist government. Brutally crushed a few weeks later by an invading Soviet-backed army, the hopes for a 'socialism with a human face' were put to an end in the Eastern Bloc for the first time.

Those who supported the crushing of the revolution, such as the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), were pejoratively labeled 'tankies', named for the tanks of the Warsaw Pact oppressors.

Just twelve years later, the Prague Spring of '68––which started as an attempt by reformist Alexander Dubček to bring about democratic socialism in then-Czechoslovakia––met the same fate at the hands of Soviet imperialism.

Exposing a repressive political order, these events irrevocably damaged the worldwide communist movement, with thousands in Western Europe, especially in Britain, tearing up their Communist Party membership cards in protest.

Today, communist organizations––which all claim to be the one and only representative mass movement and revolutionary vanguard of the people––fall prey yet again to the revisionist and anachronistic ideas of authoritarian communism. This worrying trend is intensifying, as a new wave of 'tankie' thought that domi-

nates certain leftist spheres and calls itself Marxism-Leninism (ML) makes a resurgence.[1]

If Marxism is scientific, then it must be open to change through the discrediting of old and the advancement of new ideas. It is time that communist organisations break with the past, a paradigm shift that should be spearheaded by the youth: these old ideas must be called out and pushed back against within our movement, not merely because of their moral and political fallouts but also because of their inherent perversion of true Marxist thought.

Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 that 'A spectre is haunting Europe ––the spectre of communism'. Ironically, the modern far left is haunted, too. Fragments of a bygone past, such as Cold War-style two-pole thinking, falsified Stalinist history and dogmatic sectarianism have embedded themselves within the true legacy of the communist movement. Rather than serving as agents of social progress and as the radicalizing force of society, this modern far-left current has erected bulwarks of an era which no longer exists.

The Irish Left

The Irish left, to which this article will frequently refer, is but a national manifestation of a larger-scale trend in the international movement. Irish parties in which Stalinism is once again being embraced include, for example, the Workers' Party (WP), the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) and their respective youth branches, namely the WP Youth and the now-unaffiliated Connolly Youth Movement (CYM).

These groups must be acclaimed on the one hand but criticized on the other. In the face of neoliberal politics, they have stood firm in their commitment to Marxism, albeit a perverted form thereof.

[1] Marxism-Leninism is a strain of Marxism formalized under Stalin's era and later adapted by Mao.

In the resurgence of Stalinism, there is an undertone of gradualism, of the hope that true socialism and eventually communism will develop over a period of time. This gradualist undertone can be seen, for example, in the support for North Korea. The same gradualism was popular among proponents of the U.S.S.R., too.

Hidden within it is a 'faith in advancement', faith in the progress of history. The argument built on this faith is that, if anti-imperialism is taken to its extreme––that is, if we provide so-called 'critical' support for any regimes which claim to be socialist and which are opposed to the United States––and this 'critical' support eventually makes the imperialist superpower back away, then conditions will improve and true socialism will be built in that country. And this will contribute to the impending world revolution and the development of communism.

However, this argument completely ignores the realities of dictatorships and the material interests of a tyrannical elite. The enemy of my enemy is not my friend; or at least, my own interest in a world revolution––and the dismantling of a superpower opposed to it––does not justify supporting a ruling elite which brutalizes its own people, regardless of material achievements, be this in Cuba, China or North Korea.

When looking at models of libertarian communism, such as the Paris Commune of 1871, the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo–Federacion Anarquista Iberica of 1936–39 and the Zapatista uprising, it becomes clear that voluntary 'socialism from below' is the only true way to bring about democratic control of the economy and real participatory democracy. The purported need for a vanguard party to protect the newly-created workers' paradise following a revolution––to avert the threat of counterrevolution and keep the direction of the revolution 'ideologically pure'––is both a lie and contradictory. It is a lie because the people themselves can organize themselves. It is contradictory because history has shown that when a small elite seizes power from the popula-

subjected to the reign of the free market. If people do not get to exercise their right to vote under this system, as was the case in the U.S.S.R, it is no relief that the electoral system is council-based[8] and not a bourgeois democracy. If social relations are oppressive, as those in the U.S.S.R were, it does not matter that the oppression is between the working class and the party nomenclature rather than the working class and the company owners.

Accordingly, Marxists should always place the human––human rights––and truth at the core of the struggle, rather than embracing an abstract goal devoid of such concepts. The end doesn't justify the means. In fact, authoritarian means cannot lead to egalitarian ends, and a revolution in which it is considered counter-revolutionary to speak the truth is no revolution at all. The hermit kingdom of North Korea, ruled by the brutal Kim Dynasty's monarch, is quite far from the philosophical end goal of Marx and Engels. Given that it kills and oppresses in the name of communism, it is even further from that end goal than any liberal-democratic capitalist country can be.

There is thus a need to admit to the failures of the past and of the present (even if doing so might coincide with the views of Western powers and mainstream media),[9] but, at the same time, to develop a vision of what the world should look like––a vision that is detached from the past, that does not require adherence to any of the currently competing regimes, and that embodies humankind's eternal duty to oppose any and all forms of injustice around the world.

[8] Although, for nuance, it must be stated that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc both had certain democratic characteristics, mostly on the local level. See, e.g., the creation of the 1968 law, 'Principles of Legislation on Marriage and the Family of the USSR and the Union Republics', which was freely and massively participatory.

[9] Trotsky, in the 1930s, was accused of agreeing with fascist powers in his condemnation of Stalin and the Soviet Union. Regardless, he was right; he was telling the truth.

They do the utmost to advance the cause. Unabashedly exposing the tottering, unsustainable and cruel system of capitalism through class analysis and a materialist lens, they are the continuing legacy of revolutionary politics, whereas novel movements have, alas, shied away from even mentioning the name of Marx.

On the other hand, the emperor has no clothes. These parties, as an emergent whole having roots in pro-Soviet origins, delegitimize the leftist political spectrum due to their failure to break with the past in the early '90s, after the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe collapsed and the crimes committed by past so-labelled 'communist' regimes were revealed.

At the same time, reformist factions in the communist movement, such as the WP's De Rossa faction––which split in 1992 following the party's failure to break from its traditional Soviet-era politics––have turned toward accepting free-market economics and have re-emerged as accomplices of capitalism.

In the absence of a reliable alternative, it is this dichotomy in which Marxism has gotten stuck in the 21st century.

The legacy of Sovietism within our movements manifests itself both culturally and structurally––in organizational structure, historical revisionism and foreign policy. This weed must be uprooted and it is the youth who must hold the shovel.

Despite their poignant criticisms in the Dáil of Irish capitalism and of liberal-bourgeois democracy,[2] well-organized public protests or marches and well-developed policies, certain stances of these parties choke the progress of the left. Wishing Stalin 'happy birthday', standing in solidarity with Belarussian dictator Lukashenko rather than the people's protest against him, or praising the iron-fisted ruler of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, on social media is a spit in the face of everything that any serious leftist thinker has ever stood for.

[2] The Dáil Éireannis the lower house of parliament in the Republic of Ireland.

In the distant past, these parties fraternized with such regimes either out of ideological belief or for pragmatic reasons. Some did it for the money they received from Communist countries or parties; others were true believers.

Sean Garland, a well-respected figure on the Irish left and former Secretary-General of the Workers' Party, visited North Korea multiple times in the late '70s to seek business links to aid the revolution at home. But he remarked to a journalist that his party 'weren't under illusions' about life under the peninsula's regime. In 1986, he asked the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for 'a grant of one million pounds (Irish)' for the communist struggle in Ireland. In the late 1980s, both the WP and the CPI received financial support from Eastern Europe's most brutal state-capitalist dictatorship,[3] the Soviet satellite state of the German Democratic Republic.

However, the aim of this article is hardly to write a shocking exposé or to pass judgement on the past. As Marxists, we must be materialists and critically examine the roots of the problem, understand its consequences and provide a solution for today. The past is merely historical background, the echo of a generation of now-veteran communists who grew up in the two-pole, black-and-white world of the Cold War––back when there were hopes for an imminent world revolution, when the crimes of these regimes were still concealed to the less observant eye, when the prevailing dogma was that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

Times have changed. Yet crucially, people, mindsets and organizations have stayed the same. These bulwarks of a bygone time are

[3] The characterization of the U.S.S.R and Eastern Bloc countries as 'socialist' is wrong. Rather, they were state-capitalist, meaning that the means of production were owned, not by the people, but by a centralized state power, and that production for profit and capitalist social relations still existed; but, in contrast to private capitalism, capitalist social relations were mediated by the state rather than through a decentralized network of economic entities acting autonomously to form a 'market'.

The point is not to denigrate the achievements of Lenin or the Soviet Union, of which there are many to note[7]––nor, in fact, to denigrate any other country in which Maoists or other Marxist-Leninists took power. Critical analysis is a key part of Marxist theory, to fuse what works and what does not into a synthesis. However, defending specifically the parts of history where they catastrophically failed to deliver on human rights and on the essence of socialism is an issue. The failure to recognize that Marxism-Leninism in praxis has led to these abuses is a gross mistake and is a miscarriage of critical analysis, as it makes us vulnerable to the same errors in the future.

Liberation of the Human Spirit

The Belgian Workers' Party is one organisation that has reformed and distanced itself from its Stalinist past. As is necessary, it applies Marxism to the specific situation of the Belgian people so as to grow its support base with a combination of revolutionary politics, minimal demands and the end of sectarianism, in favour of the much-needed 'United Front', rather than blindly following a specific doctrine. In the 2019 Belgian federal elections, it reached an electoral success of 8.62%, although a Marxist should be careful of using parliamentarism as a measure of success. In contrast, the electoral results of Irish Marxist parties are embarrassingly meager.

Marxism, as a philosophy, aims to achieve the liberation of the human spirit. If a system which claims to be socialist or communist cannot fulfill this aim, it cannot be Marxist. If there is still exploitation under a given system, as was the case in the U.S.S.R, it is no relief that the economy is centrally planned as opposed to being

[7] E.g. Healthcare, housing and homelessness, gender equality, elimination of poverty and industrialization are just a few areas in which, when contrasted with Tsarist and post-'90s Russia, the U.S.S.R was remarkable.

lion of 1921), anarchist resistance (e.g., Makhnovists) and, later, inner-party factions as well (e.g., the United Opposition, which included Trotsky). In fact, as Noam Chomsky argued in 1989, Bolshevism was seen by other groups as a 'right-wing deviation of Marxism' that began to centralize power in the hands of the state rather than that of the people. The period following the October Revolution was described by eyewitnesses as an unnecessary power grab, a slow but steady coup d'etat by the Bolsheviks which saw dissenting socialists and anarchists exiled or killed, a process in which the stripping of civil liberties, ideologically sanctioned by Lenin's vanguard theory and enforced by the Party's control over the Cheka secret-police, created fertile ground for the rise of Stalinism, also known as Marxism-Leninism.

When Emma Goldman, an American anarchist, visited the U.S.S.R. in 1922, she wrote, 'Witness the tragic condition of Russia. The methods of State centralization have paralysed individual initiative and effort; the tyranny of the dictatorship has cowed the people into slavish submission and all but extinguished the fires of liberty; organized terrorism has depraved and brutalized the masses and stifled every idealistic aspiration; institutionalized murder has cheapened human life, and all sense of the dignity of man and the value of life has been eliminated; coercion at every step has made effort bitter, labour a punishment, has turned the whole of existence into a scheme of mutual deceit, and has revived the lowest and most brutal instincts of man'.

While the achievements of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the October Revolution and the Bolshevik Party must be critically analyzed under the harsh material conditions at the time, more than a hundred years have passed since then. Sovietism, which has led to mass murder, genocide and starvation (particularly between 1927–1953), does not need to be defended to justify the ideologies of the left. We should not bear association between the dysfunctional state-capitalist dictatorship of the U.S.S.R and the words of Marx.

but emergent properties of old habits: the continued defence of the past, the legacy of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and the perception of foreign policy as an either-or dilemma. And with this, a new generation of youth, far from holding the shovel to uproot the weed, is becoming the seed in which the past flourishes.

Today, the WP is aligned with the Initiative of Communist and Workers' Parties (INITIATIVE) European group. The CPI participates in the annual International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, an association of 118 legacy-Marxist parties from all over the world that includes North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, and in which INITIATIVE also participates. The formation of this association is an act of legitimization of the world's most brutal political regime, in which Ireland's leading Marxist-Leninist parties are undoubtedly complicit.

Little known proto-embassies like the Korean Friendship Association (KFA), which has official delegates in 34 countries, act as political whitewashers and business fronts to fund the North Korean regime. As late as 2001, both the WP and CPI joined KFA Ireland in a joint letter, writing to the U.S. government in support of the Kim dynasty.

Tankieism Takes Hold Among Youth

Normally, the veterans of any movement are challenged by the youth, a dance which inevitably arms the newcomers with the experience of the elders while a healthy synthesis of ideas emerges from the clash of old and new. What does not work is discarded; what works is carried forward.

This does not seem to be the case for our movement today. In fact, the observable trend is that as the youth radicalize into Marxists, the leftist student scene is increasingly being taken over by the same ideas that dominated the far left in the past century.

This might be because one of the only political currents publicly carrying the red banner of Marxism––or one specific strain thereof––are the bulwarks of the past, collecting and moulding like-minded individuals in a self-perpetuating system that is unable to challenge itself. As students join youth movements, for example, they are confronted by an already-present and ever-snowballing sociocultural space, supported by an organizational structure, which demands conformity both horizontally––amongst themselves––and vertically––from the adults on top in the party, who are more likely than the newcomers to hold a certain set of views which forms the party line.

It would be foolish, however, to blame this persistence of old ideas on any one element, as intersectionality is at play. A combination of propaganda on the Internet (for example, the rise in the number of Chinese diplomats and embassies with Twitter accounts, from 1 in 2013 to over 30 by 2019), authoritarian communism's simple (but purposely extreme) answers to complex problems and hardliner veterans can also partly account for the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Marxism has been co-opted by specific power structures––which, of course, seek to sustain themselves––that resist the momentum of history. Through force of association, these parties have co-opted the name of Marx. This hurts the moral, political and scientific integrity of Marxism, not to mention the ability of activists to organize. It is unacceptable and we must push back.

For example, the Communist Party of Ireland celebrated Stalin's birthday in a tweet on 18 December 2020, honoring the man, who according to them, 'oversaw the building of the very first socialist state.' 'The mask of the "protestors" in Hong Kong have well and truly slipped,' says another tweet from the Dublin branch, purporting to show that the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong are orchestrated and funded by the C.I.A.

This is not surprising, since the CPI's official manifesto, while maintaining a modicum of neutrality, ultimately decries the 'horror stories' and 'propaganda' regarding 'injustice and oppression'

He says, 'This is a crucial issue for the movement. The problem is that their existence dirties, confuses and denigrates the concept of socialism, which is a concept of human freedom, and so they drag down the movement. It makes it hard for rational people to take the left seriously, and the left suffers. People all around the world reject Stalinism and tankies, and they are going to reject any left––and rightly so––that is dominated by tankies or even is tolerant of tankiesm. You have to fundamentally differentiate what genuine Marxism or socialism is from the ideologies these people represent. They represent an ideology and philosophy that is detrimental to what the left needs to be and to the kind of left that can energize people'.[5]

'The bigger problem is the left that won't call out Stalinists and tankies', he continues. 'It's always been the bigger problem. If they were really isolated and not accepted, and were challenged, it would be a different environment. But they're not being challenged by most of the so-called left. The 'soft' Stalinists act as if all the left has most positions in common, because we are also opposed to capitalism and imperialism. If you call these people out, if you challenge them, then you are being "sectarian"––which is the big dirty word––by going against "left unity". All of this kind of stuff is meant to basically silence anybody who goes against the ideology of authoritarian communism'.[6]

Revolutionary Critics of Bolshevism

At the time of societal upheaval in Russia, there existed revolutionary forces who opposed the increasing authoritarianism of the Bolsheviks from late-1917 onward. They included various tendencies (e.g., Luxemburgism), socialist parties (e.g., the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries), spontaneous uprisings (e.g., the Kronstadt rebel-

[5] Personal communication, Jan. 30, 2021.
[6] Ibid.

especially as the phenomena intensifies, since many people are reluctant to challenge these ideas.

The orientation of youth organizations is almost certainly affected by the old-timers in party headquarters. However, the surprising aspect is, once again, that the youth do not shake up the old; in fact, the youth may even be more conservative and less nuanced than the veterans, which is incredibly uncommon for youth political organizations.

Marxist-Humanism versus the Tankie Resurgence

Marxism-Humanism is a completely distinct strain of Marxism which is anti-authoritarian, and which views humans not just as material forces––the building blocks of history towards the abstract goal of communism––but as the centerpieces of what Marxism should strive to achieve: the creation of a system most fitted to the liberation of human activity and creativity. Thinkers like Raya Dunayevskaya have developed Marxism-Humanism as the logical continuation of Marx's writings.

Anne Jaclard is the Organizational Secretary of the U.S.- and U.K-based Marxist-Humanist Initiative organization. She is one of the veteran Marxists who has reflected on the phenomena of resurgent tankieism. 'We've observed this trend to resurrect Stalinism in the United States, in Ireland, in the U.K and elsewhere', she says. 'Its resurgence at the same time as increasing extreme-right authoritarianism worldwide is really frightening. There is such a thin line between the on-line tankies, the trolls at talks and protests, and what is happening in countries like Poland and Hungary where far-right governments have taken power'.[4]

Andrew Kliman, another veteran Marxist-Humanist, is an economist who has written extensively on the theories of Marx.

[4] Personal communication, Jan. 30, 2021.

within 20th-century Marxist-Leninist states. 'The West's policy of "anything but communism" has led it to support any and every anti-communist regime, including the most brutal tyrannies,' it continues, ironically. Cuba, it is said, 'with mass democratic participation, constantly renews and invigorates the practice of living socialism and inspires millions of people'. While Cuba's healthcare system is impressive and its local-level decision-making is community-based, its 'democracy' overall isn't something to look up to.

The CPI's now-unaffiliated youth group, the Connolly Youth Movement, tweeted on 25 April, 2020 in support of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (i.e., the North Korean regime), saying that 'it is necessary to reject US imperialism around the world and that includes in Asia and on the Korean peninsula,' while linking a document full of blatant propaganda, which denies that there are any human rights abuses in the country.

Similarly, a Workers' Party Youth Facebook post, from August 18 of last year, proclaims that 'at this moment we must support, albeit critically, the current government who wish to protect the territorial integrity of Belarus and the economic gains that have been preserved since the dissolution of the Soviet Union'. The comments under this post speak of shock and disappointment that an organization which considers itself to represent the people would turn its back on workers protesting an oppressive government. The problem here is not mere denouncement of economic sanctions as a tool of neocolonialism, or of the countless efforts of the U.S. to overthrow democratically-elected governments in Latin America––which any Marxist should naturally oppose––but the active support of oppressive regimes.

For pragmatic political reasons, the Workers' Party itself is inclined to hide these tendencies; it prefers to focus on local and national issues. Nevertheless, they have, for example, fraternized with the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), a Stalinist party based in the U.S., which has called on the U.S. to "end the military occupation of South Korea" in support of Pyongyang.

To those who agree with these takes, the pushback they receive from others is a sign of their success––and of truth, as respectability is equated with being part of the system. However, there is a difference between taking the controversial stance of aiming for the overthrow of capitalism and being the laughing stock of the public. It will be impossible to build class consciousness and support for our movement while presenting clearly dictatorial and nonfunctional regimes as models to be inspired by.

The Propagandistic Tankie Subculture

Other questionable, albeit classic, 'tankie' takes include supporting Putin's Russia (and its geopolitical interests, including Assad in Syria), solely because of their opposition to the imperialist United States. Also common is denial of the Holodomor, the Tiannamen Square massacre of 1989 and China's ongoing genocide against Uyghurs (while conveniently ignoring China's state-capitalism and neo-imperialism, as well as the fact that independent labour unions are banned in the country). This ideology stems from anti-imperialist thought that is taken to its extreme and fused with apologia. It manifests itself not just in official statements but in jokes, memes, iconography, aesthetics, the fetishization of the U.S.S.R and China, and ML marches under the banner of Stalin and Mao, which has happened on numerous occasions.

These takes are objectively wrong––they are lies.

In fact, there exists a whole Stalinist subculture––which has its own propaganda, key figures and resources––that is dedicated to falsifying history and contemporary events. It includes YouTube channels, Reddit communities and Twitter accounts. It includes books like Ludo Marten's hagiography of Stalin, certain works of political scientist Michael Parenti, and the writings of professors with organizational backing like Grover Furr. (Furr, who claims, for example, that the Katyn Massacre was perpetrated by the Nazis, has the backing of the Progressive Labor Party, a Marxist-Leninist group based in the U.S). All of this feeds into the pipeline of spitting out new recruits for authoritarian communism.

Denial plays a key role in these efforts. It is much like climate-change denial: pro-Stalinist propaganda denies findings reported in academic literature, the consensus view among historians, and corroborated evidence provided by nonprofit human-rights organizations. This makes debate difficult, as it challenges epistemology itself: all that fails to conform to a given worldview is branded as imperialist lies, part of an all-embracing anti-communist conspiracy, while the contrary positions, no matter how fringe, are unquestionably held to be the truth. This makes the results of 'research' a foregone conclusion.

And oftentimes, it is the youth who are the most ardent believers, transforming the once-pragmatic fraternization into true ideological belief.

Sadly, this subculture is big, with the Workers' Party's youth branch in Trinity College Dublin alone attracting about 75 members per year, as compared to the 150 to 200 who join the democratic-socialist People Before Profits, which is a worrying ratio. The Connolly Youth Movement has close to ten thousand 'likes' on Facebook. Although the movements that include a significant Stalinist presence, in which I myself have taken part, do not share a hive-mind, the phenomena of 'tankies' is becoming more and more noticeable, especially in youth circles. When one goes on social media, especially specific parts of Twitter, one is bound to see, for example, either straight-out denial of the Gulags and the ongoing Uyghur Genocide, or veiled justification of these events in the form of memes.

These posts can have surprisingly high levels of engagement, sometimes reaching thousands of reactions. Social media acts as a loudspeaker for them. This forces out dissenting leftist dialogue,