

Communism Defeated Fascism Eighty Years Ago and Will Defeat it Again: The Forty-Eighth Newsletter (2025)



Eighth Route Army bugler, China, 1942. [Credit: Sha Fei.]

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research**.

On 13 November, at the Global South Academic Forum in Shanghai, China, we released our latest **study**, *The 80th Anniversary of the Victory in the World Anti-Fascist War – Understanding Who Saved Humanity: A Restorationist History*. An edited version of my keynote speech ‘Two Lies and an Enormous Truth’, delivered to introduce the study, is reproduced here.



At the Krasnogvardeisky Housing and Utilities Department of the city of Leningrad, 48 wives of frontline soldiers learned the professions of stove-making, roofing, and plumbing. 18 April 1943. [Credit: Georgy Konovalov.]

In early August 1942, the Soviets set up loudspeakers across Leningrad. The city had been under siege for over 300 days. People were starving. The conductor, Karl Eliasberg, kept the Leningrad Radio Orchestra going by holding rehearsals and personally taking his musicians to feeding stations. On 9 August, Eliasberg collected the 15 survivors of the Leningrad Radio Orchestra and brought in some members of the military bands to the Bolshoi Philharmonic Hall. They performed Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7* (the Leningrad Symphony) over the radio and through the public loudspeakers.

🔊 [Listen to Symphony № 7 in C Major \(Leningrad\) - Dmitry Shostakovich](#)

Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*, performed by the Mariinsky orchestra under Valery Gergiev in 2020.

The symphony is made up of four movements. The first, calm and almost pastoral, evokes Leningrad before the war. The second, built around a snare drum ostinato that grows steadily louder, alludes to the Nazi invasion. The third, led by strings and wind instruments, laments the terrible suffering of the Soviet people, millions already dead or dying. The final movement, in C major, loud and proud, anticipates victory against the evils of fascism. They did not know it yet, but they were less than halfway through the siege. They had 536 more days of starvation and battle ahead of them. It says something about the sheer grit of the Soviet citizenry that they would perform the symphony amid the siege, loudspeakers pointed at the Nazi lines so that the Germans could hear it too. In the Soviet archive, there is a sentence written by an intelligence officer: 'Even the enemy listened in silence. They knew it was our victory over despair'. Later, a German prisoner said that the symphony was 'a ghost from the city we could not kill'.



A unit of the 255th Marine Brigade of the 18th Army of the North Caucasian Front prepares for battle, 1943.
[Credit: Yevgeny Khaldei.]

Our study shows that the Soviet Red Army destroyed 80% of the Wehrmacht in their miraculous rush across Eastern Europe. By the time the Western armies came near the borders of Germany, the Nazi regime had already collapsed. It was the Soviet Red Army that liberated most of the people in concentration camps, and it was the scientific manner of their advance that forced the Nazi allies in Eastern Europe – such as the Romanians – to surrender and change sides. The reason the Soviet Union was able to marshal all its strength against the Nazis is because the Chinese Communists and patriots defended the Soviet Union's eastern flank against attacks by the Japanese militarists. Fighting with inadequate arms, the Chinese Communists and patriots nonetheless inflicted enormous damage on the Japanese, tying down 60% of their army and preventing it from facing the onrush of US troops that went from island to island in the Pacific.

If the Chinese had not tied down the Japanese troops, the Soviet Union would have fallen (and Nazi

Germany would have seized Europe) and US troops might not have prevailed in the battles of Saipan (1944) and Iwo Jima (1945). The Soviet Red Army and the Chinese Communists and patriots together sacrificed tens of millions of lives to defeat fascism (the precise calculation is laid out in our study, ranging from 50 million to 100 million). By May 1945, when the Nazi regime collapsed, it was already clear that Japanese militarism was on a path towards surrender. It was unnecessary for the United States to conduct the Trinity tests in July 1945 and drop atom bombs on Hiroshima (6 August) and Nagasaki (9 August). The immense sacrifice of the Soviet citizens and the Chinese Communists and patriots made the use of that weapon of mass destruction preventable; that the United States used it tells us more about imperialism's violent disregard for human life, which is exactly what we are seeing today in **Gaza**.



Paramedic Vera Andreeva Leonova (born 1916, left), a medical assistant of the 2nd Medical Battalion of the 6th Guards Cavalry Division of the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps of the Southwestern Front, and nurse Maria Ostrotenkova provide first aid to wounded soldier Ermoolenko, April 1942. [Credit: Mikhail Samoylovich Bernshtein.]

The first lie. The Western Allies opposed the fascists from the onset and won the war against fascism.

The truth. The Western governments sent their armies to destroy the October Revolution from the moment it began in 1917. The Soviet government sued for peace in December 1917, but Germany nonetheless attacked Finland and the young Soviet republic, which led to a massive allied invasion (with troops descending from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Romania, Estonia, Greece, Australia, Canada,

Japan, and Italy). The attitude of the Allies is clear from the writings and speeches of British politician Winston Churchill, who in 1919 said that the Allies should destroy ‘the foul baboonery of Bolshevism’ (30 years later he said that ‘the strangling of Bolshevism at its birth would have been an untold blessing to the human race’). In the 1930s and 1940s, the Western governments wanted the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy to turn their guns against the Soviet Union and destroy it. That was what ‘appeasement’ meant – that they agreed with Adolf Hitler’s anti-communism and allowed his military build-up as long as it focused on the Soviet Union. Although Britain and France declared war on Germany in September 1939, they did nothing in the months that followed – a period known as the Phoney War, the *Drôle de guerre*, or the *Sitzkrieg* (a play on *Blitzkrieg*, or lightning war).

In 1941, Hitler’s armies invaded the Soviet Union. At the Tehran Conference of 1943, the United States and United Kingdom had to acknowledge that it was the Red Army that was destroying fascism. Churchill, on behalf of King George VI, gave Soviet leader Joseph Stalin a sword made of Sheffield steel called the ‘Sword of Stalingrad’ to commemorate the courage of the Soviet citizens who withstood the siege (where two million were killed) and beat the Nazis. But it took the Allies another year before they entered the war in Europe in 1944. By this time, the German military had been decimated by the Red Army (and by Allied aerial bombardment). The Western countries entered the war because they feared that the Red Army would charge into Germany and hold a position in the heart of Europe.

For the Western governments, the principal contradiction was not between liberalism and fascism: it was between the imperialist (or war) camp – which included both the fascists and the liberals – and the socialist (or peace) camp. This contradiction ran from 1917 to 1991 right through the years of the Second World War – the World Anti-Fascist War.

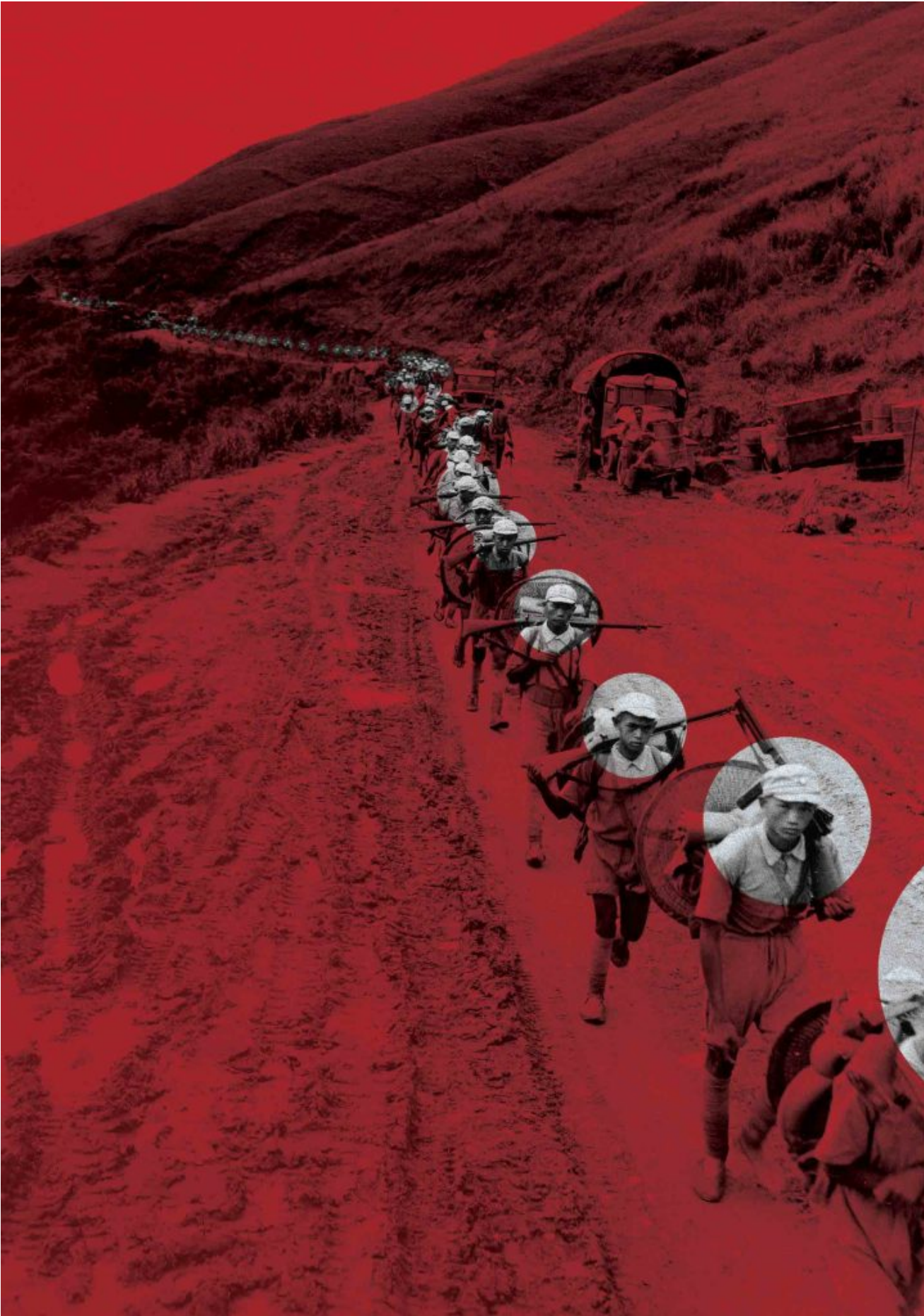


A meeting of the Eighth Route Army on Futuyu Great Wall, 1938. [Credit: Sha Fei.]

The second lie. It was the US sacrifices in the Pacific war and the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that defeated Japanese militarism.

The truth. The World Anti-Fascist War did not begin when Germany invaded Austria in 1939. It began two years earlier in China, at the time of the Marco Polo Bridge incident (the July 1937 clash near Beijing that marked the start of Japan's full-scale invasion of China) and continued right through the US war against Korea, which did not come to a close until the armistice of 1953. Millions of brave patriotic and anti-fascist people fought against Japanese militarism, which drew in the worst of the far right in Korea and Indochina. By the time the United States entered the war in December 1941, the Chinese patriots and Communists – as well as the national liberation armies in Indochina and Southeast Asia – tied down 60% of Japanese troops, rendering them unable to attack the eastern flank of the Soviets. The immense sacrifices of the Hundred Regiments Offensive in 1940, where General Zhu De led 400,000 Communist troops to destroy Japanese infrastructure in northern China (including 900 kilometres of railroad line), should not be forgotten.

The mythography of the US marine clambering up onto the heights of Iwo Jima or the atom bomb cowering the Japanese into surrender is pervasive. Yet it erases the fact that the Japanese had already been substantially beaten, that they were prepared to surrender, and that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not military targets. What happened in August 1945 was not about military strategy: it was entirely a demonstration of US power, a message to the world about the new weapon that the US had developed and a warning to the communists in Asia that this weapon could be used against them. The millions of Asian workers and peasants that died to defeat fascism – including my family members in Burma – were erased by the mushroom cloud. It began to take precedence in popular memory. The bomb, not the people who fought for each inch of land across southeast Asia, became the hero. That is the second lie.



The 54th Army walks down a steep mountain grade towards a 600-foot-long catwalk across the Red River at Pa-Tu, China, 9 August 1945. [Credit: T/3 Raezkowaki.]

The enormous truth. Amid these two lies is an enormous truth that has been buried in our popular memory: fascism is the negation of sovereignty and dignity, the ugly twin of colonialism. It is hard to distinguish between the two. After all, genocide was a constitutive feature of colonial rule (consider the six million people killed in the Congo, the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples of South West Africa by Germany, the genocide of the native peoples of the Americas, and the three million Bengalis starved to death in 1943).

After the defeat of German fascism and Japanese militarism, the Dutch, French, and British, with their US allies, returned to claim their colonies in Indonesia, Indochina, and Malaya. The violence of these colonial wars in the 1940s and 1950s is grotesque. Of the Dutch attempt to recolonise Indonesia, the nationalist leader Sukarno said, ‘They call it *police action*, but our villages burn, our people die, and our nation bleeds for its freedom’. Chin Peng, a Malayan communist, said something similar: ‘We rose up because we saw villages starve, voices silenced by money and power’. General Sir Gerald Templer, who ran the British Emergency in Malaya, said after a rebellion that it was a ‘village of five thousand cowards’ and starved the villagers by denying them rice.

Villages burned. Villagers starved. That was the reality of the attempted reconquest of the colonies and then of the US war on Korea. When the US began its operations in Korea, President Harry Truman said that his army should use ‘every weapon that we have’ – a chilling comment given the use of nuclear weapons on Japan. But there was no need for an atom bomb, since aerial bombardment vanished the cities of northern Korea. As Major General Emmett O’Donnell told the US Senate in 1951, ‘Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name. There were no more targets in Korea’. This was their attitude: fascism or colonialism – take your pick.

The Western colonialists resurrected fascistic elements in Japan, Korea, Indochina, and other countries and allied with them to strengthen an international axis against workers, peasants, and communists. This reveals that the Western colonialists were not anti-fascist at all. Their real enemy was the possibility that workers and peasants would build clarity and confidence and opt for a socialist future.



Soviet troops hoist the red banner on the quadriga of the Brandenburg Gate after the capture of Berlin, May 1945. [Credit: Yevgeny Khaldei.]

The enormous truth is that it was the Soviet Red Army and the Chinese Communists and patriots that *actually* defeated Nazi Germany and militarist Japan. It was these forces that sacrificed the most against fascism and understood the intimate relationship between fascism, capitalism, and colonialism. One cannot be an anti-fascist and be for colonialism or capitalism. That is simply impossible. These are antithetical formations.

My mind is still in Leningrad in August 1942. Remember the orchestra and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*. The Nazi troops surround the city. Everything is silent. Then the music begins. It continues for an hour. And then, the music stops.

Warmly,

Vijay

