Pete 'Potemkin' Seeger: Stalin's little minstrel

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"One of the things I'm most proud of about my country is the fact that we did lick McCarthyism back in the fifties."
"I still call myself a communist, because communism is no more what Russia made of it than Christianity is what the churches make of it." (1995 interview)
~Pete Seeger

Eulogy to Stalin's little 'Songbird'
American folksinger and communist activist Pete Seeger (1919-2014) died a few days ago. To the Democrat Socialist Party Seeger was a venerated hero who possessed his capacity for social justice without ever losing his ability to sing 'freedom songs,' including songs about love of a utopian ideal country without racism and poverty, hatred and war. To the Left Seeger was a patriot: a champion of social justice. To the Right Seeger was an unremarkable musician, a communist, a communist sympathizer who used his vast popularity to enable and legitimize murderous dictators across the world while ignoring the desperate pleas of the hundreds of millions Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Hitler and others murdered in the name of communism, socialism, social justice and evolution atheism's survival of the fittest.

Seeger's comment about defeating McCarthyism as his greatest achievement is instructive for Sen. Joe McCarthy (R-WI) was the one man in the 1950s whose Senate Hearings put the fear of God in the hearts of legions of communists and communist sympathizers like Seeger, Hollywood, the leftist media, the academy, the unions, environmentalists, anarchists, progressives, liberals, socialists, radicals – i.e., the base of the Democrat Socialist Party and Communist Party USA.

Seeger helped score the soundtrack for the labor and civil rights movements, and changed minds by getting people to sing. In 1949, one of Seeger's most famous songs was "If I Had a [Soviet] Hammer [and Sickle]" written in support of the socialist/progressive movement later popularized by Peter, Paul and Mary. In 1955 Seeger had appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee and declined to testify. "You may be cited for contempt of Congress," the Committee chairman told him. "Sir," replied Seeger. "I have nothing but contempt for this Congress." This arrogant contempt of Congress, particularly to questioning by Republicans, would cement the reputation of Pete Seeger as a hero of the Left, yet when it came to standing up to and speaking out against some of the twentieth centuries greatest tyrants and genocidal murders – Mussolini, Franco, Mao, Hitler, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, Lenin, and especially Stalin (whose Soviet Union Seeger repeatedly visited in 1964, 1967, 1981 and N. Korea in 1972), for these socialist, communist and Marxist mass murders all old Songbird Seeger had for them is exalting songs of praise heaped upon these despots by Stalin's obedient little minstrel... Pete Seeger.

In a 2012 essay titled, "The Communist Singer who gave America Obama," I referenced Dr. Paul Kengor's notable book, "The Communist," about the life of Barack Obama's surrogate father (who some like moviemaker Joel Gilbert calls Obama's 'real father') Frank Marshall Davis (1905-87). Kengor refers to singers Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger as a "Potemkin Progressives" who, like many famous American progressives in the 1920s-60s, had severe misunderstandings of things Soviet and Stalin and effectively used their public notoriety to increase and transmit their misinformation to the public on a grand, diabolical scale. Separate from Potemkin Progressives like John Dewey, George Bernard Shaw, W.E.B. Du bois, Paul Robeson, Frank Marshall Davis, the Columbia faculty and countless numbers of other deceived leftists, Seeger accepted the Stalinist line so completely that he went to his grave as a fervent agent of communism for almost 80 years, although Seeger gave an insincere 'repudiation' of Stalin later in life.

1930s and 1940s

Seeger's love affair with communism dates back to 1936 where at the age of 17 Pete Seeger joined the Young Communist League (YCL), then at the pinnacle of its popularity and power. In 1942 Seeger joined the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). In a June 16, 1941 review in Time magazine, which under its owner, the socialist/progressive Henry Luce, had become very interventionist, denounced the Almanacs' song *John Doe*, condemning it as propaganda to what it called "the mendacious Moscow tune" that "Franklin Roosevelt is leading an unwilling people into a J. P. Morgan war." Eleanor Roosevelt, an admirer of folk music, allegedly found the album "in bad taste." Yet in the academy (which in the 1940s still had a few non-socialist scholars left) the eminent German-born Harvard Professor of Government Carl Joachim Friedrich, an adviser on domestic propaganda to the US military who in a review in the June 1941 *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "The Poison in Our System," he pronounced *Songs for John Doe"*...strictly subversive and illegal," "...whether Communist or Nazi financed," and "a matter for the attorney general," observing further that "mere" legal "suppression" would be deficient to stop this form of populist poison, the poison being folk music, and the ease with which it could be spread.

1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s and, with the increasing revelations of Joseph Stalin's atrocities, notably the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Seeger became increasingly disenchanted with Soviet communism. In his PBS biography, Seeger tried to rewrite his communist associations and falsely stated beginning in 1949 that he "drifted away" from the CPUSA yet maintained life-long friendships with communists who did not leave the movement.

After the 1950 conviction and imprisonment of the Hollywood Ten for contempt of Congress, Seeger was subpoenaed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on August 18, 1955. And like his Hollywood Ten comrades Seeger refused to plead the Fifth Amendment (which asserted that his testimony might be self- incriminating) and instead refused to name personal and political associations on the grounds that this would violate his First Amendment rights (freedom of speech): "I am not going to answer any questions as to my association, my philosophical or religious beliefs or my political beliefs, or how I voted in any election, or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this," Seeger testified. On March 26, 1957, Seeger was charged with contempt Congress, but in May 1962 an appeals court ruled the indictment to be flawed and overturned his conviction.

Vietnam War era and Seeger's repudiation of Stalin

According to his biographer David Dunaway, Seeger didn't repudiate Stalin's genocide until 1982 where he performed at a benefit concert for Poland's Solidarity resistance movement. In the late 1980s Seeger also expressed disapproval of violent revolutions, remarking to an interviewer that he was really in favor of incremental change [i.e., Fabian Socialism] and that "the most lasting revolutions are those that take place over a period of time." In his 1993 autobiography *Where Have All the Flowers Gone,* Seeger wrote, "Should I apologize for all this? I think so." He went on to put his thinking in context:

> How could Hitler have been stopped? ...At any rate, today I'll apologize for a number of things, such as thinking that Stalin was merely a "hard driver" and not a "supremely cruel misleader." I guess anyone who calls himself a Christian should be prepared to apologize for the Inquisition, the burning of heretics by Protestants, the slaughter of Jews and Muslims by Crusaders. White people in the U.S.A. ought to apologize for stealing land from Native Americans and enslaving blacks. Europeans could apologize for worldwide conquests, Mongolians for Genghis Khan. And supporters of Roosevelt could apologize for his support of Somoza, of Southern White Democrats, of Franco, for putting Japanese Americans in concentration camps. Who should my granddaughter Moraya apologize to? She's part African, part European, part Chinese, part Japanese, part Native American. Let's look ahead.

Seeger's moral equivalency arguments here are both grotesque and obscene, yet they are typical of liberal fascist arrogance and duplicity. What he fails to establish is a proper historical paradigm and answer this question of ultimate concern – *Who* did many of those terrible things to society which you lament about in song? – Answer: the Democrat Socialist Party whom you've supported for almost 80 years of your life. We will not forget all of this history with your flippant phrase, "Let's look ahead."

1990s to 2014

Seeger's devotion to communism remained steadfast 60 years later in a 1995 interview, where he insisted that "I still call myself a communist, because communism is no more what Russia made of it than Christianity is what the churches make of it." In 2006, David Boaz – Voice of America and NPR commentator and president of the libertarian Cato Institute – excoriated Seeger in an op-ed in *The Guardian*, entitled "Stalin's Songbird" in which he denounced *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times* for praising Seeger. He categorized Seeger as "someone with a longtime habit of following the party line" who had only "eventually" separated with the CPUSA.

In 2007, in response to criticism from a former banjo student – historian Ron Radosh, a former Trotskyite who now writes for the conservative National Review – Seeger wrote a song condemning Stalin, "Big Joe Blues": *"I'm singing about old Joe, cruel Joe. / He ruled with an iron hand. / He put an end to the dreams / Of so many in every land. / ... I got the Big Joe Blues."*... I'm not at all convinced Seeger ever recanted communism; he was just trying not to let history overtake him.
The day he died, President Barack Obama called Seeger "America's tuning fork" who believed in ""the power of song" to bring social change. "Over the years, Pete used his voice and his [Soviet] hammer [and Sickle] to strike blows for worker's rights and civil rights; world peace and environmental conservation and he always invited us to sing along. For reminding us where we come from and showing us where we need to go, we will always be grateful to Pete Seeger. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Pete's family and all those who loved him," Obama remarked.

Epilogue to a 'Useful Idiot'

Yet who was largely responsible for much of the mass social upheaval in America from the Loyalist treasonous alliance with King George III against the American colonists, to slavery and the KKK to Jim Crow discrimination, ghetto gulags, the Welfare State voluntary genocide (abortion), deconstructing the U.S. Constitution and Obamacare? – Answer: the Democrat Socialist Party, that's who, nevertheless the Left received very little historical condemnation both then and now as demonstrated by Black people, who are slavishly loyal to the Democrat Socialist Party voting for Obama at 96% in 2008 and 93% in 2012. Here in Detroit (currently in Chapter 9 bankruptcy) where I live, Blacks voted for Obama's socialist slavery at 98%! ... and Black people didn't listen to Seeger's music.

Seeger, although a very popular folksinger and American communist icon, was what Lenin called a 'useful idiot' or what Dr. Kengor called a 'Potemkin Progressive,' typically in politics and economics, to describe any construction (literal or figurative) built solely to deceive others into thinking that some situation [i.e., Soviet communism] is better than it really is [i.e., genocidal death to millions trapped behind the 'Iron Curtain'] – a contrived fallacy which countless popular and influential American and European visitors to the Soviet Union naively believed and propagated this communist utopia as good, non-racist and an ideal, desirable government to be emulated here in America, Europe and throughout and the world.

Seeger's song faking criticism of 'Uncle Joe' Stalin 50 years after the fact was accompanied by a letter to Radosh, in which Seeger stated, "I think you're right, I should have asked to see the gulags when I was in U.S.S.R [in 1964, 1967, 1981, and N. Korea in 1972].
Progressive/socialist intellectuals like John Dewey, George Bernard Shaw, Upton Sinclair, Rexford Tugwell, Walter Lippmann, W.E.B. Dubois, Paul Robeson, the Columbia faculty and countless numbers of other deceived leftists including Seeger sang the praises of the genocidal butcher Stalin for decades while the craven Democrat Socialist Party here in America glorified socialism and communism calling it "Progressive" while slandering the name of Sen. Joe McCarthy and using the propaganda press and Hollywood (i.e., John Frankenheimer's1962 adaption of Richard Condon's *Manchrian Candidate* modelled the drunken buffoon, Sen. John Yerkes Iselin's character after Sen. Joe McCarthy). This progressive conspiracy to destroy the reputation of McCarthy and make him the most hated man in America, a tyrant, doubtfully driving McCarthy to drunkenness and regrettably to an early grave, yet to most Americans Sen. McCarthy was a bona fide American hero who exposed communist infiltration inside the State and Treasury Departments, inside the U.S. Military, the Academy and throughout Hollywood, yet liberals hate him and have unjustly changed his name into a curse word (McCarthyism) that mis-educated, cowardly Republicans run away from to this day.
Conservative intellectual Ann Coulter in her celebrated 2003 book *Treason* had this to say about the legendary legacy of Sen. Joe McCarthy – America's greatest politician of the twentieth century (and that includes Ronald Reagan) who was vindicated 40 years later by the release of decrypted Soviet cables called the Venona Papers (1995). Coulter writes:

> Among the most notorious Soviet spies in high-level positions in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations – now proved absolutely, beyond question by the Soviet cables – were Alger Hiss at the State Department; Harry Dexter White, assistant secretary of the Treasury Department, later appointed to the International Monetary Fund by President Truman; Lauchlin Currie, personal assistant to President Roosevelt and White House liaison to the State Department under both Roosevelt and Truman; Laurence Duggan, head of the Latin American Desk at the State Department; Frank Coe, U.S. representative on the International Monetary Fund; Solomon Adler, senior Treasury Department official; Klaus Fuchs, top atomic scientist; and Duncan Lee, senior aide to the head of the OSS.

America, we've got to stop celebrating American communists, communist sympathizers and radicals like Pete Seeger, Hollywood, Broadway, union thugs, environmentalist zealots, Obama and the Democrat Socialist Party, but instead marginalize them and punish them as the traitors they truly are. Don't sing songs to the communist Pete Seeger, but sing songs extolling the great name of a forgotten, misunderstood, yet a renowned, heroic conservative Republican... Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Book Notice

It's been 5 years since publishing my last book and now I've published two new volumes – *THE PROGRESSIVE REVOLUTION* (University Press of America, 2013):
Vol. 1 @ https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780761861102

Vol. 2 @ https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780761861126
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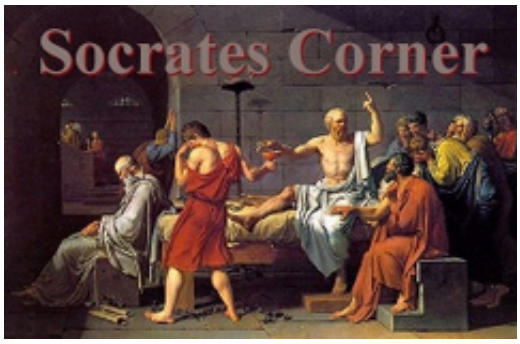

Invitation for manuscripts
I am starting a new a program on my blog dedicated to giving young conservatives (ages 14-35) a regular place to display and publish their ideas called *Socrates Corner.* If you know of any young person who wants to publish their ideas on any subject, have them send their essay manuscripts to my email at ewashington@wnd.com .
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