

## THE BUREAUCRATIC REVOLUTION

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**MAX SHACHTMAN**

***THE RISE OF THE STALINIST STATE***



# **THE BUREAUCRATIC REVOLUTION**

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*to*

*Yetta,*

*affectionately*

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## FOREWORD

THIS WORK SETS FORTH THE VIEW that Stalinist Russia and all countries of the same structure represent a new social order. I call it bureaucratic collectivism. The name is meant to reject the belief that Stalinist society is in any way socialist or is compatible with socialism; and to reject as well the belief that it is capitalist or moving toward capitalism. While private ownership in all the main branches of production and distribution has been abolished, it is not socialist. While all elementary democratic rights have been abolished to permit the most unrestrained exploitation of labor, it is not capitalist.

I regard this new society and the state that rules it as a unique form of class exploitation and oppression. The vast majority is dominated by a minority which monopolizes all political and economic power and aims at maintaining social relations that are even more alien to socialism than they are to capitalism. The ruling class too is unique, in that it does not own the national property which it rules but does "own" the state. It derives its vast economic power and privilege exclusively from the political power it exercises through its chosen instrument, the Communist party. The roots of its power over society reposing entirely in this political power, the ruling class cannot permit even such measures of popular political control as are possible under capitalism, where the roots of social power lie in property ownership. The totalitarian character of the Stalinist régime is thereby determined and—despite the concessions and modifications it may grant under popular pressure—thereby fixed.

The essays and articles which make up this book are taken from a socialist review, the *New International*, in which they appeared originally. The first one goes back twenty years; the last one is more recent. I would like to believe that the dates do not deprive them of interest or value today. It is not merely a matter of a socialist's appraisal of the Stalinist outcome of the Bolshevik revolution. It is not a matter of "intra-mural polemics" familiar and interesting to the radical movement, but to it alone. It is not a matter of restating in different form a theory and views already stated by others.

The views presented here are my own and I am unable to ascribe responsibility for them to others who have dealt with

the same subject. This does not mean that I owe nothing to others—I owe them a good deal. There are many writers in the past two decades who have questioned or denied the socialist character of Stalinist society; some who have at the same time denied that it is capitalist; and some who, like myself, called it by the name of bureaucratic collectivism so as to underline its distinctive character. I have not hesitated too long to adopt those of their ideas and insights that appeared to me to be valid and illuminating. But the way in which I have joined and interwoven these ideas with others, is my own way.

There are three main reasons why I have not found it possible to subscribe to all the views of those who, like myself, have held that a new class society and a new ruling class exist in the Stalinist countries.

One is that most of them regard “bureaucratic collectivism” or the “totalitarian state economy” or the “managerial society” as the social order common to Stalinist Russia, Hitlerite Germany and even (at least as an incipient form) New Deal United States. To me, this contention is an absurdity. It is theoretically false; it ignores what is essential in Stalinism; it is refuted repeatedly by big events and conflicts; it precludes intelligent participation in political life. I hold the difference between capitalism—be it Fascist or democratic—and Stalinism to be fundamental and irreconcilable.

Another is that many who identify bureaucratic collectivism with some form of capitalism, or who foresee that the two social systems are approaching similarity from different directions, fail, paradoxically enough, to perceive the true nature of the relationship between the two, the nature of their dependence upon each other which is both reciprocal and antagonistic. I have tried to stress this peculiar relationship which might be called symbiotic, that is, each feeds upon the other but in a different way, for different reasons, and with different results. It is my conception of this relationship, and the political conclusions I draw from it, that form the main line of separation from most other writers.

Tightly connected with this reason is the third. Other critics of Stalinism draw anti-socialist conclusions from their analyses. My conclusions are diametrically opposite. I consider it untenable and, in the long run, disastrous to counterpose to Stalinism the defense of capitalism in any of its synonymous forms. So long as the choice before the world is only between these two, it is Stalinism—totalitarian collectivism—that will gain, at one or another rate of speed. What is of paramount importance to me in the views I have put forward is this: the Stalinist reorganization of capitalist society is the penalty we pay for the failure to carry out in time a socialist

reorganization. In the long run, the race, as I see it, is not between capitalism and Stalinism. It is a race for the succession to the capitalism which has so well done its great work, which can do it no longer and which, like the Moor, must go. It is the race, then, between Stalinism and socialism, or, in the language of daily political life, between the Communist and socialist movements. On the outcome of this race the whole future depends.

My own convictions about the outcome remain fundamentally unaltered. The famous "dynamism" of the Stalinist world, which bedazzles and bewilders so many observers, is not the product of forces inherent in the social relations which it can maintain only by violence. Stalinism, a unique form of reactionism, appears "dynamic" only in contrast to the unarrested decline and helplessness of the capitalist world. It is true that democratic socialism and the forces that move toward it are for the present in a conservative phase. But they represent the largest single power in the modern, decisive countries of the world. They must of necessity base themselves upon the mighty social force—the working class—whose essential condition for existence is the struggle to maintain and expand democracy. And I believe that it is this struggle that will assert itself—sooner, I trust, rather than later—in the ranks of socialism and in society itself.

The big events of the recent past in Russia have not necessitated any basic changes in the views that are presented here; only supplementation and extension are required.

The changes that have taken place since the death of Stalin and the establishment of the Khrushchev régime have made a tremendous impression throughout the world because their importance is tremendous. In a word, the rule of open and brutal terror, the régime of bloodbaths, has been ended both in the Communist party and in the country as a whole. This would be enough to bring universal relief and satisfaction to the tens of millions who so long endured cruelties beyond full description. But more is included in the changes. Most, and perhaps all, of the slave labor camps have been abandoned and their tragic victims released to help fill the war-thinned ranks of the regular labor force. Economic conditions, especially with regard to food and clothing, have clearly improved and improved most for the workers in the larger population centers. In general, there is a relaxation—the degree differs in different social spheres—of open coercion, tension and pressure upon workers, peasants, managers, party members and officials, scholars and scientists, artists and writers, national minorities and Jews, the satellite countries—that is, all who were formerly choked in a police stranglehold. The cult of the

individual, as practised by Stalin and particularly when practised by Stalin, has been ceremoniously disavowed. Stalin himself has been officially demoted from the office of greatest, wisest and most adored leader in recorded history to the lesser office of maniacal mass-murderer, and some of his other improprieties and errors have also been registered. Party dissenters are no longer shot as Fascist reptiles and mad dogs. As in any normal despotism their frame-up, secret trial, public denouncement and disgrace is followed only by downgrading or exile. In short, almost everyone has good reason to be relieved by the great change. In the life of a people, a change of such scope is not a trifle.

But the breadth of the change far exceeds its depth. It would be wholly misleading to confuse the two dimensions. Perspective and a sense of proportion are mandatory. So is the recollection of some basic facts of the pre-war and war periods.

The modernization of Russia successfully attained under Stalin was carried out more completely and exclusively at the expense of the working class and peasantry than was the case in the worst periods of primitive accumulation in any Western capitalist country. This holds true for the intensity of exploitation, the brutality and violence of oppression, the depression of the standard of living and the utter disregard of human rights and dignity.

During the Stalin era, the Russian working classes received a smaller share of the national income than the workers and peasants of any important European country. Nowhere else was there a greater disparity between the rise in the standard of living and the rise in productivity and the national income. The number of communists and Stalinists (to say nothing of others in the population) imprisoned and murdered in the period of the Purges in Russia exceeded the figure for all the countries of the world combined. Terror raged in town and country, land and factory, in the very ranks and leadership of the ruling party itself. The count of its victims was millions upon millions. The widespread hatred of the régime generated in this period—the period of the “victory of socialism”—could be concealed from weekending foreign visitors but not from the régime itself. It did not maintain the largest secret police in history for anniversary parades.

When the war broke out in Russia, the detestation and weakness of the régime exploded in the open. In all the countries that were at war with Germany, Hitler was welcomed by friends. In some countries they numbered dozens; in others, hundreds. In no country did the welcome assume the proportions of a massive popular movement—in no country except the Stalinist empire. It does not speak well for the poor wretches who met the Nazi invaders

with bread and salt. It speaks annihilatingly against a régime so hated by so many of its own people as to make an invader of their homeland—and what an invader!—appear to them as a liberator. From no other country fighting Hitler did so many join the Reichswehr or fight alongside of it against their own government. Entire regiments and even divisions of Russians, White Russians, Ukrainians and others marched with the German army against the Russian. No other anti-Hitler belligerent, no matter how unpopular with its people, produced such a monstrous phenomenon during the war.

The régime, more than any other in Europe, had talked and worked without cease for years about the Nazi peril to the homeland. It had exacted terrible privations from its people in the name of preparing against the attack it foresaw and foretold. It repeatedly proclaimed the dread fate it had in store for the invader—with that disgusting braggadocio and bluff which were, as they still are, hallmarks of Stalinism. Yet this same régime almost collapsed when the attack did take place. Entire armies were surrounded and surrendered. The enemy penetrated deeper into the country than ever before in the history of Western invasions of Russia—deeper than the Lithuanians, the Swedes, Napoleon, Ludendorff.

There is of course no disputing the fact that the resistance to the invader gradually stiffened and eventually triumphed in the almost unbroken march from Stalingrad to Berlin. The Russian soldier is a brave and tenacious warrior. But it was Hitlerism that provided the first major impulsion to turning the tide, with the grisly atrocities it committed on a massive scale against the invaded peoples and the hideous zoological chauvinism with which it sought to subjugate or wipe out the Russian *Untermenschen*.

Even against all this, which understandably infuriated every Russian, Stalin did not seek to mobilize the wrath of the people in the name of the “socialism” officially proclaimed as “irrevocably established.” The heroes invoked to inspire resistance were dredged up out of the past of Tsarist medievalism and reaction—gendarmes of obscurantism like General Kutuzov whose relationship to socialism or democracy is sufficiently remote. In the war against foreign intervention following the Bolshevik revolution, the people were called upon to defend the Socialist Fatherland and they responded. In the second world war, Stalin evidently regarded such an appeal as imprudent and not as effectual as his call for the defense of Mother Russia, and even Holy Russia—terms last employed by Tsar Nicholas II. It was Stalin’s biggest achievement in self-criticism.

The Russian victory in the war was a revolutionizing force. No people can be expected to return from a victory over a foreign foe who threatens its life, its soil, its nationhood and independence, only to accept submissively a wanton régime at home, especially if the régime did not always cover itself with glory in the defense of the homeland. To this consideration may be added others no less important. As has already been indicated, many of the iniquities of the régime had been, if not supported with enthusiasm then at least tolerated, on the ground that all belts, economic and political, had to be tightened against the threat of impending Nazi attack. The threat proved to be anything but imaginary, even if we leave aside the question of Stalin's own contribution to converting threat to reality. But Hitlerism was so crushingly defeated that it could not be invoked again as a justification for continuing the pre-war course of the régime. Before arriving at the funeral pyre in Berlin, the Russian soldier marched through thousands of miles of countries to the west and southwest of his home. Now he could see these lands not as he had been told they were but as they really were. Even though they were war-torn, and at best represented, generally speaking, the poorer and less developed countries of Europe, he could hardly help observing the superiority of their standard of living and their political standards as compared with those he had to endure. This revealing experience of millions, to be transmitted upon their homecoming to many more millions, greatly worried the ruling class and exerted a heavy pressure upon it. A loosening of the totalitarian yoke was dictated to the Stalinist bureaucracy the minute the Russian westward advance met the extinction of Hitler and his sinister star. What should occasion surprise is not that the now familiar series of concessions was made to the peoples of the Stalinist empire, but that it was made so belatedly and not much earlier.

The resistance of the bureaucracy to any significant change was obdurate and lasting, so long as the personal power of Stalin remained intact. But in a modern totalitarian society dominated by an autocrat, personal power, no matter how absolute it is or seems to be, is not like a pistol which, when it falls from its dead owner's hand, can simply be picked up by another and wielded in the same way. The most absolute despot in such a society depends, as he must, on a vast apparatus of control, manned by a vast, hierarchically-ordered bureaucracy. Since it cannot and dare not submit to the control of the mass without abandoning its control over the mass, it cannot submit itself to its own control without imperiling its cohesiveness and therewith its power. It must protect itself by submitting to a supreme arbiter (which is why the present-day pious talk of the bureaucracy against the "cult of the indi-

vidual" is so much rubbish). But before one such supreme arbiter-autocrat can take the place of his predecessor, the apparatus must be conquered against all possible rivals.

The replacement of Stalin by Khrushchev illustrated this process perfectly. Every claimant to power after Stalin's death had to demonstrate that he could yield to the powerful, if muted, pressure for change without imperilling the rule of the bureaucracy itself. The demonstration had to be convincing, in the first place, to the party apparatus. Prominent associates and co-responsibles of Stalin made an effort. Beria, head of the secret police, promised an end to police terror. Malenkov promised that consumer goods would soon gain production priority. But the crisis of the régime which both of them represented and from which neither one could dissociate himself, proved to be much deeper than universally supposed. Beria, representing the police which everybody had cause to hate, was assassinated by his good friends and colleagues, who then indicted and disgraced him in public. Two years later, Malenkov fell, but this time with no blood-letting. The bureaucracy was evidently summoning up the courage it lost under Stalin, and setting itself against the blood purges that had made its very life so precarious in the past. Another two years elapsed, and Khrushchev's supremacy was established with his remarkable speech at the XXth Party Congress.

The entire speech, whose like is not to be found anywhere in history, may be summarized in three sentences: We will never forget Stalin's greatness in bringing us to power in the land and brutally crushing all who stood in our way—that was sanity. We will never forgive Stalin for brutally crushing and humiliating us who kept him in power—that was insanity. Sanity will now be restored by repudiating and ending the terror, so that the bureaucracy may rule more or less undisturbed by the fears of yesterday or fears of an actively discontented people.

On the basis of this bold and dramatic repudiation of the aspect of Stalin's régime which undermined the security of the new ruling class, coupled with the reaffirmation of the aspect which assured its security, Khrushchev firmly established his right to the succession in the eyes of the bureaucracy taken as a whole. Since the XXth Congress, he has faithfully lived up to his promises, the implicit as well as the explicit.

For more than half a decade now, the life of the economic and governmental bureaucracy and its domination of society have been made easier. There have been none of the disquieting upheavals that struck East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and—right after Stalin's death—parts of Russia. The nightmare

of monstrous accusations and blood purges in government and industry has been dissipated. A bureaucrat can now live both in comfort and in peace. To be sure, his power and position are not absolute. He must still submit to controls which include exasperating criticism and "self-criticism," demotions and even dismissals. But as he looks the world over, he is consoled by the sight of all ruling classes, everywhere, being subjected not to the same but to similar state-power controls, goadings, public rebuke and reprimand. He is consoled further by the thought that, at least for the present period, he is no longer threatened by the midnight prelude to a bullet in the skull in a G.P.U. cellar or even to the long voyage and long confinement to a slave labor camp. The controls of the party apparatus are, without a doubt, still irksome to this bureaucracy; but since they are directed mainly and essentially against the omnipresent threat to the very existence of the bureaucracy and its power—that is, against democracy—the irksome controls remain as tolerable as they are necessary.

The consolidation of Khrushchev's position as arbitrator-autocrat inside the party apparatus has also proceeded, in general, satisfactorily. The bureaucracy has ground for contentment with Khrushchev's success in realigning the ranks of the party apparatus and restoring its monolithic character. The importance of this achievement—to date it is an achievement—must not be neglected.

After Stalin's death, the ruling party was threatened with all sorts of divisions. *Such divisions, in the conditions of totalitarianism, open up the principal possibility of a revolutionary intervention by the people for the overturn of the régime and the establishment of democracy.* Until the divisions are overcome and monolithism is restored, the rule of the bureaucracy is imminently threatened. It must have iron discipline, not self-administered, but enforced against it by an autocrat.

In this respect Khrushchev's performance has been outstanding. He has eliminated all the most prominent coadjutors of Stalin — Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and even Bulganin — but without again arousing the fright of bureaucracy and apparatus by resuming the system of blood purges against demoted rivals. He has squeezed out the lemon named Zhukov and restored the shaken authority of the party machine in and over the armed forces. All of Beria's men in the G.P.U. have, it goes without saying, long been cleared out and the secret police (now kept in the background, in line with the new course, but not at all dissolved or disempowered) is at the service of the new *Vozhd*.

The party apparatus has been bloodlessly but systematically purged on an immense scale. In the two years between the XXIst

Party Congress (January, 1959) and the middle of 1961, almost two-thirds of all the party leaderships of the Russian and its dependent republics were removed and replaced; about forty per cent of the party regional secretariats were similarly reconstituted. In six such widely different republics as Tadjikistan, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Turkmenistan and Azerbaidjan, more than one fourth of the Party Central Committee members were purged between 1958 and 1960 in the first-named; one third were purged in the second and third; almost half were purged in the fourth; and more than half in the last two. Khrushchev has been carrying through, up to the time of this writing, a drastic *Gleichschaltung* of the party machine to recast it in his image and to staff it reliably, that is, monolithically. (As is the custom, the purge is accompanied by massive accusations against party—and industrial—officials of swindling, peculation, malfeasance, forgery, embezzlement, fraudulence, counterfeiting and other authentic manifestations of Stalinist “socialism.”)

As for the “collective leadership” that Khrushchev talked about so devoutly at the XXth Congress, it has inevitably turned again into a collection of obedient henchmen of Khrushchev who are not as yet as extravagant in exalting the new republican Caesar as was the case in Stalin’s time. The evolution is following an inexorable law of bureaucratic collectivism.

The extensive popular reforms and concessions granted under the Khrushchev régime, plus the failure of the new leader to take blood measures against party rivals and opponents, prompted widespread speculation on the limitless capacities of the régime itself to convert totalitarianism into democratism. This is not the place to examine all the weird and wishful theories spun around these speculations, including the theory to which this work is so largely devoted, that is, that Stalinist Russia is in some sense or other a socialist state or society. It is in order, however, to point out four respects in which Khrushchev himself has rebuked the hopeful speculators by clearly fixing the limits of reform and concession.

First is the fundamental consideration plainly implicit in Khrushchev’s sensational speech at the XXth Party Congress. Stalin’s greatest achievement was the modernization of Russia by means of the most concentrated total exploitation of the muscles and nerves of the working population known in our epoch. To make this possible he drew together the elements of a new exploiting class and consolidated its rule over Russian society. And in turn to make this possible, he destroyed all the great achievements of the Bolshevik revolution. Destroyed also were all those

who in one way or another, consciously or half-consciously, resisted the rise of the new class and defended the liberation ideals of 1917. They were wiped out in a reign of terror that easily equalled Hitler's in some respects and exceeded it in others. If Khrushchev now does not pursue a reign of terror against revolutionary opponents, it is solely because the job of extirpating them totally—in so far as they were the men of 1917—*was already performed by his forerunner*. Stalin accomplished a class task. Khrushchev has no need to repeat this task but only to rest upon its accomplishment. There are no more Trotskys or Zinovievs or Bukharins to kill off. This is basic.

The self-same consideration is to be found even more explicitly in Khrushchev's speech. He is very careful to draw a clear distinction, even if in his own terms, between the two victims of Stalinist terror. He still finds it important, before the assembled party machine, to "affirm that the Party had fought a serious fight against the Trotskyists, Rightists and bourgeois nationalists. . . . Here Stalin played a positive rôle." But he finds that Stalin played a not at all positive rôle "after the complete political liquidation of the Trotskyists, Zinovievists and Bukharinists, when as a result of that fight and socialist victories the Party achieved unity. . . . Stalin thought that now he could decide all things alone and all he needed were statisticians; he treated all others in such a way that they could only listen to and praise him." Or be assassinated anyway. The limits to the repudiation of Stalinism are plain enough. They have been stressed again by the limits set by Khrushchev on the "rehabilitation" of those who were hounded, persecuted, expelled from the Party, imprisoned and even murdered under Stalin. Rehabilitated have been only the loyal and much misunderstood Stalinists. Not one Trotskyist or Zinovievist is known to have been restored to Khrushchev's good graces.

The third indication of the limits was most thunderously given only a few months after Khrushchev's speech, and this time too by the speaker. The Hungarian revolution aimed unmistakably at the independence of the country under socialist democracy. Not a single European revolution in this century had such widespread, almost universal, popular support; none had nobler goals. None—not even the Hungarian Soviet republic of 1919—was more swiftly, more perfidiously, more pitilessly and more brutally suppressed by force of arms, by alien arms to boot, by arms wielded—what could be more sardonic?—in the name of socialism. The commander-in-chief of this counterrevolutionary operation was not Stalin (he would not have flinched either) but Khrushchev. Reforms, yes. Freedom, no.

The most expressive indication of the limits set by Khrushchev is the very latest one, represented by his draft of the new program to be adopted by the coming XXII<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress. It announces that the building of Communism is now the "immediate practical task for the Soviet people." This is good news. Under Communism, Marx and his followers have held, there is not only an end to all classes and class distinctions and privileges, but an end also to the state and therefore to state or any other kind of official coercion. The social principle prevails of "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." The new program, it is almost unnecessary to say, is not in the least concerned with what has always been meant by communism. It is concerned, as are all the basic words and deeds of the régime, with perpetuating the totalitarian rule of the bureaucracy, and everything else in it is, as usual, fraud and deceit.

The masses are promised clothes and food and housing in great amplitude and with adequate escape clauses in every other paragraph. Despite this, it is entirely possible that with the passage of enough time, the régime, if it continues in power, can provide virtually the entire population with all its basic physical or material needs. But this alone would not distinguish it from capitalism, inasmuch as it is just as possible, theoretically, for a capitalist state to reach a similar level of approvisionnement of its people. Theoretically, indeed, as the text of this work shows later on, the late Bukharin, as chairman of the late Communist International, held that such a level is also possible under a modern, non-capitalist, slave society. But if Communism means, in its most illuminating and promising definition, the leap from the "kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom," there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in Khrushchev's new program to indicate that Stalinist society even proposes to move in that direction.

There is not a word in the program about how it was possible for a madman to reach the helm of a socialist society and maintain himself there for years by means of a reign of terror against his own party, his own government and his own people—and without the people knowing the facts which were common knowledge to millions in other countries. One would think that this is not a triviality for a régime calling itself socialist. There is not a word, therefore, on how this socialism can safeguard itself against a repetition of the same abomination. The new program for "the building of the Communist society" has not a single word to say about the rôle of the secret police (the word "police" occurs nowhere in the document) in the recent past, at the present time, or in the paradise to come. But all this is next to nothing com-

pared to the central point, and the central point is the rôle, position and power of the political machine of the ruling class, the Communist party, in the march toward Khrushchevist Communism.

"Historical development is bound to lead to the withering away of the state," we read. And what is the state in Russia? It "arose as a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat." That is indeed how it arose. It is that no longer, however, for "the dictatorship of the proletariat has fulfilled its historic mission and has ceased to be indispensable in the U.S.S.R." The very next paragraph elucidates this point further: "The party holds that the dictatorship of the working class will cease to be necessary before the state withers away." The proletarian dictatorship has done its work, and now, "the party holds" that this dictatorship, which "has ceased" to be necessary, "will cease" to be necessary. The thought is expressed with sparkling clarity. But not this thought alone.

The old state, which will cease but also has ceased, is already something else. It "has become a state of the entire people, an organ expressing the interests and will of the people as a whole." When this exciting event occurred is not indicated, which is too bad in view of the fact that it never before existed in history, either in reality, in theory, in forecast, in party programs or party expectation. It would not be too daring to state that it does not exist today and will not exist tomorrow. The phrase alone is a first-rate absurdity. The claim that this state exists is an affront to the intelligence in general and the Russian people in particular. According to an authority like Khrushchev himself at the XXth Congress, it was not the "will of the people as a whole" that was expressed by the "state of the entire people." For years and years, it was the personal will and caprice of one man, and a demented one at that, that was expressed and executed by the state machinery for coercion which was entirely at his disposal. The "interests and will of the people as a whole" had nothing whatever to do with the behavior of the state.

At any rate, the state of the entire people, which does not and cannot exist, is going to wither away, which would seem to be a pity since it already expresses the interests and will of the people as a whole—a condition that ought to satisfy even the most critical. When will it start withering away and when will it have withered? On this there is an answer. "To insure that the state withers away completely," two sets of conditions must be provided. The first deals with internal conditions—"the building of a developed Communist society." That alone will take doing. In the next decade (1961-1970), "the Soviet Union, in creating the material and tech-

nical basis of communism, will surpass the strongest and richest capitalist country, the U.S.A.," with bountiful consequences for all—"everyone will live in easy circumstances . . . hard physical labor will disappear," etc. In the following decade, "the material and technical basis of communism"—which was being created in the preceding ten years—"will be created and there will be an abundance of material and cultural benefits for the whole population." By 1980, then "a communist society will, on the whole, be built in the U.S.S.R." But, to be precise, only on the whole. "The construction of Communist society will be fully completed in the subsequent period." That does not look like too long a time to wait, at least with respect to the internal conditions.

There are, however, external conditions to be met as well. They are "the final settlement of the contradictions between capitalism and communism in the world arena in favor of communism." Until Stalinism has triumphed on an international scale, the state cannot be expected to wither away. What can be expected instead, while Russia is being transformed so rapidly into the strongest country in the world, with material and cultural abundance for all? The program replies without equivocation or obscurity:

"The period of full-scale Communist construction is characterized by a further enhancement of the rôle and importance of the Communist party as the leading and guiding force of Soviet society."

The "*further enhancement*" of the power of the totalitarian party machine—this is the key and central aim which the entire program is written to justify. All official Russian comment and exegesis since the publication of the draft makes this conclusion incontestable. The masses are promised every conceivable reform and amelioration, including free housing and free lunch. But one line of change is unmistakably blocked off: they can look forward to no political right or institution that would enable them to exercise control over the now uncontrolled and uncontrollable party bureaucracy. "The party exists for the people and it is in serving the people that it sees the purpose of its activity," writes Khrushchev. But absolutely no means is provided or promised to the people whereby *they* can freely decide *how* "the party" is to serve them; *whether or not* "the party" is truly serving them; or *who else* would *better* serve them.

All the deciding is to be done, in the future as in the past, by "the party" and only by "the party." And this in turn means: all the deciding is to be done by the uppermost reaches of the absolutist party apparatus, by those who decide the composition of the Central Committee of the Party in the Ukraine, of the Secretariat of the Party in Uzbekistan; by those who decide on

what is produced, how it is produced, what is distributed, how and to whom it is distributed; by those who decide what the working day is and what the wage rate is and what the manager's salary and perquisites of office are; by those who decide when atomic bomb tests are suspended and when they are resumed; by those who decide whom the people shall elect unanimously, against what the people shall protest unanimously and for what the people shall cheer unanimously.

And the newly-proclaimed period of "full-scale Communist construction"? It is planned in the first and last place to mark the "further enhancement" of the monopolistic, monolithic power of those who decide everything and alone decide everything. From the standpoint of the fight for socialist freedom, everything else in the document is humbug. The all-important fact about the bureaucracy is its utter, dogged, determination not to yield the absolute political power which gives it absolute rule over society. Khrushchev may yet propose or even carry out a hundred different changes, including welcome changes, but on the all-important question no one can expect a hair's-breadth of change—not from him, that is, not from the bureaucracy. Here indeed is a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose*.

It has often been said, in recent years: The Stalin era has really come to an end. The country or the Russian working class were not ready for democracy at the beginning of that era but now the country has been modernized in many basic ways. The original cause for the rise of the bureaucracy and its totalitarian rule has vanished. There is a new and mighty working class, a new intelligentsia, a new and widely educated people, even a new peasantry. Therewith progress toward the original but at that time utopian ideals of the revolution—equality and democracy—is assured.

There is enough that is valid in this contention to make it a half-truth. But like most half-truths it is misleading because of what it ignores.

The great and fundamental changes achieved under Stalin are undeniable. It is a fact that a new, modern and fresh working class and intelligentsia has grown up, and that in increasing numbers and increasing measure it aspires to those radical political changes that would lead to an end to the totalitarian tyranny and the inauguration of socialist democracy. It is a fact, too, that the backwardness and poverty of Russia was the cause (more truly, was one of the most important causes) of the rise of bureaucratic totalitarianism. But it is not less true that just as the era of Stalin saw the rise and consolidation of a new working class such as did not

exist in the Twenties, so did it see the rise and consolidation of a new ruling class, a bureaucracy, such as did not exist forty years ago.

It is an egregious error in thought to assume that an effect comes to an end with the end of the cause that produced it. Every effect itself tends to become a cause, independent of the cause that originally generated it. An ulcer which may have been produced in the first place by untidy eating habits cannot, after it has developed beyond a certain point, be eliminated merely by changing these habits. Surgical methods are required.

The collectivist bureaucracy in Russia is not a mirror-image of the old backwardness that automatically vanishes when it vanishes. No, it is a robust, ambitious, predatory, self-conscious, socially trained and politically well-represented class reality, with more than enough privileges and power of position in Stalinist society to generate the stiffest possible resistance to a graceful, cheery withdrawal from supremacy. For that withdrawal it will require some vigorous prompting. In good fortune there is indeed a new force in Russia capable of such prompting. Up to the present and for an additional period of unknowable duration, the new party leadership has shown sufficient political skill in holding this force—the working class, the collectivized peasants, the intelligentsia—from going the full distance. For this, the bureaucracy owes Khrushchev a debt of gratitude—the bureaucracy, but no one else.

Unless this is grasped, the course of the Khrushchev régime does not make any sense whatever. On the one hand, it proposes an enormous, even unparalleled improvement in the material conditions of the population. There is a high percentage of exaggeration in this proposal, to be sure, for with all the notable advances, the official economic claims of the régime are reached by multiplying the actual coefficient of growth with a politically-determined coefficient of bluff.\* But the régime's ability—and intention—to

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\*A recent disclosure is enough to indicate the dimensions of official falsification. Official propaganda lays claim to a 28-time multiplication of gross industrial production in the planning period from 1928 to 1958. Toward the end of 1959, however, a work on the Russian economy was published in Moscow, composed of articles written earlier by the prominent economist and academician, S. G. Strumilin. The value of figures on gross production may be judged from Strumilin's comparison with the figures, as he gives them, on net production, which generally eliminate the multiple calculations built into the figures on gross production. Using figures for production based on constant prices of the year 1926/27, Strumilin's tables show: in 1928, the value of gross production ran a little more than twice the value of net production (21.5 million rubles as against 10.1); this distorting disparity widened almost every year until 1956 when the figures ran, respectively, 492.4 million rubles as against 147.7—an exaggeration of well over 300 percent. Or, to put it differently, net production was 47 percent of gross production in 1928, becoming almost continuously smaller until it reached a

change economic conditions at home for the better are beyond question and, short of a world calamity, the next period should prove this. If it can and will achieve this satisfying of many of the material aspirations of the people, why does it propose, on the other hand, not only to maintain all the institutions and instruments of repression in its hand but to proceed to their "further enhancement"? For it is transparently clear that the power of the Communist party cannot be "further enhanced" without strengthening the power of coercion at its disposal, that is, the state, which is at bottom a bureaucracy, a police and a prison system.

In this apparent madness, there is method and sense. *Economic progress in Stalinist society does not lead automatically to democracy but to the maintenance of the machinery of oppression.* The half-truth above has its application here. As the economy grows, the people see more clearly that there can be plenty for all without the need, real or apparent, of a privileged ruling class that rewards itself so lavishly for the job of exploiting the masses into technological modernity. If the power of the party machine is to be "further enhanced," it is singly and solely for the purpose of defending the collectivist bureaucracy against this growing insight of the people, an insight which represents a revolutionary threat to Stalinist totalitarianism more dangerous to it than the atomic arsenal of the West.

The bureaucracy is flanked by the jaws of this great contradiction: it must grant more and more economic concessions to the masses which both exemplify and stimulate their readiness to manage the economic and political affairs of society themselves; it cannot and will not grant them those concessions which mean the end of its power to grant or deny anything. I see no reason to believe that the bureaucracy, under Khrushchev or a successor, can keep these jaws apart indefinitely. Because it cannot, a fundamental revolution in Russia is inescapable.

What will provide the great impulsion for such an upheaval is not predictable. It can originate in Russia, directly as an explosion from below. This does not now appear to be indicated. Or such

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figure of only 30 percent of gross production in 1956. Strumilin's drastic revision of official claims is an unexpectedly close confirmation of the estimates of the "coefficient of bluff" made by Profs. Kaplan and Moorsteen for the Rand Corporation; and, in another form of estimate, nearly confirms the estimates by Prof. Seaton of Oxford. Strumilin's figures, or method of calculation, are not necessarily ideal. They are enough to give all but the gullible a good idea of the role played by straightfaced bluff in Russian economic claims. As for the role of bluff in the Kremlin's political claims, it differs only in the greater scope of its impudence.

an explosion can be preceded and precipitated by the opening up of cracks and crevices and then wide breaches in the ruling machine which comes apart under stress. Such a process has been witnessed a dozen times and more in our century alone whenever despotic régimes crumbled in a crisis.

The régime of Khrushchev seems to be so far away from the threat of such fissures and breaks as to be immune to them. The new star seems to be in clear ascendancy, in terms of popularity with the bureaucracy as well as with the people. But as Goethe pointed out, it is provided that trees shall not grow to heaven. The strength of the new régime indeed lies in the achievements it has already attained; but it lies much more in the achievements it has promised to attain. The Khrushchev régime has been granted a short-term credit, and during this term it is on trial in the weightiest of courts.

In the court of the bureaucracy, in particular the party bureaucracy, which is decisive, the régime has been given a provisional but not a final favorable verdict. Khrushchev has saved the ruling party from an upheaval of the masses such as was bloodily repressed in Hungary. He has saved it likewise from perilous upheavals in its own midst. He has restored a great measure of unity in the party hierarchy and has thus far maintained it without resorting to the sheer terror which was Stalin's principal instrument. To this extent, he has earned the orb and scepter of monarch of the bureaucracy formerly held by Stalin.

In other respects, he has yet to match Stalin's achievements. Stalin vastly enlarged the territory of the empire during and after the second World War. Except for an important but small triumph in Cuba and a smaller one in former Indo-China, Khrushchev has added nothing but the promise that expansion will be achieved by the policy of ruse, bluff, riskless subversion and the like. The plan to cozen Yugoslavia back into the "socialist camp," that is, to Kremlin domination, has not been an outstanding success. Indeed, the rift in the "socialist camp" has widened considerably under Khrushchev.

China is the biggest example. The Chinese Stalinists want the international economic and military strength of the Communist countries to be used mainly to bolster and amplify their rule and power over China and whatever other parts of Asia and the Pacific they can acquire. The Russian Stalinists have a distinctly different opinion on this score: international Communist strength must first serve *their* interests, and all strategy, tactics, slogans and diplomacy must be adjusted accordingly. Khrushchev has not been able to persuade or coerce his beloved Chinese comrades into

sympathy with his view. If the rift is not healed but, as is likely, it becomes a gulf, the consequences to both bureaucracies are incalculable and, in any case, not attractive to them.

West Berlin is a bone in my throat, Khrushchev is reported as saying. That is nothing compared to the Chinese Stalinist opposition. It has nothing whatever to do with revolutionary or socialist principle. But to Khrushchev it is a knife at his throat.

The principal opponent of the Kremlin abroad, the alliance of the Western bourgeois powers, has no small share of the world's tribulations and difficulties in the cold war and elsewhere. Yet, the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot be unaware that the alliance has not only held together but, in the face of the multitudinous varieties of Khrushchev's appeals and threats, has, on the whole and in the decisive areas, kept Russia in check thus far. While Khrushchev's course has strengthened all sorts of right-wing elements in the capitalist countries, it has not won the support of the labor and socialist movements, certainly not in any degree comparable to the support won by Stalin in his "People's Front" period. Where Stalin persuaded whole sections of the bourgeoisie to cooperate with him and even grant enormous concessions to Russian power, Khrushchev has yet to succeed in winning even a small segment of any foreign bourgeoisie to a policy of appeasement. In the international field, at least, Stalin's gains were huge and decisive, and they changed radically all the strategical relationships in the world. Khrushchev's gains have all been small and doubtful and have changed very little.

More and more, as if gripped by chauvinistic desperation, he finds it necessary to threaten the nations and peoples of the world with outright destruction. Irony: Khrushchev ushers in the march toward a full life under Communism in Russia with the grisly threat to wipe out the lives of hundreds of millions with bombs which, since they are Communist, are superior to mere capitalist engines of human annihilation. Threats like these are hardly a sign of strength and self-confidence. The bureaucracy would have to be exceptionally dull if it did not understand that such threats are meaningless and worse, except as the direct prelude to their own suicide. To put all their faith in Khrushchev's régime, and thereby guarantee it the maximum they can contribute to its stability, the bureaucrats must obtain much more substantial, durable and effective results than the régime has thus far provided. And until they are provided, the régime is open to division, crisis and disruption.

In the court of the working classes, the final verdict is also still suspended. They cannot but accept and agree with the re-

forms so far conceded. But this cannot be the main concern of the régime. Its concern is overwhelmingly this: are the people satisfied? Do they feel that this is enough? If there were no other evidence that the people are not yet satisfied, and "want more" than the extravagant promises Khrushchev makes in his new program, that would be evidence enough.

The notion that a despotism saves itself by granting reforms that leaves the régime basically intact, is sometimes true, but because it is often refuted, it is also false.

"It is not always by going from bad to worse that a nation is driven to revolution," observed de Tocqueville. ". . . experience suggests that the most dangerous moment for an evil government is usually when it begins to reform itself. Only great ingenuity can save a prince who undertakes to give relief to his subjects after long oppression. The sufferings that are endured patiently, as being inevitable, become intolerable the moment it appears that there might be an escape. Reform then only serves to reveal more clearly what still remains oppressive and now all the more unbearable; the suffering, it is true, has been reduced, but one's sensitivity has become more acute."

There is no doubt in my mind that the "sensitivity has become more acute" throughout the Kremlin empire. There is no doubt that this will manifest itself dramatically and on a big and decisive scale at "the moment it appears that there might be an escape." The moment will be marked in all likelihood by a crisis in the bureaucracy; a crisis precipitated by a breach of the monolithic system that cannot be swiftly repaired; a breach created by a now unknowable event, an unexpected problem, a hard-to-surmount obstacle, which the bureaucracy is unable to face as one man.

It is not at all likely that such a crisis will be generated or promoted by Western capitalism. Just as it has succeeded in maintaining itself throughout these decades of world-revolutionary storms by exploiting all the reactionary characteristics of Stalinist "socialism," so in turn Stalinist totalitarianism has sustained itself on the inability of capitalism to bring order, security, peace and progress to the world it dominated so completely up to yesterday. There is no significant indication that a basic change in the policies and capacities of capitalism lies ahead. The symbiotic relationship between the two social systems to which reference was made earlier, is, by all signs, likely to continue. One of the soundest means of prolonging the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy is to present the stagnant and even waning capitalist world as the alternative to it.

The impulse for the change can, however, come from the

international socialist movement, particularly in those countries where it is a powerful force, already at the head of the nation or contending for such leadership. That means in the first place and above all the socialist movement in Europe. Its weaknesses and defects have been pointed out more than once and even stressed beyond measure, so much so that its tremendous strength and even mightier potentialities are often ignored. In most of the countries of Europe west of the barbed-wire frontiers, the socialist parties not only represent the sole serious alternative to the futile and futureless parties of the status quo but are the political instrument of the democratic working class. Their countries, taken together, would represent the strongest economic and political force in the world, capable of taking and carrying out initiatives for peace and progress that could radically change the face, the alignments and prospects of our tormented world. They do not represent a ready-made instrument for such a change. But they do represent an enormous potential, lying just below the official surface, for the change which no other political force can seriously be expected to undertake. While it is not in any way guaranteed in advance, it is to be hoped that this movement will in time find the program, the boldness, the leadership to unite Western Europe, to start with, on a democratic socialist basis. It is not only the end of Stalinism that this would herald; that end would only be an important by-product of a new era in our world's history. That is worth working for. In the process of finding its authentic program and leadership, the utmost clarity about the nature and meaning of Stalinism is imperative for the socialist movement, not only in Europe but everywhere else. It is my hope that this work makes enough of a contribution to a clarification to justify its publication.

I have been sufficiently encouraged in this hope by good and old friends whom I thank here for so insistently urging me to prepare this work for publication. I am grateful to them not only for this, and for other assistance they have provided, but above all for thoughtful and critical discussions over a period of years which contributed more than I can describe to a sharpening of the views that I put forward here.

M. S.

*September, 1961*



## REFLECTIONS ON A DECADE PAST

**MAN, THE POLITICAL ANIMAL, DOES NOT start with theory but with action. It is only after a variety of actions have accumulated that he feels the need of drawing conclusions and acquires the possibility of theory which is only a generalization from experience past to guide him in experience to come. Human progress is made only to the extent that this need is felt and the possibility utilized. If the goal of that progress is true human dignity, the process of reaching it can be described as the growth of man's consciousness of his power over nature, including his own nature. If this process is not straightforward or uninterrupted or as rapid as it might be, it is due in large measure to the fact that the mind, while the most remarkable organ we know, is also one of the most conservative: each idea which finally lodges in it after long and suspicious scrutiny offers resistance to every new idea or new theory.**

All this holds true for man associated in political movements, including in different degrees the most iconoclastic or revolutionary. The greater his consciousness and his capacity for thinking, the more he strives to make his thoughts comprehensive, to bring order and system into them. But beyond a certain point, this striving, which is utterly indispensable for logical thinking and fruitful action, runs the risk of sterilizing the movement and its action by freezing thought into dogma. This risk is run especially by the revolutionary movement, precisely because of the importance it attaches to theory. The consequences of this risk are not unavoidable. They cannot be conjured away, however, simply by repeating after Engels that our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action. To understand why it is not a dogma and cannot be, is much more important.

In a world where everything but change itself is continuously changing, and where action (or inaction) contributes to change, theory, which is a guide to action applied to given conditions, cannot possibly apply in exactly the same way or to exactly the same

extent under altered conditions. If theory is to remain revolutionary and valid, it must of necessity always be open to the criticism of experience, reaffirmed where practice confirms its validity, modified where that is dictated by a modification of conditions, and discarded where it proves to be ambiguous, outlived or false.

This constant re-examination and readiness to revise itself is provided for by Marxism itself which, because it is revolutionary and scientific, is critical and therefore also self-critical. It is its only safeguard against shriveling into a dogma. By misapplying this safeguard, or ignoring it altogether, the Marxian movement of our time has contributed to its own enfeeblement. In this sense, it is not Marxism that has failed, as many gloomy critics find it so popular to say nowadays; it is the Marxian dogmatists who have failed.

To enter the second half of the century with nothing more than the political equipment the movement had at the beginning of the war is not so much criminal as it is preposterous. Those whose greatest boast is an impressive capacity for boasting may claim as their proudest virtue a "finished program"; they are only announcing that their program is as good as finished and they with it. As for ourselves, we lay no more claim to having a "finished program" (what a *stupid* phrase! Just when was it finished? Just what finished it?) than Marxists have ever claimed since the days of the program which Marx and Engels presented. We seek constantly to clarify, renovate and strengthen the socialist program in harmony with the real developments and the needs of the struggle. Since it is a program for struggle, and not a home for elderly radicals, we cannot say just when it will be "finished." The question is of little interest to us.

The principal new problem faced by Marxian theory, and therewith Marxian practice, is the problem of Stalinism. What once appeared to many to be either an academic or "foreign" problem is now, it should at last be obvious, a decisive problem for all classes in all countries. If it is understood as a purely Russian phenomenon or as a problem "in itself," it is of course not understood at all. It exists as a problem only in connection with the dying out of capitalist society, on the one hand, and the struggle to replace it by socialism, on the other. It is only in this connection that we can begin to understand it.

If our movement had done nothing more than to make its contribution to the understanding of Stalinism, that alone would justify its existence. It is our unique contribution, and all our views are closely connected with it. We consider it decisive for the future of capitalism, in so far as it has one, and for the future of socialism.

An understanding of Stalinism is too much to expect from the bourgeoisie. The modest theoretical capacities at its disposal are still further restricted by class interests which blind it in the investigation of serious social problems, especially when it is so exclusively preoccupied with frenzied but futile efforts to patch together a social order that is falling apart at every point. To the extent that its thinkers and statesmen try to *explain* Stalinism in more or less coherent terms, they inform us that collectivism necessarily leads to tyranny—a homily usually prefaced by the well-worn banality from Lord Acton about how power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The explanation does not explain much, least of all how it happens that the tyranny of collectivism is supplanting the freedom of capitalism. But nothing more can be asked from a theory which was intellectually developed and popularized by the savants in the abattoirs of American yellow journalism.

Most of the time, the bourgeoisie does not transcend demonology. It explains Stalinism in the simple terms of evil spirits, witchcraft, black magic, conjurations and other unnatural forces, which can be exorcised by adequate police measures or by stocking more atomic bombs than the demonic forces. Stalinism remains for the bourgeoisie what Winston Churchill, not its most obtuse representative, described as an enigma and a riddle and a mystery. The military mind of Mr. Churchill—which is only a species of the common police mind—hears no special call to undo the enigmas, ravel the riddles and pierce the mysteries of society. Explain Stalinism? It is enough to blow it up by an atomic bomb.

The international Social Democracy has little more to offer. Theory in general and Marxian theory in particular ceased long ago to hold its interest. In part this explains why it alternates between joining with the Stalinists against the bourgeoisie (in the East) and joining with the bourgeoisie against the Stalinists (in the West). About a quarter of a century ago, the Russian Menshevik leaders who retained some respect for theoretical generalization described Stalinism as “state capitalism” or as “one of its forms.” In more recent times, the same theory has regained a pallid existence, or a multiplicity of existences, among smaller groups in and around the Trotskyist movement: Stalinism is Red Fascism, or bureaucratic Fascism, or caste-ruled state capitalism, or bureaucratic state capitalism, or some other variety of state capitalism.

One inconvenience of this theory is that the Stalinist social system is not capitalist and does not show any of the classic, traditional, distinctive characteristics of capitalism. Another is that there is no capitalist class under the rule of Stalinism, and there are as many embarrassments in conceiving of a capitalist state where

all capitalists are in cemeteries or in emigration as in grasping the idea of a workers' state where all the workers are in slave-camps or factory-prisons. A third is that nowhere can an authentic capitalist class, or any section of it, be found to support or welcome Stalinism, a coolness which makes good social sense from its point of view since it is obvious to all but those who extract theories from their thumbs that Stalinism comes to power by destroying the capitalist state and the capitalist class. There are a dozen other inconveniences about the theories of "state capitalism," or any theory based upon the idea of a single "universal capital" which Marx, rightly, we think, jeered at as nonsensical. But the most important one is the fact that the theories preclude any understanding of the actual social conflict in which Stalinism is involved and offer no possibility of an effective political course for the working-class movement. To combat it as a capitalist force is like galloping with tilted rubber hose at a windmill that is not there.

There remains the Trotskyist movement. During the lifetime of Trotsky, his theoretical contribution to the understanding of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution out of which Stalinism was born, was the only serious and fruitful one produced within or outside the Marxian movement. In the Trotskyist movement today gnomes have succeeded the giant and misery has fallen heir to grandeur. The changing tides of events which sweep the islet on which they are marooned without sail or chart or compass or ship or pilot, seems to give them the illusion that it is they who are moving. Actually, they are immobilized victims of a dogma. They repeat ritually that although Russia is a vast prison of the workers and the peoples, it nevertheless remains a workers' state because property is in the hands of the state. This state is, however, completely in the hands of an uncontrollable bureaucracy which directs the economy in its own interests. And while it is totalitarian and counter-revolutionary, it nevertheless overturns capitalism in one country after another and extends the domain of the workers' state as it was never extended before. More baseless theories have been concocted about many things; a weirder one is hard to think of.

This dogma is the substance that has made it possible, today as in the past, for Stalinism to exercise a strong magnetic attraction upon the Trotskyist movement, forcing it into reluctant alignment in most of the fundamentally important political developments and leaving it essentially only with the criticism not so much of what Stalinism does as the "methods" by which it does it. This was already true in part during Trotsky's leadership; since his death, it has become *the* trait of the Trotskyist movement, which is obscured at times only by its erroneous analyses of Stalinism's line

as a "capitulation" to capitalism. This the bourgeoisie would like to believe in but it has come to understand ruefully that the "capitulation" is only chimerical. The growing frenzy of enthusiasm which the Trotskyist movement has worked up for the Tito régime, which is socially identical with the Russian Stalinist régime even if the Fourth International only yesterday solemnly designated it as Bonapartist capitalism, is only another case of the magnetic attraction to which it yields. This disoriented movement cannot, without radically reorienting itself, make any positive contribution to the reorientation of the working-class movement in general.

The Second World War served at least this useful purpose: it underscored the tendencies of development of capitalism and Stalinism, and by making more explicit what was already implicit in them, brought them into clearer perspective.

The decay of capitalist society continues at a rapid pace and almost without interruption. One after another, its organs are attacked by the poisons of decomposition. The mere fact that one part of the capitalist world found it imperative to ally itself with so mortal an enemy of capital as Stalinism is enough to show that we are in the presence of a dying social order. The same thing is shown by the fact, now almost universally acknowledged by the bourgeois world, that the problems which the incredibly destructive war purported to solve are still unresolved and must wait for solution upon victory in the "cold war" which, it is not very sanguinely hoped, will prevent the open military collision of a third world war. Another world war, the third in two or at most three generations—and this one a war of incalculable consequences for whatever civilization we have—is more than any social system can endure. Yet there is no other perspective before world capitalism, and few serious representatives of the capitalist camp confidently offer any other.

The economy of capitalism has never been so chaotic, unstable and so far removed from classical capitalist economy. The reactionaries who complain, unavailingly, that the system of "free enterprise" is being undermined in all capitalist countries, *even* in the United States, by "socialist" measures, are quite right, in their own way. All they fail to understand is that for capitalism to exist *at all* nowadays it must allow for its *partial negation*, for that "invading" socialism of which Engels wrote some four-score years ago. However, the mixture of the "invader" with decaying capitalism produces an increasingly insufferable monstrosity.

The chaos of capitalist economy is organized, as it were, only by an ever heavier emphasis on war economy, on the production of means of destruction which do not re-enter the process of produc-

tion to enrich the wealth of the nation and which "enter" the process of production of the enemy nation only to disrupt and destroy it. If the war budgets were reduced throughout the capitalist world to what was normal no more than thirty years ago, complete economic prostration would follow immediately and automatically. Such burdens, capitalism cannot escape. They are breaking its back, no matter how much they are shifted to the shoulders of the working people.

In the political sphere, there is a corresponding development. It would almost suffice to point out that in the last real fortress of capitalism, the United States, taken on the whole, there is today less democracy than existed under the Hohenzollern and Habsburg monarchies before the First World War. Partly under the necessity and partly on the pretext of fighting the "fifth column" of Stalinism, one long-standing democratic right after another is being assaulted in the country, undermined, restricted or wiped out altogether. The criminality of the assault is matched only by the hypocrisy of the Stalinist protestants, the cowardly flabbiness if not direct connivance of most of the liberal world, and the tacit approval of the drive by the official labor movement which conducts its own drive in parallel with it. In the other capitalist countries the situation is no better; in many of them it is worse and much worse.

The more the ownership and control of the means of production and exchange are concentrated in the hands of the few—the greater is the centralization of authority and power in the hands of the state and the further are the masses removed from control of economic and political conditions. The deeper the economic crisis of capitalism, the shakier its foundations, the greater the ineffectualness of the market as the automatic regulator of capitalist production—the wider and deeper is the intervention of the state into the economy as substitute-regulator, substitute-organizer, substitute-director. The more extensive the wars and the war preparations, the vaster, more critical and more complex the efforts required to sustain them both in the economic and the political (add also the ideological) fields—the more the state is obliged to regiment and dictate in all the spheres of social life, the less tolerant it becomes of all "disruption," the more it demands conformity to the "national effort," to state policy, from all the classes.

The working class is least able to conform because the accumulating burdens rest primarily on its shoulders. To protect its economic interests it is compelled to oppose the prevailing trends. To resist effectively it must have and exercise those democratic rights which, while valuable to all classes, are absolutely indis-

pensable to the working class. The more it exercises these rights out of the simple necessity of defending its economic position—the stronger is the tendency of the bourgeois state, out of the simple necessity of defending *its* position, to curtail these rights and even to nullify them entirely. Self-preservation generates in the working class a craving for democracy and dictates the fight for it *against the bourgeoisie*.

The socialist movement, which is (or should be) nothing but the conscious expression of the fight of the working class, can be restored to a decisive political force if it realizes that, today far more than ever before, the all-around and aggressive championing of the struggle for democracy is the only safeguard against the encroaching social decay, and the only road to socialism. We are or must become the most consistent champions of democracy, not so much because the slogans of democracy are “convenient weapons” against an anti-democratic bourgeoisie, but because the working class, and our movement with it, must have democracy in order to protect and promote its interests. The last thirty years in particular have confirmed or reminded us or awakened us to the fact that without the attainment of democracy all talk of the conquest of power by the working class is deceit or illusion, and that without the realization of complete democracy all talk of the establishment of socialism is a mockery. A socialist movement, grant it the best intentions in the world, which ignores or deprecates the fight for democracy—for all democratic rights and institutions, for more extensive democratic rights and the most democratic institutions—which is suspicious about such a fight being somehow not in consonance with or something separate from (let alone inimical to) the fight for socialism, which trails along behind that fight or supports it reluctantly or with tongue in cheek, will never lead the fight for socialist freedom.

To cling to the terms of the old polemics between left and right wings of socialism—“dictatorship” versus “democracy”—not under a passed situation but in a radically different situation, is political madness. The Russian Revolution has been destroyed; it is no longer the polestar of the socialist proletariat. The socialist proletariat is no longer on the offensive; its struggle for power is nowhere on the order of the day. The main obstacle on the road, not to socialist power, but simply to the reconstitution of a socialist working-class movement, are not the parliamentary illusions of the proletariat. They are the illusions of Stalinism.

Today, not reformism but Stalinism is the principal threat to the integrity, the consciousness, the interests of the working class.

Today, the term dictatorship does not bring to the mind of the worker the image, clear or dim, of the inspiring soviet democracy of the Bolshevik revolution. It represents what he has experienced in his own day and on his own back: Fascist or Stalinist totalitarianism. The fear and hatred which these despotisms stir in him are deep and justified. The worker of today who wants "democracy" and rejects "dictatorship" does so for entirely different reasons than the worker of 30 or more years ago. He is unerring in his class instincts, and right in his "prejudices" for democracy, despite the confused form in which he may express them. The meaning of political terms especially is determined in the long run by the people and not by an élite, and even if that élite is socialistic and scientific it loses little or nothing by bowing to the popular verdict.

The class instincts of the proletariat are a safeguard against many things. But they do not suffice for the victory of socialism. For that, a *conscious* proletariat is required, a socialist proletariat. The question that once arose as an academic one is now posed as a real one: what is the social trend when capitalism has become ripe and overripe, objectively, for the socialist reorganization, and the working class, for one reason or another, fails to develop its socialist consciousness to the point where it is capable of dealing capitalism the death-blow?

Socialism does not and cannot come into existence automatically. Does capitalism then continue in existence automatically and indefinitely? We are familiar with the theory that Stalinist Russia is a workers' state which decays and decays and decays further, but which will nevertheless always remain a workers' state until overturned by the capitalist class. There is evidently also a theory that capitalism continues to decay and decay and decay still further but that until it is overturned by the socialist proletariat, no matter how long that may take, it will continue to exist as a capitalist society. Neither theory, for all the stereotyped references to dialectics, is worth the paper devoted to it.

To say that capitalism is decaying is to say that it is increasingly incapable of coping with the basic problems of society, of maintaining economic and political order—that is, of course, order on a capitalist foundation. Modern society, based on large-scale manufacture and world trade, is an intricate and highly integrated complex. Every serious disturbance of its more or less normal operation—crisis, war, sharp political conflict, revolution—violently dislocates the lives of millions and even tens of millions all over the world. The dislocations in turn render difficult the return to normal operation. The difference between capitalism flowering and capitalism declining lies in the growth of the number, scope, gravity and

intensity of these disturbances. It is increasingly difficult for capitalism to restore an equilibrium and to maintain it for long. Where the crisis reaches an acute stage, and the forces of capitalism are more or less paralyzed, the proletariat is called upon to restore order, its own order, by the socialist revolution.

But what if the proletariat is not organized to carry through the socialist revolution? Or, having carried it out, as in Russia in 1917, what if it remains isolated and is therefore not yet able to discharge its only task as a new ruling class, namely, to abolish all ruling classes by establishing socialism? From the days of the Paris Commune to the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the answer was always the same: the proletariat pays for failure in bloody retribution inflicted by the bourgeoisie restored to power.

In the last quarter of a century, an epoch of the exceptionally rapid disintegration of capitalism, we have seen that the answer to the failure of the working class may also take another form. Where the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of maintaining (or, as in the case of Russia), of restoring its social order, and the proletariat is not yet able to inaugurate its own, a social interregnum is established by a new ruling class which buries the moribund capitalism and crushes the unborn socialism in the egg. The new ruling class is the Stalinist bureaucracy. Its social order, hostile both to capitalism and socialism, is bureaucratic or totalitarian collectivism. The bourgeoisie is wiped out altogether and the working classes are reduced to state slaves.

The elements of the new ruling class are created under capitalism. They are part of that vast social *mélange* we know as the middle classes. Concentration of capital, capitalist crisis—these uproot the numerous strata which are intermediate between the two basic classes. They tend more and more to lose their stake in the capitalist system of private property. They lose their small properties or the properties lose their value; they lose their comfortable social positions or their positions lose importance. The sharper and longer the agony of capitalism, the more of these elements become declassed. Their old social allegiances give way to new ones, the choice depending on a whole mass of circumstances. They are attracted to anti-capitalist movements, real or spurious.

When the socialist movement is in a growing, healthy, self-confident condition, they are drawn to it, become its valuable allies and are greatly influenced by its democratic and socialist ideology. Under other circumstances, many of them are drawn to a fascist movement which promises to check the excesses of capital without permitting the rule of labor. However, fascism in power proved to be a crucial disillusionment to the anti-big-capitalistic middle

classes and, particularly since its defeat in the war, suffered a tremendous moral-political blow on a world scale. Today it is Stalinism, in the absence of a revolutionary socialist movement which it has helped so signally to strangle, that exercises a magnetic power over these elements.

Stalinism is represented by a powerful and seemingly stable state. Outside of Russia it commands, or tries to command, powerful mass organizations. Its authentically anti-capitalist nature is established in the minds of all social groups, including the precariously-situated or declassed elements from the old middle classes: intellectuals, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled; individuals from the liberal professions; officials and employees of all sorts, including those from the swollen but impoverished governmental apparatus; and above all else, labor bureaucrats. They have less and less to lose from the abolition of private property by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and more and more to gain from a movement which will overturn capitalism without imposing upon them the democratic discipline and equalitarian principles of the socialist proletariat.

In Stalinism they find a movement able to appeal to the masses for the struggle against capitalism, but yet one which does not demand of them—as the socialist movement does—the abandonment of the ideology which is common to all oppressor classes, namely: command is the privilege of superiors, obedience the lot of inferiors, and the mass must be ruled by kindly masters for its own good. Such elements gravitate easily to the Stalinist bureaucracy precisely because it already has, or has the possibility of acquiring, the leadership of one of the main social classes, which has in common with them a growing disinterest in the preservation of capitalist property.

Given the existence and normal growth of the proletarian movement and its assimilation of a socialist consciousness, all these elements taken together would not constitute a very decisive social force. But the weight of social forces is not absolute but relative. The socialist consciousness and coherence of the working class have suffered tremendous blows in the past three decades from reformism, on the one hand, and from Stalinism, on the other. Its disorientation and demoralization have been aggravated by the continuing decomposition of capitalism. While we do not believe for one moment that this condition will continue without end, the fact is that this is what the situation has been for some time.

Compared with a working class in such a state, the elements we have described, *especially when bolstered by a big Stalinist state*, can for a time act as a decisive social force in one country after

another where the crisis has prostrated the bourgeoisie. What is more, this force can destroy the bourgeoisie, its state and its economy, and transform itself into a new ruling class. It can do it and it has done it. That the auto-certified Marxists refuse to recognize this fact is small comfort to the bourgeoisie that has been crushed and the working class that has been subjugated.

While the power of Stalinism was confined to Russia, this analysis and conclusion may have appeared abstract or premature. The reserve is no longer possible. It is possible now to re-read the history of the Russian Revolution with greater profit. It proved that the working class, democratically organized, self-acting and class-conscious, can carry out the socialist revolution, can "establish democracy." Unless this is attributed to some we-do-not-know-which quality unique to Russians, it is valid for the working class as a whole. It proved also that the working class in power either moves toward the socialist reconstruction of society, or loses power altogether.

During and after the Second World War, the new Stalinist bureaucracy became the master of just those more-or-less peripheral countries in which the most striking and complete collapse of the bourgeoisie—economic, political, military and ideological—occurred, and precisely because of that collapse. Poland, Hungary, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, China—these are not yet the world, or the decisive part of the world; far from it. But whether Stalinism conquered them from abroad (régimes imposed by the Russian army) or by means of a native movement, the symptomatic significance of the events is clear. A new state machine, replica in every respect of the Russian state machine, is established by the bureaucracy and under its exclusive, totalitarian control. All the means of production and exchange are sooner or later converted into state property. The decadent and demoralized bourgeoisie is sooner or later exterminated. The working classes are deprived of any right whatever and transformed into modern slaves.

Capitalism has become reactionary and obsolete not because it no longer develops the productive forces but because it converts more and more of those forces at the disposal of society into means of destruction which do not enrich but impoverish it, and prevent it from making the progress which a rationally-organized economy would assure. That—according to Marx and according to what we can see all around us with the naked eye.

The reactionary character of Stalinism is determined in the same way. The productive forces available to society are converted into means of destruction to no smaller—perhaps even to a larger—extent under Stalinism than under capitalism. The enormous

wastage in production under Stalinism is notorious and inherent in bureaucratic collectivism. The physical using-up of the most important productive force in society, the workers, and their downright annihilation in the slave camps, is appalling under Stalinism; it has yet to be exceeded by capitalism. The vast technological advantages of state ownership are constantly dissipated precisely by the social relations established by Stalinism and its parasitic ruling class.

To determine the class character of the Stalinist bureaucracy by asking if it is historically necessary, in the way Trotsky demanded and his unthinking epigones repeat, is, to put it quietly, erroneous. They would be hard put to it to prove that all ruling classes in history were historically necessary in the sense they give to this phrase. Was the feudal ruling class historically necessary? It would be interesting to hear what The Theoreticians would answer to this question, and how their answer would differ from, let us say, the one given by Engels.

The Stalinist bureaucracy in power is a new ruling, exploitive class. Its social system is a new system of totalitarian exploitation and oppression, not capitalist and yet having nothing in common with socialism. It is the cruel realization of the prediction made by all the great socialist scientists, from Marx and Engels onward, that capitalism must collapse out of an inability to solve its own contradictions and that the alternatives facing mankind are not so much capitalism or socialism as they are: *socialism or barbarism*. Stalinism is that new barbarism.

The old Marxists could foresee it in general but could not describe it in detail. We can. The workers will fail to take command of society when capitalism collapses only on penalty of their own destruction, warned Engels. Stalinism is that gruesome punishment visited upon the working class when it fails to perform the task, in its own name and under its own leadership, of sweeping doomed capitalism out of existence and thus fulfilling its social destiny. For this failure it must record not the triumph of the invading socialist society but of the invading barbarism.

These are the basic thoughts that determine our outlook and politics.

They determine our attitude toward Stalinism and other currents within the working-class movement. The analysis we have made of the social forces and trends excludes any consideration of Stalinism as a working-class tendency. It operates *inside* the working-class movement, but is not *of* the working class. Those who put the Stalinist bureaucracy on the same plane with the reformist labor bureaucracy are like people digging a well with a washcloth. The

security and progress of the reformist leadership require the maintenance of a reformist labor movement—but a labor movement!—of some form of democracy—but not its complete abolition! The triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy *requires* the destruction of the labor movement and of all democracy. Whoever cannot see this after the victory of Stalinism in a dozen different countries, cannot see a fist in front of his nose.

Therefore, drive Stalinism out of the labor movement! **BUT only** by the informed, democratic decision of the working class itself, and *not* by supporting the reactionary police measures of the bourgeois state and *not* by the bureaucratic methods of the reformist and conservative labor officialdom!

We are for democracy, in full and for all, in every field, including above all the labor movement. Complete and equal democratic rights for the Stalinists in the labor movement and outside of it, we say, and not the aping of Stalinism in the fight against it. Relentless struggle to uproot Stalinism from the labor movement by democratic political and organizational means, and combination with all democratic elements in the labor movement to defend it from conquest and subjugation by the champions and protagonists of the most outrageous anti-labor régimes in the world! Whatever scores there are to settle between socialists and reformists or conservatives in the labor movement—and there are not a few—will be settled democratically and at the right time inside the labor movement. But no thinking socialist, no thinking worker, will combine with Stalinism, or do anything but resist it, when it invades the labor or, in general, the democratic movements and seeks to replace the present leadership with its own.

Our views determine our attitude toward democrats of different types. We do not differ from them because they are for democracy, but because to support capitalism, to tolerate it, to do anything but work for its replacement by socialism, is to be reconciled to a narrow class democracy and to be disarmed in face of that sapping even of bourgeois democracy which capitalism requires for its continued existence. It is not necessarily true that to fight against capitalism is to fight for democracy, we grant. But it is decidedly true that to fight for democracy is to fight against capitalism.

We do not differ from any socialist because he is for democracy as the road to socialism. That we believe—in the sense given that idea by Marx and Engels, in the sense that the attainment of democracy is possible and equated to the winning of political power by the socialist proletariat. We differ with those who believe in the growing democratization of capitalism. It is an illusion. We differ with them because of their belief in the collaboration between

classes which are irreconcilable. We differ with anyone who shows resistance to the complete independence and self-reliance of the working class. We differ with those who, hating Stalinism without understanding it, oppose it by tolerating and even urging the subordination of the working class to the doomed and dying capitalist régime. It is this very policy of reconciliation with capitalism instead of socialist struggle against it that has made possible the rise of Stalinism and its victories. The workers need a lifebuoy to carry them out of danger from the foundering ship of capitalism and not the anchor. We are revolutionary socialists, we are democratic socialists.

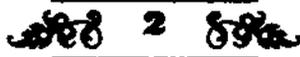
If a socialist can at all permit himself the overly youthful luxury of using such terms as "optimistic" or "pessimistic" about theoretical questions or even political perspectives, it would be in this connection: Pessimism does not lie in stating that Stalinism has conquered here and there and defeated the working class. Our "optimism" does not consist in the belief that the working class is always revolutionary, or is always ready to make the revolution, or that it cannot be defeated, or even that it is always right. It derives from our belief, scientifically grounded, that the working class, no matter what the setbacks it suffers, has a solid position in society which gives it inexhaustible powers of self-renewal and recuperation to resume the attack against the conditions of its existence. These attacks have continued; they will continue because they must.

Capitalism is dying and even disappearing, along with the capitalist classes. But the working class cannot be killed off, and it cannot exist without struggle. Stalinism has, it is true, appeared on the scene, but before this régime of permanent crisis can think of consolidating itself all over the world its first excursions beyond its original frontiers have already brought it into a violent and irresolvable conflict with itself which is doing more to reveal its real nature to the working-class world than a dozen good theories.

The idea that the working class can struggle but never win, that it can do nothing more than suffer under new oppressors, is a superstitious prejudice which ruling classes have ever been interested in cultivating. The idea that the workers, whose numbers are overwhelming, can forever attack but never break through to self-rule, is worthy of an inventor of perpetual-motion machines. ✓ The working class learns more slowly than was once thought; but with interruptions and distractions it learns. Sooner or later it will learn its emancipating task, and the power it has to perform it. On its banner then the watchword of democracy will be indistinguishable from the watchword of socialism. We are here to help make it sooner.

*May 1950*

THE THEORY  
OF BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM



## *Is Russia a Workers' State?*

THAT THE "RUSSIAN QUESTION" SHOULD continue to occupy the attention of the radical movement is anything but unusual. In the history of modern socialism, there is nothing that equals the Russian Revolution in importance. ✓

Our investigation aims to re-evaluate the character and significance of the period of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the Soviet state, marked by the rise and triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Its results call for a revision of the theory that the Soviet Union is a workers' state.

In our analysis, we must necessarily take issue with Leon Trotsky; yet, at the same time, base ourselves largely upon his studies. Nobody has even approached him in the scope and depth of his contribution to understanding the problem of the Soviet Union. In a different way, to be sure, but no less solidly, his work of analyzing the decay of the Soviet Republic is as significant as his work of creating that Republic. Most of what we learned about Russia, and can transmit to others, we learned from Trotsky. We learned from him, too, the necessity of critical re-examination at every important stage, of regaining, even in the realm of theory, what was once already gained, or, in the contrary case, of discarding what was once firmly established but proved to be vulnerable. The garden of theory requires critical cultivation, replanting, but also weeding out.

What new events, what fundamental changes in the situation, have taken place to warrant a corresponding change in our appraisal of the class character of the Soviet Union? The question, is, in a sense, irrelevant. Our new analysis and conclusions would have their objective merit or error regardless of the signature appended to them. In the case of the writer, if the question must be answered, the revision is the product of that careful restudying of the problem urged upon him by both friends and adversaries in the recent dispute in the Trotskyist movement. The outbreak of the second world war, while it produced no fundamental changes in the Soviet

Union in itself, did awaken doubts as to the correctness of our traditional position. However, doubts and uncertainties, cannot serve as a program, nor even as a fruitful subject for discussion.

The writer has, meanwhile, had the opportunity to examine and reflect upon the problem, if not as much as would be desirable, then at least sufficiently. "Theory is not a note which you can present at any moment to reality for payment," wrote Trotsky. "If a theory proves mistaken we must revise it or fill out its gaps. We must find out those real social forces which have given rise to the contrast between Soviet reality and the traditional Marxian conception."

We must revise our theory that Russia is a workers' state. What has up to now been discussed informally and without order, should now be the subject of an ordered and serious discussion. This article aims to contribute to it.

Briefly stated, this has been our traditional view of the character of the Soviet Union:

The character of the social régime is determined first of all by the property relations. The nationalization of land, of the means of industrial production and exchange, with the monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the state, constitute the bases of the social order in the U.S.S.R. The classes expropriated by the October revolution, as well as the elements of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois section of the bureaucracy being newly formed, could reestablish private ownership of land, banks, factories, mills, railroads, etc., only by means of a counter-revolutionary overthrow. By these property relations, lying at the basis of the class relations, is determined for us the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state. (Trotsky, *Problems of the Development of the U.S.S.R.*, p. 3, 1931.)

But it is not a workers' state in the abstract. It is a degenerated, a sick, an internally-imperilled workers' state. Its degeneration is represented by the usurpation of all political power in the state by a reactionary, totalitarian bureaucracy, headed by Stalin. But while *politically* you have an anti-Soviet Bonapartist dictatorship of the bureaucracy—according to Trotsky—it nevertheless defends, in its own and very bad way, the *social* rule of the working class. This rule is expressed in the preservation of nationalized property. In bourgeois society, we have had cases where the social rule of capitalism is preserved by all sorts of political régimes—democratic and dictatorial, parliamentary and monarchial, Bonapartist and fascist. Yes, even under fascism, the bureaucracy is not a separate ruling class, no matter how irritating to the bourgeoisie its rule may be. Similarly in the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy is a caste, not a

class. It serves, as all bureaucracies do, a class. In this case, it serves—again, badly—to maintain the social rule of the proletariat. At the same time, however, it weakens and undermines this rule. To assure the sanitation and progress of the workers' state toward socialism, the bureaucracy must be overthrown. Its totalitarian régime excludes its removal by means of more or less peaceful reform. It can be eliminated, therefore, only by means of a revolution. The revolution, however, will be, in its decisive respects, not social but political. It will restore and extend workers' democracy, but it will not produce any fundamental social changes, no fundamental changes in property relations. Property will remain state property.

Omitting for the time being Trotsky's analysis of the origin and rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which is elaborated in detail in *The Revolution Betrayed*, we have given above a summary of the basic position held by us jointly up to now. So far as characterizing the class nature of the Soviet Union is concerned, this position might be summed up even more briefly as follows:

To guarantee progress towards socialism, the existence of nationalized property is necessary but not sufficient—a revolutionary proletarian régime is needed in the country, plus favorable international conditions (victory of the proletariat in more advanced capitalist countries). To characterize the Soviet Union as a workers' state, the existence of nationalized property is necessary and sufficient. The Stalinist bureaucracy is a caste. To become a ruling class, it must establish new property forms.

Except for the slogan of revolution, as against reform, this was substantially the position vigorously defended by Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement for almost fifteen years. The big article on Russia written by Trotsky right after the war broke out, marked, in our opinion, the first—and a truly enormous—contradiction of this position. Not that Trotsky abandoned the theory that the Soviet Union is a degenerated workers' state. Quite the contrary, he reaffirmed it. But at the same time, he advanced a theoretical possibility which fundamentally negated his theory—more accurately, the motivation for his theory—of the class character of the Soviet state:

If the proletariat does not come to power in the coming period, and civilization declines further, the immanent collectivist tendencies in capitalist society may be brought to fruition in the form of a new exploiting society ruled by a new bureaucratic class—neither proletarian nor bourgeois. Or, if the proletariat takes power in a series of countries and then relinquishes it to a privileged bureaucracy, like the Stalinist, it will show that the proletariat is congenitally unable to become a ruling class and then "it will be

necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present U.S.S.R. was the precursor of a new exploiting régime on an international scale."

The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin régime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin régime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except openly to recognize that the socialist program based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new "minimum" program would be required—for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society.

But are there such incontrovertible or even impressive objective data as would compel us today to renounce the prospect of the socialist revolution? That is the whole question. (Trotsky, "The U.S.S.R. in War," *The New Internationalist*, Nov. 1939, p. 327.)

That is not the whole question. To that question, we give no less vigorously negative a reply than Trotsky. There is no data of sufficient weight to warrant abandoning the revolutionary socialist perspective. On that score, Trotsky was and remains quite correct. The essence of the question, however, relates not to the perspective, but to the theoretical characterization of the Soviet state and its bureaucracy.

Up to the time of this article, Trotsky insisted on the following two propositions: 1. Nationalized property, so long as it continues to be the economic basis of the Soviet Union, makes the latter a workers' state, regardless of the political régime in power; and, 2. So long as it does not create new property forms, unique to itself, and so long as it rests on nationalized property, the bureaucracy is not a new or an old ruling class, but a caste. In "The U.S.S.R. in War," Trotsky declared it *theoretically possible*—we repeat: not probable, but nevertheless theoretically possible—1. for the property forms and relations now existing in the Soviet Union to continue existing and yet represent not a workers' state but a new exploiting society; and 2, for the bureaucracy now existing in the Soviet Union to become a new exploiting and ruling class without changing the property forms and relations it now rests upon.

To allow such a theoretical *possibility*, does not eliminate the revolutionary perspective, but it does destroy, at one blow, so to speak, the *theoretical* basis for our past characterization of Russia as a workers' state.

To argue that Trotsky considered this alternative a most unlikely perspective, that, indeed (and this is of course correct), he saw no reason at all for adopting it, is arbitrary and beside the point. At best, it is tantamount to saying: At bottom, Russia is a workers' state because it rests on nationalized property and . . . we still have a social-revolutionary world perspective; if we abandoned this perspective, it would cease being a workers' state even though its property forms remain fundamentally unaltered. Or more simply: it is not nationalized property that determines the working-class character of the Soviet state and the caste character of its bureaucracy; our perspective determines that.

If Trotsky's alternative perspective is accepted as a theoretical possibility (as we do, although not in quite the same way in which he puts it forward; but that is another matter), it is theoretically impossible any longer to hold that nationalized property is *sufficient* to define the Soviet Union as a workers' state. That holds true, moreover, whether Trotsky's alternative perspective is accepted or not. The traditional view of the International on the class character of the U.S.S.R. rests upon a grievous theoretical error.

In his writings on the Soviet Union, and particularly in *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky speaks interchangeably of the "property forms" and the "property relations" in the country as if he were referring to one and the same thing. Speaking of the new political revolution against the bureaucracy, he says: "So far as concerns property relations, the new power would not have to resort to revolutionary measures." (P. 252.) Speaking of the capitalist counter-revolution, he says: "Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new régime would have to introduce into the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution." (P. 253.)

When referring to property forms in the Soviet Union, Trotsky obviously means nationalized property, that is, state ownership of the means of production and exchange. It is just as obvious that, no matter what has been changed and how much it has been changed in the Soviet Union by Stalinism, state ownership of the means of production and exchange continues to exist. It is further obvious that when the proletariat takes the helm again in Russia it will maintain state property.

However, what is crucial are not the property forms, *i.e.*, nationalized property, whose existence cannot be denied, but precisely the relations of the various social groups in the Soviet Union to this property, *i.e.*, *property relations!* If we can speak of nationalized

property in the Soviet Union, this does not yet establish what the property relations are.

Under capitalism the ownership of land and the means of production and exchange is in private (individual or corporate) hands. The distribution of the means or instruments of production under capitalism puts the possessors of capital in command of society, and of the proletariat, which is divorced from property and has only its own labor power at its disposal. The relations to property of these classes, and consequently the social relations into which they necessarily enter in the process of production, are clear to all intelligent persons.

Now, the state is the product of irreconcilable social contradictions. Disposing of a force separate from the people, it intervenes in the raging struggle between the classes in order to prevent their mutual destruction and to preserve the social order. "But having arisen amid these conflicts, it is as a rule the state of the most powerful economic class that by force of its economic supremacy becomes also the ruling political class and thus acquires new means of subduing and exploiting the oppressed masses," writes Engels. Under capitalism, "the most powerful economic class" is represented by its capitalist class state.

What is important to note here is that the social power of the capitalist class derives from its "economic supremacy," that is, from its direct ownership of the instruments of production; and that this power is reflected in or supplemented by its political rule of the state machine, of the "public power of coercion." The two are not identical, let it be noted further, for a Bonapartist or fascist régime may and has deprived the capitalist class of its political rule only to leave its social rule, if not completely intact, then at least fundamentally unshaken.

Two other characteristics of bourgeois property relations and the bourgeois state are worth keeping in mind.

Bourgeois property relations and pre-capitalist property relations are not as incompatible with each other, as either of them are with socialist property relations. The first two not only have lived together in *relative* peace for long periods of time but, especially in the period of imperialism on a world scale, still live together today. An example of the first was the almost one-century-old cohabitation of the capitalist North and the Southern slaveocracy in the United States; an outstanding example of the second is British imperialism in India. But more important than this is a key distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The capitalist class already has wide economic power before it overthrows feudal society and, by

doing so, it acquires that necessary political and social power which establishes it as *the* ruling class.

Finally, the bourgeois state solemnly recognizes the right of private property, that is, it establishes juridically (and defends accordingly) that which is already established in fact by the bourgeoisie's ownership of capital. The social power of the capitalist class lies fundamentally in its actual ownership of the instruments of production, that is, in that which gives it its "economic supremacy," and *therefore* its control of the state.

How do matters stand with the proletariat, with its state, and the property forms and property relations unique to it? The young bourgeoisie was able to develop (within the objective limits established by feudalism) its specific property relations even under feudalism; at times, as we have seen, it could even share political power with a pre-capitalist class. The proletariat cannot do anything of the kind under capitalism, unless you accept those utopians who still dream of developing socialism right in the heart of capitalism by means of "producers' cooperatives." By its very position in the old society, the proletariat has no property under capitalism. The working class acquires economic supremacy *only after* it has seized political power.

We have already seen [said the *Communist Manifesto*] that the first step in the workers' revolution is to make the proletariat the ruling class, to establish democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy in order, by degrees, to wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all the means of production into the hands of the State (this meaning the proletariat organized as ruling class), and, as rapidly as possible, to increase the total mass of productive forces.

Thus by its very position in the new society, the proletariat still has no property, that is, it does not own property in the sense that the feudal lord or the capitalist did. It was and remains a property-less class! It seizes state power. The new state is simply the proletariat organized as the ruling class. The state expropriates the private owners of land and capital, and ownership of land, and the means of production and exchange, becomes vested in the *state*. By its action, the state has established new property forms—nationalized or state-ified or collectivized property. It has also established new property relations. So far as the proletariat is concerned, it has a fundamentally new relationship to property. The essence of the change lies in the fact that the working class is in command of that state-owned property *because* the state is the proletariat organized as the ruling class (through its Soviets, its army, its courts and insti-

tutions like the party, the unions, the factory committees, etc.). There is the nub of the question.

The economic supremacy of the bourgeoisie under capitalism is based upon its ownership of the decisive instruments of production and exchange. Hence, its social power; hence, the bourgeois state. The social rule of the proletariat cannot express itself in private ownership of capital, but only in its "ownership" of the state in whose hands is concentrated all the decisive economic power. *Hence, its social power lies in its political power.* In bourgeois society, the two can be and are divorced; in the proletarian state, they are inseparable. Much of the same thing is said by Trotsky when he points out that in contrast to private property, "the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository" (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 250). But from this follows in reality, what does not follow in Trotsky's analysis. The proletariat's relations to property, to the new, collectivist property, are indivisibly bound up with its relations to the state, that is, to the political power.

We do not even begin to approach the heart of the problem by dealing with its juridical aspects, however. That suffices, more or less, in a bourgeois state. There, let us remember, the juridical acknowledgment by the state of private ownership corresponds exactly with the palpable economic and social reality. Ford and Dupont own their plants . . . and their congressmen; Krupp and Schroeder own their plants . . . and their Deputies. In the Soviet Union, the proletarian is master of property only if he is master of the state which is its repository. That mastery alone can distinguish it as the ruling class. "The transfer of the factories to the state changed the situation of the worker only juridically," Trotsky points out quite aptly. (*Op. cit.*, p. 241.) And further: "From the point of view of property in the means of production, the differences between a marshal and a servant girl, the head of a trust and a day laborer, the son of a people's commissar and a homeless child, seem not to exist at all." (*Ibid.*, p. 238.)

Precisely! And why not? Under capitalism, the difference in the relations to property of the trust head and the day laborer is determined and clearly evidenced by the fact that the former is the owner of capital and the latter owns merely his labor power. In the Soviet Union, the difference in the relations to property of the six persons Trotsky mentions is not determined or visible by virtue of ownership of basic property but precisely by the degree to which any and all of them "own" the state to which all social property belongs.

The state is a political institution, a weapon of organized coercion to uphold the supremacy of a class. It is not owned like a pair of socks or a factory; it is controlled. No class—no modern class—controls it directly, among other reasons because the modern state is too complicated and all-pervading to manipulate like a 17th century New England town meeting. A class controls the state indirectly, through its representatives, its authorized delegates.

The Bolshevik revolution lifted the working class to the position of ruling class in the country. As Marx and Engels and Lenin had foreseen, the conquest of state power by the proletariat immediately revealed itself as "something which is no longer really a form of the State." In place of "special bodies of armed men" divorced from the people, there rose the armed people. In place of a corrupted and bureaucratized parliamentary machine, the democratic Soviets embracing tens of millions. In the most difficult days, in the rigorous period of War Communism, the state was the "proletariat organized as the ruling class"—organized through the Soviets, through the trade unions, through the living, revolutionary proletarian Communist party.

The Stalinist reaction, the causes and course of which have been traced so brilliantly by Trotsky above all others, meant the systematic hacking away of every finger of control the working class had over its state. And with the triumph of the bureaucratic counter-revolution came the end of rule of the working class. The Soviets were eviscerated and finally wiped out formally by decree. The trade unions were converted into slave-drivers cracking the whip over the working class. Workers' control in the factories went a dozen years ago. The people were forbidden to bear arms, even non-explosive weapons—it was the possession of arms by the people that Lenin qualified as the very essence of the question of the state! The militia system gave way decisively to the army separated from the people. The Communist Youth were formally prohibited from participating in politics, *i.e.*, from concerning themselves with the state. The Communist party was gutted, and the Bolsheviks in it broken in two, imprisoned, exiled and finally shot. How absurd are the lamentations about the "one-party dictatorship" in light of this analysis! It was precisely this party, while it lived, which was the last channel through which the Soviet working class exercised its political power.

The recognition of the present Soviet state as a workers' state [wrote Trotsky in his thesis on Russia in 1931] not only signifies that the bourgeoisie can conquer power in no other way than by an armed uprising but also that the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. has not forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it, of reviving the party again and

of mending the régime of the dictatorship—without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of *reform*. (*Op. cit.*, p. 36.)

Quite right. And conversely: when the Soviet proletariat finally lost the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to itself by methods of reform, and was left with the weapon of revolution, we should have abandoned our characterization of the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state. Even if belatedly, it is necessary to do that now.

That political expropriation of the proletariat which is defined in Trotsky's analysis—that is nothing more nor less than the destruction of the class rule of the workers, the end of the Soviet Union as a workers' state.

A change in class rule, a revolution or counter-revolution, without violence, without civil war, gradually? Trotsky has reproached defenders of such a conception with "reformism-in-reverse." The reproach might hold in our case, too, but for the fact that the Stalinist counter-revolution was violent and bloody enough. The seizure of power by the Bolsheviki was virtually bloodless and non-violent. The breadth and duration of the civil war that followed were determined by the strength, the virility, and not least of all by the international imperialist aid furnished to the overturned classes.

The comparative *one-sidedness* of the civil war attending the Stalinist counter-revolution was determined by the oft-noted passivity of the masses, their weariness, their failure to receive international support. In spite of this, Stalin's road to power lay through rivers of blood and over a mountain of skulls. Neither the Stalinist counter-revolution nor the Bolshevik revolution was effected by Fabian gradualist reforms.

The conquest of state power by the bureaucracy spelled the destruction of the property relations established by the Bolshevik revolution.

If the workers are no longer the ruling class and the Soviet Union no longer a workers' state, and if there is no private-property-owning capitalist class ruling Russia, what is the class nature of the state and what exactly is the bureaucracy that dominates it?

Hitherto we called the Stalinist bureaucracy a caste, and denied it the attributes of a class. Yet, Trotsky admitted in September a year ago, the definition of the Russian bureaucracy as a caste has not "a strictly scientific character. Its relative superiority lies in this, that the makeshift character of the term is clear to everybody, since it would enter nobody's mind to identify the Moscow oligarchy with the Hindu caste of Brahmins." In résumé, it is called a caste not because it is a caste—the old Marxian definition of a caste would

scarcely fit Stalin & Co.—but because it is not a class. Without letting the dispute “degenerate into sterile toying with words,” let us see if we cannot come closer to a scientific characterization than we have in the past.

The late Bukharin defined a class as “the aggregate of persons playing the same part in production, standing in the same relation toward other persons in the production process, these relations being also expressed in things (instruments of labor).” According to Trotsky, a class is defined “by its independent rôle in the general structure of economy and by its independent roots in the economic foundation of society. Each class . . . works out its own special forms of property. The bureaucracy lacks all these social traits.”

In general, either definition would serve. But not as an absolutely infallible test for all classes in all class societies.\*

The Marxian definition of a class is obviously widened by Engels (*see footnote*) to include a social group “that did not take part in production” but which made itself “the indispensable mediator between two producers,” exploiting them both. The merchants characterized by Engels as a class are neither more nor less encompassed in Trotsky’s definition, given above, or in Bukharin’s, than is the Stalinist bureaucracy (except in so far as this bureaucracy most definitely takes part in the process of production). But the indubitable fact that the bureaucracy has not abolished state property is not sufficient ground for withholding from it the qualification of a class, although, as we shall see, within certain limits. But, it has been objected:

If the Bonapartist riffraff is a class this means that it is not an abor~~a~~

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\*Although, for example, the merchants would fail to pass either of the two tests given above, Engels qualified them as a class. “A third division of labor was added by civilization: it created a class that did not take part in production, but occupied itself merely with the exchange of products—the merchants. All former attempts at class formation were exclusively concerned with production. They divided the producers into directors and directed, or into producers on a more or less extensive scale. But here a class appears for the first time that captures the control of production in general and subjugates the producers to its rule, without taking the least part in production. A class that makes itself the indispensable mediator between two producers and exploits them both under the pretext of saving them the trouble and risk of exchange, of extending the markets for their products to distant regions, and of thus becoming the most useful class in society; a class of parasites, genuine social ichneumons, that skim the cream of production at home and abroad as a reward for very insignificant services; that rapidly amass enormous wealth and gain social influence accordingly; that for this reason reap ever new honors and ever greater control of production during the period of civilization, until they at last bring to light a product of their own—periodical crises in industry.” (Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 201.)

tion but a viable child of history. If its marauding parasitism is "exploitation" in the scientific sense of the term, this means that the bureaucracy possesses a historical future as the ruling class indispensable to the given system of economy. (Trotsky, "Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the U.S.S.R.," *The New Internationalist*, Feb. 1940, p. 14.)

Is or is not the Stalinist bureaucracy "a ruling class indispensable" to the system of economy in the Soviet Union?

This question—begs the question! The question is precisely: what is the given system of economy? For the *given* system—the property relations established by the counter-revolution—the Stalinist bureaucracy is the indispensable ruling class. As for the economic system and the property relations established by the Bolshevik revolution (under which the Stalinist bureaucracy was by no means the indispensable ruling class)—these are just what the bureaucratic counter-revolution destroyed! To the question, is the bureaucracy indispensable to "Soviet economy"? one can therefore answer, Yes and no.

To the same question put somewhat differently, is the bureaucracy an "historical accident," an abortion, or viable and a necessity, the answer must be given in the same spirit. It is an historical necessity—"a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality" (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 55). It is not an "historical accident" for the good reason that it has well-established historical causes. It is not inherent in a society resting upon collective property in the means of production and exchange, as the capitalist class is inherent in a society resting upon capitalist property. Rather, it is the product of a conjunction of circumstances, primarily that the proletarian revolution broke out in *backward* Russia and was not supplemented and thereby saved by the victory of the revolution in the *advanced* countries.

Hence, while its concrete characteristics do not permit us to qualify it as a viable or indispensable ruling class in the same sense as the historical capitalist class, we may and do speak of it as a ruling class whose complete control of the state now guarantees its political and economic supremacy in the country.

It is interesting to note that the evolution and transformation of the Soviet bureaucracy in the workers' state—the state of Lenin and Trotsky—is quite different and even contrary to the evolution of the capitalist class in its state.

Speaking of the separation of the capitalist manager into capitalists *and* managers of the process of production, Marx writes:

The labor of superintendence and management arising out of the antagonistic character and rule of capital over labor, which all modes of

production based on class antagonisms have in common with the capitalist mode, is directly and inseparably connected, also under the capitalist system, with those productive functions, which all combined social labor assigns to individuals as their special tasks. . . . Compared to the money-capitalist the industrial capitalist is a laborer, but a laboring capitalist, an exploiter of the labor of others. The wages which he claims and pockets for this labor amount exactly to the appropriated quantity of another's labor and depend directly upon the rate of exploitation of this labor, so far as he takes the trouble to assume the necessary burdens of exploitation. They do not depend upon the degree of his exertions in carrying on this exploitation. He can easily shift this burden to the shoulders of a superintendent for moderate pay. . . . Stock companies in general, developed with the credit system, have a tendency to separate this labor of management as a function more and more from the ownership of capital, whether it be self-owned or borrowed. (*Capital*, Vol. III, pp. 454ff.)

Even though this tendency to separate out of the capitalist class (or the upper ranks of the working class) a group of managers and superintendents is constantly accentuated under capitalism, this group does not develop into an independent class. Why? Because to the extent that the manager (*i.e.*, a highly-paid superintendent-worker) changes his "relations to property" and becomes an owner of capital, he merely enters into the already existing capitalist class. He need not and does not create new property relations.

The evolution has been distinctly different in Russia. The proletariat in control of the state, and therefore of economy, soon found itself unable directly to organize economy, expand the productive forces and raise labor productivity because of a whole series of circumstances—its own lack of training in management and superintendence, in bookkeeping and strict accounting, the absence of help from the technologically more advanced countries, *etc.*, *etc.* As with the building of the Red Army, so in industry, the Russian proletariat was urged by Lenin to call upon and it did call upon a whole host and variety of experts—some from its own ranks, some from the ranks of the class enemy, some from the ranks of the bandwagon-jumpers, constituting in all a considerable bureaucracy.

Given the revolutionary party, given the Soviets, given the trade unions, given the factory committees, that is, given those concrete means by which the workers ruled the state, *their* state, this bureaucracy, however perilous, remained within the limitations of "hired hands" in the service of the workers' state. In political or economic life—the bureaucracies in both tended to and did merge—the bureaucracy was subject to the criticism, control, recall or discharge of the "working class organized as a ruling class."

The whole history of the struggle of the Trotskyist movement in Russia against the bureaucracy signified, at bottom, a struggle to prevent the crushing of the workers' state by the growing monster

of a bureaucracy which was becoming increasingly different in *quality* from the "hired hands" of the workers' state as well as from any kind of bureaucratic group under capitalism. What we have called the consummated usurpation of power by the Stalinist bureaucracy was, in reality, nothing but the self-realization of the bureaucracy as a class and its seizure of state power from the proletariat, the establishment of its own state power and its own rule.

The *qualitative* difference lies precisely in this: the bureaucracy is no longer the controlled and revocable "managers and superintendents" employed by the workers' state in the party, the state apparatus, the industries, the army, the unions, the fields, but the owners and controllers of the state, which is in turn the repository of collectivized property and thereby the employer of all hired hands, the masses of the workers, above all, included.

The situation of the young Soviet republic (the historical circumstances surrounding its birth and evolution), imposed upon it the "division of labor" described above, and often commented on by Lenin. Where a similar division of labor under capitalism does not transform the economic or political agents of the ruling class into a new class, for the reasons given above (primarily, the relations to capitalist private property), it does tend to create a new class in a state reposing on collectivized property, that is, in a state which is itself the repository of *all* social property.

Trotsky is entirely right when he speaks of "dynamic social formations [in Russia] which have had no precedent and have no analogies." It is even more to the point when he writes that "the very fact of its [the bureaucracy's] appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relation between the bureaucracy and the riches of the nation." For what is unprecedented and new, hitherto unknown, one cannot find a sufficiently illuminating analogy in the bureaucracies in other societies which did not develop into a class but remained class-serving bureaucracies.

What Trotsky calls the indispensable theoretical key to an understanding of the situation in Russia is the remarkable passage from Marx which he quotes in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of communism], because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive."

Both Lenin and Trotsky kept repeating in the early years: in backward Russia, socialism cannot be built without the aid of the

more advanced countries. Before the revolution, in 1915, Trotsky made clear his opinion—for which Stalinism never forgave him—that without state aid of the western proletariat, the workers of Russia could not hope to remain in power for long. That state aid did not come, thanks to the international social democracy, later ably supplemented by the Stalinists. But the prediction of Lenin and Trotsky did come true. The workers of the Soviet Union were unable to hold power. That they lost it in a peculiar, unforeseen and even unforeseeable way—not because of a bourgeois restoration, but in the form of the seizure of power by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy which retained and based itself on the new, collectivist form of property—is true. But they did lose power. The old crap was revived—in a new, unprecedented, hitherto-unknown form, the rule of a *new bureaucratic class*. A class that always was, that always will be? Not at all. “Class,” Lenin pointed out in April 1920, “is a concept that takes shape in struggle—and in the course of development.”

The reminder is particularly timely in considering the struggle and evolution of the Stalinist bureaucracy into a class. Precisely here it is worth more than passing notice, that the counter-revolution, like the revolution that preceded it, found that it could not, as Marx said about the seizure of power by the proletariat in the Paris Commune, “simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” The Russian proletariat had to *shatter* the old bourgeois state and its apparatus, and put in its place a new state, a complex of the Soviets, the revolutionary party, the trade unions, the factory committees, the militia system, etc. To achieve power and establish its rule, the Stalinist counter-revolution in turn had to shatter the proletarian Soviet state—those same Soviets, the party, the unions, the factory committees, the militia system, the “armed people,” etc. It did not and could not “simply lay hold of” the existing machinery of state and set it going for its own ends. It shattered the workers’ state, and put in its place the totalitarian state of bureaucratic collectivism.

Thereby it compelled us to add to our theory this conception, among others: Just as it is possible to have different classes ruling in societies resting upon the private ownership of property, so it is possible to have more than one class ruling in a society resting upon the collective ownership of property—concretely, the working class and the bureaucracy.

Can this new class look forward to a social life-span as long as that enjoyed, for example, by the capitalist class? We see no reason to believe that it can. Throughout modern capitalist society, ripped apart so violently by its contradictions, there is clearly discernible

the irrepressible tendency towards collectivism, the only means whereby the productive forces of mankind can be expanded and thereby provide that ample satisfaction of human needs which is the precondition to the blooming of a new civilization and culture. But there is no adequate ground for believing that this tendency will materialize in the form of a universal "bureaucratic collectivism."

The revolutionary struggle against the capitalist mode of production, triumphing in those countries which have already attained a high level of economic development, including the development of labor productivity, leads rather to the socialist society. The circumstances which left Soviet Russia isolated, dependent upon its own primitive forces, and thus generated that "generalized want" which facilitated the victory of the bureaucratic counter-revolution, will be and can only be overcome by overcoming its causes—namely, the capitalist encirclement. The social revolution which spells the doom of capitalist imperialism and the release of the pent-up, strangled forces of production, will put an end to the want and misery of the masses in the West and to the very basis of the misery of Stalinism in the Soviet Union.

Social life and evolution were slow and long-drawn-out under feudalism. Their pace was considerably accelerated under capitalism, and phenomena which took decades in developing under feudalism, took only years to develop under capitalism. World society which entered the period of world wars and socialist revolutions, finds the pace speeded up to a rhythm that has no precedent in history. All events and phenomena tend to be telescoped in point of time. From this standpoint, the rise, and the early fall, of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union necessitates an indication of the limits of its development, as we pointed out above, precisely in order to distinguish it from the fundamental historical classes. This is perhaps best done by characterizing it as the ruling class of an unstable society which is already a fetter on economic development.

What has already been said should serve to indicate the similarities between the Stalinist and Fascist bureaucracies, but above all to indicate the profound social and historical difference between them. Following our analysis, the animadversions of all species of rationalizers on the identity of Stalinism and Fascism, remain just as superficial as ever.

Trotsky's characterization of the two bureaucracies as "symmetrical" is incontrovertible, but only within the limits with which he surrounds the term, namely, they are both products of the same failure of the Western proletariat to solve the social crisis by social revolution. To go further, they are identical, but again within well-defined limits. The political régime, the technique of rule, the

highly-developed social demagogy, the system of terror without end—these are essential features of Hitlerite and Stalinist totalitarianism, some of them more fully developed under the latter than under the former. At this point, however, the similarity ceases.

From the standpoint of our old analysis and theory, the Soviet Union remained a workers' state despite its political régime. In short, we said, just as the social rule of capitalism, the capitalist state was preserved under different political régimes—republic, monarchy, military dictatorship, fascism—so the social rule of the proletariat, the workers' state could be maintained under different political régimes—Soviet democracy, Stalinist totalitarianism. Can we, then, even speak of a "counter-revolutionary workers' state"? was the question posed by Trotsky early this year. To which his reply was, "There are two completely counter-revolutionary workers' Internationals" and one can therefore speak also of "the counter-revolutionary workers' state. In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power." It is a workers' state by virtue of its property forms, and it is counter-revolutionary by virtue of its political régime.

Without dwelling here on the analogy between the Soviet state today and the trade unions, it is necessary to point out that thoroughgoing consistency would demand of this standpoint that the Soviet Union be characterized as a *Fascist workers' state*, workers' state, again, because it rests on state property and Fascist because of its political régime. Objections to this characterization can only be based upon the embarrassment caused by this natural product of consistency.

However that may be, if it is not a workers' state, not even a Fascist workers' state, neither is it a state comparable to that of the German Nazis. Let us see why.

Fascism, resting on the mass basis of the petty-bourgeoisie gone mad under the horrors of the social crisis, *was called to power deliberately* by the big bourgeoisie in order to preserve its social rule, the system of private property. Writers who argue that Fascism put an end to capitalism and inaugurated a new social order, with a new class rule, are guilty of an abstract and static conception of capitalism; more accurately, of an idealization of capitalism as permanently identical with what it was in its halcyon period of organic upward development, its "democratic" phase.

Faced with the imminent prospect of the proletarian revolution putting an end both to the contradictions of capitalism and to capitalist rule, the bourgeoisie preferred the annoyance of a Fascist régime which would suppress (not abolish!) these contradictions and preserve capitalist rule. In other words, at a given stage

of its *degeneration*, the *only* way to preserve the capitalist system in any form is by means of the totalitarian dictatorship. As all historians agree, calling Fascism to political power—the abandonment of political rule by the bourgeoisie—was the conscious act of the bourgeoisie itself.

But, it is argued, *after* it came to political power, the Fascist bureaucracy completely dispossessed the bourgeoisie and itself became the ruling class. Which is precisely what needs to be but has not been proved. The system of private ownership of socially-operated property *remains basically intact*. After being in power in Italy for over eighteen years, and in Germany for almost eight, Fascism has yet to nationalize industry, to say nothing of expropriating the bourgeoisie (the expropriation of small sections of the bourgeoisie—the Jewish—is done in the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole). Why does Hitler, who is so bold in all other spheres, suddenly turn timid when he confronts the “juridical detail” represented by the private (or corporate) ownership of the means of production? Because the two cannot be counterposed: his boldness and “radicalism” in all spheres is directed towards maintaining and reinforcing that “juridical detail,” that is, capitalist society, to the extent to which it is at all possible to maintain it *in the period of its decay*.

But doesn't Fascism control the bourgeoisie? Yes, in a sense. That kind of control was foreseen long ago. In January 1916, Lenin and the Zimmerwald Left wrote: “At the end of the war a gigantic universal economic upheaval will manifest itself with all its force, when, under a general exhaustion, unemployment and lack of capital, industry will have to be regulated anew, when the terrific indebtedness of all states will drive them to tremendous taxation, and when state socialism—militarization of the economic life—will seem to be the only way out of financial difficulties.” Fascist control means precisely this new regulation of industry, the militarization of economic life in its sharpest form. It controls, it restricts, it regulates, it plunders—but with all that it maintains and even strengthens, the capitalist profit system, leaves the bourgeoisie intact as the class owning property. It *assures* the profits of the owning class—taking from it that portion which is required to maintain a bureaucracy and police-spy system needed to keep down labor (which threatens to take away *all* profits and *all* capital, let us not forget) and to maintain a highly modernized military establishment to defend the German bourgeoisie from attacks at home and abroad and to acquire for it new fields of exploitation outside its own frontiers.

But isn't the Fascist bureaucracy, too, becoming a class? In a

sense, yes, but not a new class with a new class rule. By virtue of their control of the state power, any number of Fascist bureaucrats, of high and low estate, have used coercion and intimidation to become Board Directors and stockholders in various enterprises. This is especially true of those bureaucrats assigned to industry as commissars of all kinds. On the other side, the bourgeoisie acquires the "good will" of Nazi bureaucrats, employed either in the state or the economic machinery, by bribes of stocks and positions on directing boards. There is, if you wish, a certain process of fusion between sections of the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. But the bureaucrats who become stockholders and Board Directors do not thereby become a new class, they enter as integral parts of the industrial or financial bourgeoisie class which we have known for quite some time.

Private ownership of capital, that "juridical detail" before which Hitler comes to a halt, is a social reality of the profoundest importance. With all its political power, the Nazi bureaucracy remains a bureaucracy; sections of it fuse with the bourgeoisie, but as a social aggregation, it is not developing into a new class. Here, control of the state power is not enough. The bureaucracy, in so far as its development into a new class with a new class rule of its own is concerned, *is itself controlled* by the objective reality of the private ownership of capital.

How different it is with the Stalinist bureaucracy! Both bureaucracies "devour, waste, and embezzle a considerable portion of the national income"; both have an income above that of the people, and privileges which correspond to their position in society. But similarity of income is not a definition of a social class. In Germany, the Nazis are not more than a bureaucracy—extremely powerful, to be sure, but still only a bureaucracy. In the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy is the ruling class, because it possesses as its own the state power which, in this country, is the owner of all social property.

In Germany, the Nazis have attained a great degree of independence by their control of the state, but it continues to be "the state of the most powerful economic class"—the bourgeoisie. In the Soviet Union, control of the state, sole owner of social property, makes the bureaucracy the most powerful economic class. Therein lies the fundamental difference between the Soviet state, even under Stalinism, and all other *pre-collectivist* states. The difference is of epochal historical importance.

The difference is between increased state intervention to preserve capitalist property and the collective ownership of property by the bureaucratic state.

How express the difference summarily and in conventional terms? People buying canned goods want and are entitled to have labels affixed that will enable them to distinguish at a glance pears from peaches from peas. "We often seek salvation from unfamiliar phenomena in familiar terms," Trotsky observed. But what is to be done with unprecedented, new, hitherto-unknown phenomena, how label them in such a way as to describe at once their origin, their present state, their more than one future prospect, and wherein they resemble and differ from other phenomena? The task is not easy. Yet, life and politics demand some conventional, summary terms for social phenomena; one cannot answer the question—What is the Soviet state?—by repeating in detail a long and complex analysis. The demand must be met as satisfactorily as is possible in the nature of the case.

The early Soviet state we would call, with Lenin, a bureaucratically deformed workers' state. The Soviet state today we would call—bureaucratic state socialism\*, a characterization which attempts to embrace both its historical origin and its distinction from capitalism as well as its current diversion under Stalinism. The German state today we would call, in distinction from the Soviet state, bureaucratic or totalitarian state capitalism. These terms are neither elegant nor absolutely precise, but they will have to do for want of any others more precise or even half as precise.

From the foregoing analysis the basis is laid not only for eliminating the discrepancies and defects in our old analysis, but for clarifying our political position.

*Political or Social Revolution?* Here too, without falling into a game of terminology or toying with abstract concepts, it is necessary to strive for the maximum exactness. As distinct from social revolution, Trotsky and the 4th International called up to now for a political revolution in the Soviet Union. "History has known elsewhere not only social revolutions which substituted the bourgeoisie for the feudal régime, but also political revolutions which, without destroying the economic foundations of society, swept out an old ruling upper crust (1830 and 1848 in France, February 1917 in Russia, etc.). The overthrow of the Bonapartist caste will, of course, have deep social consequences, but in itself it will be confined within the limits of political revolution." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 288.) And again, on the same page: "It is not a

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\*To avoid even a verbal identification of the Stalinist régime with socialism, I subsequently dropped this term and used in its stead "bureaucratic collectivism."  
—M. S.

question this time of changing the economic foundations of society, of replacing certain forms of property with other forms."

In the revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy the nationalization of the means of production and exchange will indeed be preserved by the proletariat in power. If that is what is meant by political revolution, if that is all it could mean, then we could easily be reconciled to it. But from our whole analysis, it follows that the Stalinist counter-revolution, in seizing the power of the state, thereby changed the property relations in the Soviet Union. In overturning the rule of the bureaucracy, the Soviet proletariat will again raise itself to the position of ruling class, organize its own state, and once more change its relations to property. The revolution will thus not merely have "deep social consequences," it will be a social revolution. After what has been said in another section, it is not necessary to insist here on those points wherein the social revolution in Germany or England would resemble the social revolution in Russia and wherein they would differ from it. In the former, it is a question of ending capitalism and lifting the country into the new historical epoch of collectivism and socialism. In the latter, it is a question of destroying a reactionary obstacle to the development of a collectivist society toward socialism.

*Unconditional Defense of the U.S.S.R.?* The slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" assumed that, even under Stalin and despite Stalin, the Soviet Union could play only a progressive rôle in any war with a capitalist power. The Second World War broke out, with the Soviet Union as one of the participants, now as a belligerent, now as a "non-belligerent." But, "theory is not a note which you can present at any moment to reality for payment." Reality showed that the Soviet Union, in the war in Poland and in Finland, in the war as a whole, was playing a reactionary rôle. The Stalinist bureaucracy and its army acted as an indispensable auxiliary in the military calculations of German imperialism. They covered the latter's eastern, northern and south-eastern flank, helped in the crushing of Poland (and along with it, of the incipient Polish Commune), and for their pains, received a share of the booty. In the conquered territories, it is true, Stalin proceeded to establish the same economic order that prevails in the Soviet Union. But this has no absolute value, in and of itself—only a relative value. One can say with Trotsky that "the economic transformations in the occupied provinces do not compensate for this by even a tenth part!"

From the standpoint of the interests of the international socialist revolution, defense of the Soviet Union in this war (*i.e.*, support of the Red Army) could only have a negative effect. Even from

the more limited standpoint of preserving the new economic forms in the Soviet Union, it must be established that they were not involved in the war. At stake were and are what Trotsky calls "the driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy . . . the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues."

The attempt to exhaust the analysis of the Stalinist course in the war by ascribing it to "purely military" steps of preventive-defense character (what is meant in general by "purely military" steps remains a mystery, since they exist neither in nature nor society), is doomed by its superficiality to failure. Naturally, all military steps are . . . military steps, but saying so does not advance us very far.

The general political considerations which actuated the Stalinists in making an alliance with Hitler (capitulation to Germany out of fear of war, *etc.*) have been stated by us on more than one occasion and require no repetition here. But there are even more profound reasons, which have little or nothing to do with the fact that Stalin's master-ally is German Fascism. The same reasons would have dictated the same course in the war if the alliance had been made, as a result of a different conjunction of circumstances, with the noble democracies. They are summed up in the lust for expansion of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which has even less in common with Lenin's policy of extending the revolution to capitalist countries than the Stalinist state has with the early workers' state.

And what is the economic base of this lust for expansion, this most peculiar imperialism which you have invented? we were asked, sometimes with superior sneers, sometimes with genuine interest in the problem. We know what are the irrepressible economic compulsions, the inherent economic contradictions, that produce the imperialist policy of finance capitalism. What are their equivalents in the Soviet Union?

Stalinist imperialism is no more like capitalist imperialism than the Stalinist state is like the bourgeois state. Just the same it has its own economic compulsions and internal contradictions, which hold it back here and drive it forward there. Under capitalism, the purpose of production is the production of surplus value, of profit, "not the product, but the surplus product." In the workers' state, production was carried on and extended for the satisfaction of the needs of the Soviet masses. For that, they needed not the oppression of themselves or of other people but the liberation of the peoples of the capitalist countries and the colonial empires. In the Stalinist state, production is carried on and extended for the satisfaction of the needs of the bureaucracy, for the increasing of its wealth, its privileges, its power. At every turn of

events, it seeks to overcome the mounting difficulties and resolve the contradictions which it cannot really resolve, by intensifying the exploitation and oppression of the masses.

We surely need not insist upon the fact that there are still classes in the Soviet Union, and that exploitation takes place there. Not *capitalist* exploitation—but economic exploitation nonetheless. It is acknowledged even by Trotsky. “The differences in income are determined, in other words, not only by differences of individual productiveness, but also by a *masked appropriation of the product of the labor of others*. The privileged minority of shareholders is living at the expense of the deprived majority.” (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 240. My emphasis—M. S.) The *driving force* behind the bureaucracy is the tendency to increase and expand this “masked [and often not so masked] appropriation of the product of the labor of others.”

Hence, its penchant for methods of exploitation typical of the worst under capitalism; hence, its lust to extend its domination over the peoples of the weakened and more backward countries (if it is not the case with the stronger and more advanced countries, then only because the power, and not the will, is lacking), in order to subject them to the oppression and exploitation of the Kremlin oligarchs. The *de facto* occupation of the northwestern provinces of China by Stalin is a case in point. The occupation and then the spoliation of eastern Poland, of the three Baltic countries, of southern Finland (not to mention the hoped-for Petsamo nickel mines), of Bessarabia and Bukovina, tomorrow perhaps of parts of Turkey, Iran, and India, are other cases in point. We call this policy Stalinist imperialism.

But are not imperialism and imperialist policy a concomitant only of capitalism? No. While crises of over-production are unique to capitalism, that does not hold true either of war or imperialism, which are common to diverse societies. Lenin, insisting precisely on the scientific, Marxist usage of the terms, wrote in 1917:

Crises, precisely in the form of overproduction or of the “stocking up of market commodities” (comrade S. does not like the word overproduction) are a phenomenon which is *exclusively* proper to capitalism. Wars, however, are proper both to the economic system based on slavery and the feudal. There have been imperialist wars on the basis of slavery (Rome’s war against Carthage was an imperialist war on both sides) as well as in the Middle Ages and in the epoch of mercantile capitalism. Every war in which both belligerent camps are fighting to oppress foreign countries or peoples and for the division of the booty, that is, over “who shall oppress more and who shall plunder more,” must be called imperialistic. (*Works*, Coll. Ed., Vol. XXI, pp. 387f.)

By this definition, on which Lenin dwelled because comrade

S. had made an "error in principle," it is incontestable that the Stalinists in partnership with Hitler have been conducting an imperialist war "to oppress foreign countries or peoples," "for the division of the booty," to decide "who shall oppress more and who shall plunder more." It is only from this standpoint that Trotsky's statement late in 1939—"We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin"—acquires full and serious meaning. If the Soviet state were essentially a trade union in power, with a reactionary bureaucracy at its head, then we could not possibly oppose "seizures of new territories" any more than we oppose a trade union bureaucracy bringing unorganized workers into the union. With all our opposition to their organizing methods, we always *insisted* that Lewis or Green organize the unorganized. The analogy between the Soviet state and a trade union is not a very solid one. . . .

To revise one's position on so important a question as the class character of the Soviet Union, is, as the writer has himself learned, no easy matter. The mass of absurdities written against our old position only served to fix it more firmly in our minds and in our program. To expect others to take a new position overnight would be presumptuous and unprofitable. We did not arrive at the views outlined above lightly or hastily. We neither ask nor expect others to arrive at our views in that way. It is, however, right to ask that they be discussed with the critical objectivity, the exclusive concern with the truth that best serves our common interests, and the polemical loyalty that are the best traditions of Marxism.

*December 3, 1940.*



## *Russia's New Ruling Class*

### WHO RULES RUSSIA TODAY?

According to the official Stalinist mythology, there is no ruling class in Russia, because there is nobody left to rule over. There is the new Soviet worker, there is the collectivized Soviet peasant, there is the not very clearly delineated "new Soviet intelligentsia"—and they all stand on the same social plane, coöperating harmoniously, without social or class conflict, to bridge the last few small gaps remaining between the socialist society already in existence in Russia and the communist society of tomorrow. If the state, usually understood to be the coercive organ of class rule, nevertheless continues to exist and, with the aid of the GPU, to grow ever stronger, more centralized and more oppressive, it is only in order to guard against the insignificant "remnants" of the outlived classes and occasional nests of unreconstructed "Trotskyist, Zinovievist, Bukharinist wreckers." The ownership of property, at all events, is no longer the basis of minority class rule, since property is now fully socialized; it is state property and thereby, in the words of the Stalinist Constitution, "the possessions of the whole people."

According to Trotsky, the working class that once ruled Russia has lost all traces of *political* power. That power has been usurped by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. However, the bureaucracy is not a class, but more in the nature of a caste whose rôle it is to serve classes. In the present case, it serves the working class. In what sense? In that it preserves the workers' *social* rule, which is represented fundamentally by the existence of nationalized property, more exactly, of state property. Russia is therefore a degenerated workers' state, the bureaucracy being a symptom of the great danger to the revolution which it has not succeeded in destroying so long as it protects state property, even if with reactionary methods.

Therefore, although the workers have no political power whatsoever, although they are exploited by methods which would not be countenanced in a bourgeois democracy, although their share of the

national wealth continues to decline in favor of the share allotted to itself by the bureaucracy, although their economic position grows worse every year, although they have nothing to say about domestic or foreign policy, about economics or politics in general, although they are subjected to the same totalitarian barbarism that Hitler inflicts upon the German workers—they remain the ruling class of Russia so long as property remains in the hands of the state.\* So long as property (*i.e.*, the means of production and exchange) remains in the hands of *what* state? In the hands of the workers' state! But what is it that makes it a *workers'* state? The fact that property is in its hands. And so on in a complete circle.

My view was, briefly, that that which Trotsky called the political rule of the working class was actually its class rule; that this had been brought to an end by the counter-revolution of the Stalinist bureaucracy—roughly in the period between 1933 and 1936—which established new property relations while retaining more or less intact the old property forms (*i.e.*, state property), and thereby set up a new, reactionary, hitherto unprecedented state with a new ruling class. This new social order, while a thousand times closer to capitalism than it is to socialism or even to the workers' state of the early days of Lenin and Trotsky, is neither capitalist nor proletarian. To distinguish it from either one of these two and at the same time to underline its outstanding characteristics as tersely as possible, this new state was designated as *bureaucratic collectivism*.

The official defenders of Trotsky's theory had previously shouted themselves livid with the demand that we discuss the fundamental question of the class character of the Soviet Union, which they declared themselves ready to argue with the greatest of freedom and amplitude. They met the criticism and presentation which we had made with a dignified silence which they have maintained down to the present day, and directed at the critic a stream of abuse which they have maintained just as steadily. As is evident, they borrowed this method of theoretical dispute from the same source whence Collins borrowed the theory that the Russian people own everything in Russia—except the state which really does own everything.

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\*Like Lenin, Trotsky is not without his epigones. He wrote time and again to show that ownership of all property by the state in Russia did not make it social property; that on the contrary, the "fundamental sophism" of Stalinist doctrine was precisely its identification of state property with "the possessions of the whole people." Yet we are now told by one George Collins that in Russia "the factories, mines, mills, railroads, workshops, belong to those who work them. The soil belongs to those who till it." Did this 100 per cent Stalinist propaganda-lie appear in *The Daily Worker*, where common decency dictates that it properly belongs? No, it appears on page 1 of the Trotskyist *Militant* for September 12.

But although we have for long been deprived of the annihilating criticism which Collins & Associates would undoubtedly inflict upon our views if they could be persuaded to speak, we have just been provided with some extremely interesting corroboratory material from another source. It appears in an article by Solomon M. Schwartz, called "Heads of Russian Factories," which appears in the September, 1942, issue of *Social Research*, a quarterly published in New York by the New School of Social Research. The article is part of a graduate faculty research project on "Social and Economic Controls in Germany and Russia." Unless we are mistaken, the author is the same writer who, apparently a member or supporter of the Russian Menshevik Party, used to contribute before the war to the German theoretical magazine of Rudolph Hilferding.

The article deals with the origin and rise of a new social stratum, the heads of the Russian factories, and "their relations with government officials and organizations." Its principal value lies in the patent objectivity and scholarly scrupulousness with which the author has selected and compiled his data from official Soviet sources. If we accept the data it is because they are entirely in line, first, with commonly known and commonly accepted facts; second, with material adduced repeatedly by Trotsky on which we have had good reason to rely in the past, and third, with material about which we are more directly informed.

What the present political views or affiliations of the author are, we do not know. Schwarz seems to lean over backward in political self-restraint, both from the standpoint of giving his own political opinions and of indicating the political causes and concomitants of the phenomenon he examines. All things considered, we are ready to say: "So much the better."

Schwarz starts, satisfactorily enough, with the end of the civil war in 1921. Industry had to be reëstablished; the militants in the military forces were being demobilized. A system of dual managements was set up in the factory, with the Bolshevik Party representatives (*khozyastvennik*, "economist") as director, and a "technical director," usually from the overthrown classes, as his assistant.

The party director, who exercised most of the managerial functions, was often a former worker who had played an active role in the local labor movement since the beginning of the Revolution or even before, perhaps in the very factory where he now acted as manager. [This and all following quotations are from Schwarz unless otherwise indicated.] The technical director, often an engineer with considerable experience, served as a subordinate assistant, limited in his rights in the factory and frequently, for political reasons, tacitly considered not wholly reliable.

For reasons which Schwarz does not develop properly, in our

opinion, either because of the political limitations he places upon himself in his article or because of his own political limitations, this "system of dual control" began to disappear along about 1928-1929. The first "wrecker" trials—of bourgeois engineers—were framed by the régime, and despite Stalin's speech of June 23, 1931, on the "six conditions necessary for our industrial development," in which he held out a rather wilted olive branch to the engineers of the old order, the latter never got back to the tolerated positions they had enjoyed before.

That is understandable. In the first place, new levies of engineers trained from among the young Soviet generation were being turned out of the technical schools. But more important than this was the fact that the "wrecker trials" were held, not because the engineers had wrecked but because it was necessary to wreck the engineers. It was part of the violent campaign which the bureaucracy suddenly launched at that time to crush all bourgeois elements in the country's economic and social life, following right on the heels of the climax of the first phase of the crushing of the revolutionary elements in the Bolshevik Party (the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists).

Hindsight enables us to see now how erroneous was the then analysis of the Left Opposition, and in particular of its leader, Trotsky. The Stalinist wing of the party was judged to be a fundamentally inconsequential grouping which was doomed to capitulate to the Right wing. The latter, representing the capitalist restorationist tendency in the party, was the real and serious and durable danger. The Stalinist wing might make a little zig-zag to the left, but only in order to make a bigger and more prolonged jump to the right at the next stage. The Stalinists might gain a bureaucratic point here or there over the Right wing, but it would quickly end by going over to the Right wing. The Stalinists, due to their hold on the party machine, might defeat the Right wing inside the party, but on the broad arena of the class struggle in the country, the "Right Wing will crash down upon the head" of the party bureaucracy. The real protagonists were the capitalist forces, on the one side, represented inside the party by the Right wing, and the revolutionary proletariat, on the other, represented by the Opposition. The Stalinist Center would be speedily dissolved in the heat of the class struggle between these two forces—and while speedily did not mean fifteen weeks or months, it certainly was not meant to extend to fifteen years.

This misconception, this terribly wrong underrating of the true significance of the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy, failed to

prepare us properly for the future. Stalin's "zigzag to the left" was no movement to the left at all, if by that term is understood a movement in the direction of the class interests of the proletariat. It was not a brief precursor of a long zigzag to the right, if by that term is understood a capitulation to the capitalist elements. The opening up of the independent Stalinist drive (independent of Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky, that is, of the Right wing), marked the beginnings of the declaration of independence of the bureaucratic counter-revolution, of its rise to power *in its own name*, not in the interests of the working class and not in the interests of capitalist restoration. This drive had and still has its ups and downs; it had its zigzags and side-leaps and slow-downs and retreats. But at the same time it had a main line, a fundamental line: the formation of a new, reactionary ruling class in Russia, and the re-casting of Russian economic, political and social life in the image of this new ruling class.

That's why the line of Stalinism *inside Russia* meant not only the most brutal extirpation of all representatives and institutions of the working class, but an only slightly less brutal extermination of all representatives and institutions—especially economic—of the capitalist class. At bottom, that is also why the Stalinists would not tolerate even the most abject coexistence of the capitulators. The latter thought they were capitulating to representatives—bad ones, to be sure, but representatives nevertheless—of their own class and their own class régime. Had their assumption been essentially correct, they would have been absorbed into the apparatus of the "bad representatives" of their class, as has happened before in history. But the assumption was false; that's why they were not absorbed by the new Stalinist bureaucracy and could not be. The fate of the capitulators, acting in the most debased manner for what they thought was the most noble cause, was thus a *double tragedy*.

We have just mentioned "the *new* Stalinist bureaucracy." To see and weigh just what it is, let us return to Schwarz.

With the restoration or near-restoration of pre-war economic levels, and with the need of more and more managerial forces, the Central Committee, especially from 1928 onward, laid increasing stress on the training of *khozyastvenniki*. Where Rykov had put some emphasis on this point, it is interesting to note that men like Molotov laid much greater emphasis on it. In the middle of 1928, it was decided that the proletarian elements in the engineering colleges and technical schools must be raised to a minimum of 65 per cent among the new applicants; and "the party nucleus in the engineering colleges was also to be strengthened by commissioning annually, for engineering studies, at least 1,000 communists with good experience in the field of party, Soviet or trade union

activity." Eighteen months later, the Central Committee renewed its emphasis on this problem, increased the number of communists assigned for engineering studies from 1,000 to 2,000, and for the year 1930-31, to 3,000; while the Communist Youth organization "was instructed to prepare 5,000 annually for training in engineering colleges and technical schools." "Red specialists," to be trained for the purpose of replacing the old bourgeois technicians, and of supplementing the former party *khozyastvenniki*, began streaming from the colleges and schools by the thousands. How great, comparatively, was their number, may be seen from the fact that while there were only 20,200 engineers in all Soviet industry in 1927-28 (before the inauguration of the five-year plans), 165,600 students were graduated from the colleges and schools in the period of the first five-year plan alone (1929-32).

The extremely rapid growth of industry, unexpected by the bureaucracy, went hand in glove with a shortage of labor and a decline in quality. The bureaucracy at first proceeded with a freezing of transfers of workers from manual work to general administration for two years (October 20, 1930, decree). Two years later (September 19, 1932, decree) it acknowledged that "the system of accelerated education of engineers and technicians had failed. . . . In that section of the decree devoted to 'recruiting for the engineering colleges and technical schools' there was this time no mention of a 'workers' nucleus. The previous regulations in this regard were not formally revoked, but they were tacitly pushed into the background, and little by little forgotten."

Schwarz adduces instructive figures on the changes in the social composition of the schools. They really speak for themselves:

The percentage of worker students began a rapid increase in 1928, but after 1933 it showed an even more rapid decline. In fact, the figures for 1938 may be regarded as on practically the same level as those for 1928, because during those years there was a great increase in the percentage of manual workers among the whole population.

	1928	1931	1933	1935	1938
	pct.	pct.	pct.	pct.	pct.
<b>Higher educational institutions</b>					
Total .....	25.4	46.6	50.3	45.0	33.9
Industry (and building) .....					{43.5
Transportation and postal service....}	38.3	61.9	64.6	59.8	{43.5
<b>Technical schools</b>					
Total .....	25.8	42.6	41.5	31.7	27.1
Industry (and building) .....					{41.0
Transportation and postal service....}	38.5	60.1	62.2	51.7	{42.8

Conversely the percentage of students consisting of white collar employees and their children grew considerably after 1933, but here the figures apply principally to the "specialists" and the employees in the

higher positions, for the white collar employees in medium and inferior positions were of about the same material and social standing as manual workers, sometimes lower. At the beginning of 1938, as shown above, manual workers and their children constituted 33.9 per cent of the students of the higher educational institutions; at the same time the figure for peasants and peasants' children was 21.6 per cent, but that for white collar employees and "specialists" and their children was 42.2 per cent (the remaining 2.3 per cent consisting of "others"). The figures for the higher educational institutions devoted to training for industry are even more significant: manual workers, 43.5 per cent; peasants 9.6 per cent; white collar employees and specialists 45.4 per cent.

This gradual process of reducing the proletariat's influence in the posts of direction, which were becoming increasingly the posts of command, underwent an abrupt change in 1936, according to Schwarz. He quite rightly connects this change with the big purge that began with the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial in 1936 and reached a high point with the Pyatakov-Radek trial in January, 1937. Thousands were cleaned out of posts, from small enterprises right up to the highest posts in the land.

From the last months of 1936 until well into 1938 a radical change took place in the leading industrial personnel, wider and more important than that of 1928-29. *This shift cannot be explained as arising out of the development of industry.* The replacement of almost all the important industrial chiefs by new men—new not only in the direct sense of the word but also in the sense that they were representatives of a social stratum now in process of formation—*was a conscious act of policy, put into effect systematically and with a decisive firmness by the supreme authority.* . . .

The replacement of the chiefs of industrial plants by new men was only one aspect of this *new social upheaval*. Its broader aspects—its historical roots and inner motives and sociological importance—cannot be analyzed within the frame of this study. [Schwarz here exercises the political self-restraint already noted. Note also that the italics are mine—M.S.]

Of what type were the new industrial directors, the new chiefs of the factories, the new overlords, in a word? Schwarz' picture is photographically accurate:

. . . In their political psychology they represented a new type. Most of them leaned toward authoritarian thinking: the highest leadership above (Stalin and those closest to him) has to decide on right and wrong; what that leadership decides is incontrovertible, absolute. Thus the complete devotion merely by the fact that the system represented by Stalin made possible the rise of these people. The attitude had deeper roots. Stalin was for them the embodiment of the economic rise and the international strengthening of the country. They accepted as natural the fact that this rise was dearly paid for, that the bulk of the toiling masses remained in dire want. They were educated to the idea that the value of a social system depends on the nationalization of the economy and the speed of its development: a society with a developed industry and without a capitalist

class is *ipso facto* a classless society, and the idea of social equality belongs only to "petty-bourgeois equalitarianism." Their interest was not in social problems, but in the strong state that built up the national economy.

The year Schwarz gives for the rise of this new ruling class, with its own specific class ideology—not a "deviation" from the ideology of another class, but a specifically different ideology—is of significant importance. It coincides with our own estimate of the period of the rise to class power of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. At the same time, it coincides with the time of Trotsky's radical change in policy, conformative to his view that the objective situation had changed. For it was in 1936 that Trotsky declared that the Russian proletariat had not only lost all political power, but that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not be removed by reform methods, and that the proletariat could return to power only by means of an armed insurrection, that is, the violent overthrow of the existing régime. Once Trotsky made this change in his policy, then, given the singular character of the class rule of the proletariat which distinguishes it fundamentally from all preceding ruling classes, he was saying that the workers' state in Russia had been destroyed by a counter-revolution.

When Trotsky declared in 1936 that the proletariat of the USSR *had* lost the "possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it," of reviving the party and the régime "without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform," he involuntarily recognized, on the basis of his own criterion in 1931, that Russia was no longer a workers' state.

But while there may be, and are, disputes about the class character of the Russian state, there can scarcely be any debate about the change in the character of the so-called Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Schwarz' contribution on this score solidly confirms Trotsky's view in 1933-34 that the Stalinist party, at any rate, could not be reformed, and most definitely confirms our more specific point of view on the question of the present CPSU.

He dates the radical and fundamental change in the party from the period of the big purges, 1936-38, and compares party statistics of the Seventeenth Congress, before the purges (1934) and of the Eighteenth Congress, after the purges (1939).

At the Seventeenth Congress 22.6 per cent of the delegates had been party members since before 1917, and 17.7 per cent dated their membership from 1917; thus 40 per cent had belonged to the party since before the time it took power. A total of 80 per cent of the delegates had been party members since 1919 or earlier. But five years later, at the Eighteenth Congress, only 5 per cent of the delegates had belonged to the party since 1917 or before (2.6 per cent from 1917, 2.4 per cent from earlier years), and instead of 80 per cent, only 14 per cent dated their membership from 1919 or earlier.

Perhaps even more impressive are the figures for the party as a whole. At the time of the Eighteenth Congress there were 1,588,852 party members (compared with 1,872,488 at the time of the Seventeenth Congress, a loss of almost 300,000 members). Of the 1,588,852, only 1.3 per cent, hardly more than 20,000, had belonged to the party from 1917 or before. At the beginning of 1918 the party had numbered 260,000 to 270,000 members, mostly young people. Even taking account of the high mortality during the Civil War, it can be assumed that fewer than 200,000 of these people were alive at the beginning of 1939. But only 10 per cent of them had remained in the party.

The high regard for party membership that dated from the heroic period was over. At the Eighteenth Congress it was particularly emphasized that 70 per cent of the members had belonged only since 1929 or later, and that even of the delegates, 43 per cent belonged to this group (the comparable figure for the Seventeenth Congress was 2.6).

The report of the Mandate Commission of the Seventeenth Congress emphasized with satisfaction that 9.3 per cent of the delegates were "workers from production," that is, were actual, not only former, manual workers. This question had always been mentioned at the previous congresses. At the Eighteenth Congress, however the party lost all interest in the matter. Even the most glorified Stakhanov workers—Stakhanov, Busygin, Krivonos, Vinogradova, Likhoradov, Smetanin, Mazai, Gudov—were somewhat out of place at this Congress. All of them were now party members, and some were delegates, but when the Congress passed to the election of the new Central Committee of the party, the important leading body of 139 persons (71 members and 68 substitutes), not one of the famous Stakhanov workers was elected. It was but a logical development that the Congress changed the statutes and eliminated all statutory guarantees of the proletarian character of the party. The Communist Party is no longer a workers' party; to an increasing extent it has become the party of the officers of the various branches of economy and administrations.

The CPSU is about as much a "bureaucratic workers' party" as the National Socialist German Workers Party is a "fascist workers' party." To say, as Trotsky rightly but inconclusively said, that it is the party of the bureaucracy, is not enough. The CPSU is the party of the new ruling class, the collectivist bureaucracy.

How do the new factory directors jibe with the "specifically" party bureaucracy? A most interesting development has taken place in the relations between these two social groups. Marx underlines in *Capital* the familiar phenomenon of the division of the original owner-superintendent into the owner and the superintendent. Where originally the property-owner performed the socially-useful work of superintendence and management and was therefore a "laboring capitalist," the further division of labor under capitalism and the extension of the economic power of the capitalists made it possible for them to "shift this burden [of management] to the shoulders of a superintendent for moderate pay."

Noting this development under capitalism, I pointed out in my article on the Russian state, almost two years ago, that a directly

opposite development had marked the rise and consolidation of the power of the new ruling class in Russia—the “owner” (of the state) had fused with the manager. I wrote that “the bureaucracy is no longer the controlled and revocable ‘managers and superintendents’ employed by the workers’ state in the party, the state apparatus, the industries, the army, the unions, the fields, but the owners and controllers of the state, which is in turn the repository of collectivized property and thereby the employer of all hired hands, the masses of the workers, above all, included” (*The New International*, December, 1940, p. 200).

Schwarz traces the same process which marked the consolidation of the new ruling class. What he calls the “conscious act of policy, put into effect systematically and with a decisive firmness by the supreme authority,” was the necessary movement of the Bonapartist bureaucracy to establish and widen a *new* class base for itself in the economic foundations of the country. A new class base—no longer the old base of a corrupted *labor* bureaucracy. Hence the decline in the “influx of workers and workers’ children into the institutions of higher education.” Hence also the decree of the Supreme Council of the USSR on October 2, 1940, in which

... free education was abolished in the high schools (the eighth, ninth and tenth classes of the public school) and in the higher educational institutions, and a fee was introduced amounting to 150 to 200 rubles a year in the high schools, 300 to 500 rubles a year in the colleges. Hence a higher education became the exclusive privilege of those who could pay for it. The social tendency of this decree is further illuminated by another issued by the same body on the same day, introducing the compulsory vocational education of boys from fourteen to seventeen. After a training of six months (for boys of sixteen and seventeen, to teach them the duties of a “half-qualified” worker) or of two years (for boys of fourteen and fifteen, to teach them the duties of a “qualified” worker) the young men are for four years tied to their manual vocation, and must work in the enterprises indicated to them by the special authority; except in these respects they work under the same conditions as the other workers. But this compulsory vocational training (and the consequent compulsory labor) is not general: 800,000 to 1,000,000 boys must be “mobilized” each year for the vocational schools, but the students of the high schools (the last three classes of the public school) and of the higher educational institutions are tacitly exempt from this obligation. Thus the character of the higher education as a social privilege of the new higher social stratum is directly emphasized. The future industrial chiefs grow up from their very school days with a feeling of their social superiority.

In blunter language, the “new higher” *class* has its special class privileges and grows up with a feeling of its class superiority. Meanwhile, as happened under capitalism in its time, the class status of the workers as a whole is frozen, but in this new class state with methods that are essentially singular to it.

. . . The promotion of workers into administrative positions was almost stopped in the second half of the 30's. The outstanding workers were now protected by higher wages, bonuses and the like and in their social and material position they were elevated above the majority of the workers, almost to the level of the higher ranks of plant employees and engineers. But they were no longer "promoted"; they remained manual workers. Moreover, by this time it was only for a few of these favored workers that the way was open to a higher education, with a prospect of rising later to industrial leadership. The idea of putting the direction of industry into the hands of people rising from the working class and bound up with labor, as it had been formulated at the end of the 20's, was now lost, and the order to assure a workers' nucleus in the colleges and technical schools had been tacitly forgotten. At the end of 1940 obstacles were even put in the way of workers' children attaining a higher education.

The process of developing out and congealing a new ruling class could not avoid the problem of the relations between the new heads of industry and the specifically party officialdom. Schwarz shows, as we indicated two years ago, how this problem has been solved by means of a more or less harmonious fusion, similar though not quite identical with historic fusions into one class of different social strata.

Although directors and party officials represented the same interests, "the economic interests of the state," they nevertheless represented "different social types," they "often approached the problems of plant life in different ways." "Only around the middle of the '30's did these tensions (between the two groups) begin visibly to abate, and only at the beginning of the '40's were they almost completely removed."

It might be supposed that in a state consciously built up as a party dictatorship this uncertainty would work in favor of the party officials, but actually the dominant trend in the first half of the 30's was a strengthening of the authority of the economic officers, guaranteeing them a greater freedom of decision. Thus the position of the director as compared with that of the party cell grew stronger. The outcome of the development was not a more intensive subordination of the economic officers to the party officers, but an increasing influence of industrial officers inside the party. The new changes that began in the middle of the 30's, much more complicated than may appear at first sight, ended with an almost complete removal of friction between industrial and party officials.

The fusion of the new industrial leadership with the new party bureaucracy was at the same time a fusion with the official (and new) state apparatus—quite inevitably—and the "perfection" of the most totalitarian régime in all history.

It is characteristic of recent developments that the young engineers are being increasingly promoted, not only in industrial plants but everywhere, especially in the Communist Party offices and in the general administration. Toward the end of the 1930's the newspapers published frequent reports about the election of engineers and technicians as secre-

taries of party organizations in the plants, and some of the rising new men even reached the central government. When the Soviet Constitution of December 5, 1936, was voted, there were only eighteen People's Commissariats, including five industrial commissariats, but during the next two years the number was increased, and today the People's Commissariats total thirty-seven, those for industry twenty-one. Many of the industrial commissariats are led today by younger engineers, some of them having risen into these positions directly from the office of plant director. Engineers in the Soviet Union constitute today almost a third of the government, a phenomenon not to be observed anywhere else.

Then, after pointing out (as quoted further above) how the social composition and character of the ruling party has been altered fundamentally, Schwarz continues:

Thus it is no accident that the young engineers, who since 1936 have occupied such important positions in the industrial administration, have come more and more into party offices, even into the higher positions in the party structure. And in the plants the party apparatus and the general administration have become more and more homogeneous, both socially and psychologically. The roots of the friction between the plant directors and the cell secretaries have died out. . . .

The party organization of the plant is thus enclosed in the general industrial administration as an auxiliary organ of the official control; in this activity it is strongly subordinated to the higher party organs, which are at the same time superior to the administrations of the plants. This arrangement serves as a substitute for the public control of public economy. The problem of the relations between the plant administration and the party bodies loses through this development its sociological complexity and becomes only a problem of administrative technique.

"A substitute for the public control of public economy"—indeed it is! It is a euphemistic way of saying that the worker-controlled collectivist economy has been replaced—euphemistic but accurate. The "substitute" is in no sense of the word a workers' state. The closest it comes to this characterization is the description of it that a radical editor once permitted himself to give of the Stalinist state: *a workers' prison.*

• • •

It is not hard to understand why Marxists hesitate to acknowledge the rise to power of a new ruling class, new in type as well as in character. They have been educated in the fundamental concept that in our time society can be organized only under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. As a broad historical generalization, we believe that this concept is basically correct. But it cannot serve as a substitute for the concrete study and evaluation of the historic bypath that has led Russia to a new class state and a new ruling class, the Stalinist bureaucracy.

*September, 1942*

## *Stalinism and Marxist Tradition*

**THE THEORY THAT RUSSIA IS NEITHER** a capitalist nor a workers' state but rather a bureaucratic collectivist state meets an initial resistance from all Marxists, with some of whom it is prolonged more than with others. This is perfectly natural and understandable. We adopted this theory only after a long and thoroughgoing discussion. We have no right to complain when others move at an even slower pace, or even if they refuse to move in our direction at all.

Those who resist our theory base themselves upon their understanding of the teaching of Marx. In a well known passage in his *Critique of Political Economy*, Marx wrote:

The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individuals in society; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society.

If capitalist society is the *last* antagonistic form of the social process of production, and if it creates the material conditions for the solution of this antagonism by the socialist society which is to be established by the working class—it is legitimate to ask what part is played in this Marxian system by our theory of bureaucratic collectivism? According to our theory, bureaucratic collectivism not only is not socialism but does not represent a workers' state of any kind. At the same time, we hold, it is not a capitalist state. Finally, by characterizing bureaucratic collectivism as a reactionary, exploitive, and therefore also an antagonistic society, it is implied that capitalism may not be the last antagonistic social formation. Paraphrasing Trotsky, one critic declares that our theory "would signify that not the workers but a new bureaucratic class was destined to displace dying capitalism." He then charges that "Shachtman . . . intervened and interposed a new class between the capitalists and the proletariat, thus reducing Marxism to utopian levels."

The questions raised are serious and weighty. There is no

doubt whatsoever that they involve an appraisal of the whole question of the collapse of capitalism and the future of socialism—and thus of the future of mankind itself. Such questions deserve thought and the most objective discussion, not on the low level of ignorance and demagogy to which the problem is so often depressed but on the heights to which Marxism necessarily raises it. On these heights, it is possible to examine carefully and then to re-establish clearly the theoretical tradition of Marxism. This requires patient and earnest study, scrupulous objectivity and the application of the Marxist method itself.

"In broad outlines," wrote Marx in the sentence immediately preceding the passage already quoted from the *Critique*, "we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society." (My emphasis—M. S.)

"In broad outlines," but only in broad outlines! Like many such statements by Marx, this must not be construed in the rigid, dogmatic, mechanical sense against which Marx himself found it necessary to admonish his followers time and time again. It must not be construed as an absolute truth. Marx indicates here the "principal epochs in the economic formation of society," listing them, as he writes elsewhere, "in the order in which they were determining factors in the course of history." Marx would be the first one to reject the idea that every people in the world passed and had to pass from primitive communism through all the stages he indicated, one following in inexorable succession after the other, and ending, after the collapse of capitalism, in the classless communist society of the future. Such a mechanical interpretation of Marx, although not uncommon among Marxists, has nothing in common with Marxism.

Like everyone else acquainted with the history of society, Marx knew that there were stages in the development of communities, peoples and nations which could not be fitted into any pattern of iron succession. Where, in such a pattern, would we fit those "highly developed but historically unripe forms of society in which the highest economic forms are to be found, such as coöperation, advanced division of labor, etc., and yet there is no money in existence, e.g., Peru," about which Marx wrote (*Critique of Political Economy*, p. 296)? Where, in this iron pattern, would we fit the régime of Mehemet Ali, the viceroy of Egypt in the early nineteenth century who was the sole owner of the land and the sole "industrialist," from whom all had to buy—a régime referred to in one of the works of Karl Kautsky? Where in this iron pattern would we fit any one of a dozen of the antique Oriental régimes which Marx

himself placed in a special, exceptional category? The list can be easily extended.

Marx found himself obliged on more than one occasion to protest against all the absolutist constructions placed upon his materialist conception of history both by uninformed friends and uninformed adversaries. It is not without interest that many of his protests referred not only to interpretations made by Russian writers but to the way they applied Marx's ideas (as they interpreted them) to Russia. One of the most valuable and instructive documents of Marxism is a letter by Marx, unfortunately not widely known, to a Russian Populist acquaintance, "Nikolai-On" (N. F. Danielson). In the letter Marx deals with an article written by another and very well known Russian Populist, N. K. Mikhailovsky, who attributed to Marx that very mechanistic schema of social development which Marxists have always had to contend against, and which we must now seek to eliminate from the Trotskyist movement as well. The length of the quotation, as the attentive reader can see, will be more than justified by the appropriateness of its contents:

Now what application to Russia could my critic draw from my historical outline? Only this: if Russia tries to become a capitalist nation, in imitation of the nations of Western Europe, *and in recent years she has taken a great deal of pains in this respect*, she will not succeed without first having transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once brought into the lap of the capitalist regime, she will be subject to its inexorable laws, like other profane nations. That is all. But this is too much for my critic. He absolutely must needs metamorphose my outline of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of the general course, fatally imposed upon all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they find themselves placed, in order to arrive finally at that economic formation which insures with the greatest of productive power of social labor the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. He does me too much honor and too much shame at the same time. Let us take one example. In different passages of *Capital*, I have made allusion to the fate which overtook the plebeians of ancient Rome.

Originally, they were free peasants tilling, every man for himself, their own piece of land. In the course of Roman history, they were expropriated. The same movement which separated them from their means of production and of subsistence, implied not only the formation of large landed properties but also the formation of large monetary capitals. Thus, one fine day, there were on the one hand free men stripped of everything save their labor power, and on the other, for exploiting this labor, the holders of all acquired wealth. What happened? The Roman proletariat became not a wage-earning worker, but an indolent mob, more abject than the former "poor whites" in the southern lands of the United States; and by their side was unfolded not a capitalist but a slave mode of production. Hence, strikingly analogical events, occurring, however, in different historical environments, led to entirely dissimilar results.

By studying each of these evolutions separately, and then comparing them, one will easily find the key to these phenomena, but one will never succeed with the master-key of a historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical. (*The New International*, November, 1934, p. 110f.)

Engels, writing to the same Danielson on February 24, 1893, added: "I subscribe completely to the letter of our author [Marx]...."

Like Marx himself, his great co-workers found more than one occasion to protest against the vulgarization of the materialist conception of history worked out by the two founders of scientific socialism. Mehring, reading from the Berlin *Vorwärts* (October 5, 1890), quotes from an article in which Engels found it necessary, not for the first time and not for the last time, to correct bourgeois misinterpreters of Marx's concept, in the hope that it would be better understood by Marx's followers:

The materialistic method is transformed into its opposite when it is employed not as a guide to the study of history, but as a finished stencil in accordance with which one accurately cuts the historical facts.

To this declaration of Engels, Mehring himself adds:

Historical materialism is no closed system crowned with an ultimate truth; it is a scientific method for the investigation of human development.

Is not the attempt to cut the *fact* of Stalinist society into "a finished stencil," in which there is room only for capitalist state or workers' state, a perfect example of the transformation of Marx's materialistic method into what it is not and cannot be?

The view that Marxism presents an absolute schema of an iron succession of social orders which holds good for all peoples and all times; which excludes any intermediate stages, any leaps over stages, any retrogression into previous stages or any bastard social formations distinguished from the "principal epochs in the economic formation of society"; and which by the same token also excludes—and that absolutely—any unique social formation interposed between capitalism and a workers' state or between a workers' state and socialism (as, for example, the social *reality* which we have in the form of the Russian bureaucratic collectivist state)—that is a view that does Marx "too much honor and too much shame at the same time." Such a view necessarily converts Marx's "outline of the genesis of capitalism in western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of the general course, fatally imposed upon all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they find themselves placed."

Marx's materialist conception of history *in no way* "rules out" in advance, by theoretical interdiction, as it were, our theory of bureaucratic collectivism. That theory was arrived at "by studying each of these evolutions separately, and then comparing them," in order to "find the key" to the *unique* phenomenon of Stalinist society. When Marx wrote that "one will never succeed" in understanding such a social phenomenon as faces us in Russia today by means of "the master-key of a historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical," it is as if he foresaw the hopeless dilemma, the growing confusion and political impotence of those who seek to force-fit Stalinist Russia into an iron pattern for which Marx bears no responsibility. To those who charge us with a "revision of Marxism," we will not retort that it is they who are revising Marxism. It suffices to reply that only those who do not understand Marx's materialist conception of history and Marx's method can attribute to him such an absolutist theoretical absurdity.

Neither Marx nor Engels could foresee the actual course of the Russian proletarian revolution, or the historical circumstances under which it took place. They had no need and there were no grounds for speculative writing on the possibility of the degeneration of a proletarian revolution confined to a backward country or on the form that this degeneration might take. In our own century, the question of degeneration of the revolution and the forms of its degeneration has been posed more than once, even before 1917. Is a classless communist society even a possibility? Can the proletarian revolution produce anything more than a victory only for the revolutionists who lead it? Best known of those who contended that the *socialists* may be victorious, but *socialism* never, was Robert Michels. In face of the reality of the Stalinist degeneration, more than one "disillusioned" revolutionist and more than one turncoat have proclaimed that Michels' theory has been confirmed by history.

How have Marxists dealt with such theories as Michels'? By the simple pious assertion that an anti-capitalist but non-socialist state is an absolute impossibility, that it is ruled out theoretically by Marxism? Let us see how the problem is discussed by so authoritative a Marxist as the late N. I. Bukharin in one of his best-known works which was written in the earliest periods of the Bolshevik revolution and served as a textbook, so to speak, for a whole generation of Marxists.

Referring to Engels, Bukharin points out that in all past societies there were contending classes, and therefore a ruling class, because of the "insufficient evolution of the productive forces."

. . . But communist society is a society with highly developed, increased productive forces. Consequently, it can have no economic basis for the creation of its peculiar ruling class. For—even assuming the power of the administrators to be stable, as does Michels—this power will be the power of specialists over machines, not over men. How could they, in fact, realize this power with regard to men? Michels neglects the fundamental decisive fact that each administratively dominant position has hitherto been an envelope for economic exploitation. This economic exploitation may not be subdivided. But there will not even exist a stable, close corporation, dominating the machines, for the fundamental basis for the formation of monopoly groups will disappear; what constitutes an eternal category in Michels' presentation, namely, the "incompetence of the masses" will disappear, for this incompetence is by no means a necessary attribute of every system; it likewise is a product of the economic and technical conditions, expressing themselves in the general cultural being and in the educational conditions. We may state that in the society of the future there will be a colossal over-production of organizers, which will nullify the *stability* of the ruling groups. (N. I. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*, p. 310.)

This holds, however, and in our view it holds unassailably, for the *communist society*, one in which the productive forces have indeed been so highly developed and increased, and are available in such abundance, as to make even the highest level of the development of the productive forces attained by capitalism appear as miserably inadequate as it really is. But does it also hold for the transitional period that necessarily intervenes between the end of capitalism and the full flowering of communism? Obviously not. On that score there is not and, of course, there cannot be any disagreement.

But the question of the *transition period* from capitalism to socialism, i.e., the period of the proletarian dictatorship, is far more difficult [continues Bukharin]. The working class achieves victory, although it is not and cannot be a unified mass. It attains victory while the productive forces are going down and the great masses are materially insecure. There will inevitably result a *tendency* to "degeneration," i.e., the excretion of a leading stratum in the form of a class-germ. This tendency will be retarded by two opposing tendencies; first, by the *growth of the productive forces*; second, by the abolition of the *educational monopoly*. The increasing reproduction of technologists and of organizers in general, out of the working class itself, will undermine this possible new class alignment. The outcome of the struggle will depend on which tendencies turn out to be the stronger. (N. I. Bukharin, *Ibid.*, p. 310f.)

Take note especially of the two very precise formulations of Bukharin. One: "there will *inevitably* result a *tendency* of 'degeneration,' i.e., the excretion of a leading stratum *in the form of a class-germ*." So far as we know, it occurred to nobody to denounce Bukharin as a "revisionist" for writing this, even though he wrote

it long before so much as the outlines of the present Stalinist state could be visible. Bukharin is, of course, not referring to a new capitalist class that would be excreted when he writes of "a class-germ." He is writing, let us remember, of Michels' theory of a new *bureaucratic* class that would triumph as a result of the socialist revolution, and Bukharin does not hesitate to acknowledge—this almost thirty years ago!—that this is theoretically possible. Bukharin does not begin to deny that the formation of such a new class is possible. He acknowledges the tendency. He promptly adds two of the counteracting tendencies. And his conclusion? He does not even suggest that the triumph of socialism is guaranteed by some abstraction, by some absolute force. Not for a minute! He concludes—this is his second formulation of importance to us—"The outcome of the struggle will depend on which tendencies turn out to be stronger." Or if we may formulate it in the way which excited so much horror among some self-styled "monists." "The question of the perspective of Stalinism cannot be resolved in a purely theoretical way. It can be resolved only in struggle." The theoretical tradition of Marxism is represented in the manner in which Bukharin deals with the problem but not at all in the manner in which the "monists" reject the "pluralism" which they ascribe to us.

Marx wrote before the Russian Revolution, and Bukharin wrote before the Stalinist society appeared as an organized whole and even before Stalinism itself made its appearance. The Trotskyist opposition has been the eye-witness of the rise of Stalinism and has been the only one to make a serious analysis of it. Next to Trotsky, the late Christian Rakovsky was the outstanding leader of the Trotskyist movement. After expulsion from the party and exile, Rakovsky wrote many penetrating analyses of Russian society under Stalinism. Given the conditions of his existence in that period, many, if not most, of his studies are probably irretrievably lost. But we have sufficient indication of the trend taken by his analysis prior to his tragic capitulation. Writing about "The Life of the Exiled and Imprisoned Russian Opposition," N. Markin (Leon Sedoff) gave the following information:

Concerning the bureaucracy, Comrade Rakovsky writes: "Under our very eyes, there has been formed, and is still being formed, a large class of rulers which has its own interior groupings, multiplied by means of pre-meditated cooptation, direct or indirect (bureaucratic promotion, fictitious system of elections). The basic support of this original class is a sort, an original sort, of private property, namely, the possession of state power. The bureaucracy 'possesses the state as private property,' wrote Marx (*Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*)." (*The Militant*, December 1, 1930.)

There is, furthermore, ample evidence to show that Rakovsky's view was supported by not a few of the Trotskyists exiled and imprisoned by Stalin. The whole of Rakovsky's analysis is not at hand, neither are the whole of his conclusions; and it may well be that we shall never see them. But the trend of his analysis is sufficiently clear; the Stalinist bureaucracy is a new class based upon "an original sort of private property." It is a ruling class that derives its power from its complete domination of the state which owns all the means of production and exchange. Whatever may have been the thoughts which preceded or succeeded the section from Rakovsky's manuscript which Markin quotes, it is plain enough that Rakovsky's point of view is, if not identical with our own, at least analogous to it. Yet the publication of Rakovsky's views as long ago as 1930 did not bring down upon his head any such puerile denunciations of "revisionism" as we hear today.

Finally, Trotsky himself. He held, of course, to the position that Stalinist Russia still represented a workers' state, even if in degenerated form. He denied that Stalinist Russia represented either a capitalist state or a new social formation like bureaucratic collectivism. But he *did not exclude* the theoretical possibility that a bureaucratic collectivist state could come into existence.

At the very beginning of the war, on September 25, 1939, he warned: "Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or a few months prior to its inglorious downfall?" Trotsky firmly expected the solution of the problem of Stalinism by means of the triumph of the revolutionary proletariat in *direct connection* with the crises of the world war. That is completely clear in his polemics against us in 1939-40.

If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In that case, the question whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was "a class" or a growth on the workers' state will be automatically solved.

Further, he wrote, that "it is impossible to expect any other more favorable conditions" for the socialist revolution than the conditions offered by the experiences of our entire epoch and the current new war. But suppose the proletarian revolution does not triumph in connection with the war, and suppose the Stalinist bureaucracy maintains or even extends its power? Trotsky did not hesitate to pose this question too—and to give a tentative answer to it.

✓ If, contrary to all probabilities, the October Revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts—then we should doubtless have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copy-book label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of reëvaluating the world historical perspectives for the next decades if not centuries: have we entered the epoch of social revolution and socialist society, or, on the contrary, the epoch of the declining society of totalitarian bureaucracy? ✓

Thus, while Trotsky rejected the theory that Russia is a bureaucratic collectivist state, he did not, and as a Marxist he could not, rule out the possibility of a bureaucratic collectivist society on the basis of an *a priori* theory, or a “monistic concept” which we are now asked to believe is Marxism. ✓

Stalinist Russia can be understood only “by studying each of these evolutions separately and then comparing them.” To analyze it we need no “historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical.” We need only the “master-key” of historical materialism, not in the sense of a “closed system crowned with an ultimate truth,” but as a scientific method, as a guide to the study of the real history of the Stalinist state, as the method by which its social anatomy can be laid bare.

## II

Our theory of the class character of the Stalinist state, we are admonished, represents a break with Marxism, because we hold that Russia is neither working class nor capitalist but bureaucratic-collectivist. But that is not the worst of our crimes. According to a Trotskyist critic, we continue to deepen our break with Marxism. In 1941 we wrote that “bureaucratic collectivism is a nationally-limited phenomenon, appearing in history in the course of a singular conjuncture of circumstances.” What has been added to this that makes our break with Marxism “deeper”? An analysis of the events that have occurred since 1941. The events represent an unforeseen and hitherto unanalyzed phenomenon, so far as Stalinism is concerned. They are a refutation, and a thorough one, of the predictions made by Trotsky.

Up to the outbreak of the Second World War, Stalinism represented a state that grew out of the proletarian state established by the Bolshevik revolution. It was a successor not to capitalism but to a revolutionary workers' state. It represented a triumph not over

a capitalist state but a triumph over the working class and its revolutionary state. We may disagree on a dozen different aspects of the problem of Stalinism, but there is no conceivable basis for a difference on this simple fact. We may disagree on the conclusions to draw from the fact that the Stalinist state replaced not a capitalist state but the state of Lenin and Trotsky, but on the fact itself there can be no disagreement.

What, however, is new in the development of Stalinism since the outbreak of the war? Some people prefer not to be troubled with or even reminded of the facts which the entire world, both bourgeois and proletarian, is thinking about and discussing. It upsets them. It is much more convenient and infinitely less disturbing to repeat over and over again what was said yesterday, mumbling the same ritualistic formulæ like pious people saying their beads over and over again and always in the same order. The trouble is, whether we like it or not, there are new beads to account for. Stalinism has successfully extended its state control over new countries. The régime in such countries as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is now identical in every respect with the régime of pre-war and post-war Stalinist Russia. In Yugoslavia, the Stalinists are in the process of establishing fundamentally the same type of state as exists in Stalinist Russia. In Poland, substantially the same holds true. In other Balkan countries where the Stalinists have gained domination, they are also engaged in establishing social régimes identical with the one that exists in Russia.

The triumph of Stalinism in all these countries has not occurred in the same way and on the same basis as in Russia. In these countries Stalinism did not succeed a proletarian revolution. In these countries there was no revolutionary workers' state for Stalinism to crush. In these countries, Stalinism triumphed over a bourgeois state and over a subject, not a ruling, proletariat. It expropriated, both politically and economically, the bourgeoisie and the landowning classes, or it is in the process of expropriating them, and nationalized their property. The idea that the bourgeoisie rules in *any* sense, be it economically, politically, socially or in any other way, is a grotesque absurdity. This absurdity may be swallowed by some ignorant people in the radical movement, but there is not a bourgeois in the entire world, let alone a bourgeois in these countries themselves, whom you could begin to convince that his class is still in power in any sense.

We doubt if it will be asserted that in the countries conquered by Stalinism a classless socialist society exists. If the bourgeoisie is

not in power in these countries, what class is in power? What class rules?

Let us lay aside for the moment the question of what class rules in these countries, so long as it is agreed that the bourgeoisie does not rule. The transference of social power from one class to another is the outstanding characteristic of a revolution (or a counter-revolution). Such a transfer of power has taken place in these countries. Now, if we agree, as we must, that the rule of the bourgeoisie has been overturned in these countries; and if we agree further, as we must indeed, that the state established in these countries is substantially identical or is, at the very least, becoming identical with that which exists in Russia; and finally if we accept the theory that Stalinist Russia represents a degenerated workers' state—then the conclusion is absolutely inescapable: a workers' state, partly degenerated or wholly degenerated or degenerated in any other way, has been established by Stalinism in the conquered countries of eastern Europe.

The conclusion would not necessarily alter the view that Stalinism is bureaucratic. That is granted. But it would necessarily destroy fundamentally the theory that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary—in the sense in which some Trotskyists apply that term to Stalinism. For, in the narrow Trotskyist concept, the term counter-revolutionary must be and is applied only to those social or political forces that are not merely anti-socialist and anti-working class but—by that very token, as it were—also pro-capitalist; that is, those forces which work either subjectively or objectively for the preservation of bourgeois society and the rule of the bourgeoisie. How reconcile this with the fact that Stalinism has wiped out or is wiping out the class rule of the bourgeoisie? How reconcile it with the view—which follows relentlessly from the definition—that Stalinism has established a workers' state in bourgeois countries? If that altogether too much abused word “dialectics” were to be manipulated a thousand times more skillfully than it is, it could not extricate the manipulators from their dilemma.

Unlike the post-mortem Trotskyists, we have sought to analyze the reality by means of the materialist method and to introduce those corrections or supplements into our theory which the reality demands of us. The Stalinist state is no longer confined to Russia. Bureaucratic collectivism has been established in other countries as a result of a triumph over the capitalist class, over the capitalist state of these countries. The pseudo-Marxist who contents himself, as Lenin once remarked contemptuously, with “swearing by God,” finds no need to concern himself with the problem because for him the problem simply does not exist. To the serious Marxist the

problem of yesterday is posed today in a new form: what is the future of the Stalinist state, what is the perspective of Stalinism, in relation, on the one side to the future of capitalism and, on the other side, to the perspective of socialism?

We will not at this point set forth the analysis of this problem made by us in 1946. For the moment, we will only repeat one of the conclusions which the Trotskyist critic quotes:

The question of the perspective of Stalinism cannot be resolved in a purely theoretical way. It can be resolved only in struggle.

And again:

Whether or not Stalinism can triumph in the capitalist world cannot be denied absolutely in advance. To repeat, it is a question of struggle.

These sentences, which are nothing but simple ABC, at first evoke that sarcasm which the critic expressed with such mastery. He writes: "It is clear that our slogan, 'Socialism or Barbarism,' should now be amended to read: "Socialism, Bureaucratic Collectivism or Barbarism!" " This is a telling blow, and while we are reeling from it, stiffer blows are rained down upon us. Sarcasm is not his only strong point. Theory, philosophy—he is at home in these fields as well.

We read that:

In 1946, by adopting the above-quoted resolution, the Workers Party rejected the *heart* of the Marxist system: its *monistic concept*. Marxism holds that we live in a world of law, not of pure chance. This is true not only of the natural world, but also of human society. Shachtman (as usual, in passing) substitutes for Marxism an idealistic philosophy of *pluralism*: We may have socialism, we may have Stalinism—who knows? Only the "concreteness of the events" will show. In the theoretical sphere this is the most serious break possible with Marxist ideology. . . . The perspective of the Trotskyist movement, based on Marx's world outlook as embodied in the *Communist Manifesto*, is discarded by the Workers Party in favor of an idealistic "multiple factors" concept, which is far closer to "True Socialism" than to Marxism.

There it is, word for word. The reader will just have to believe that it is not invented by us but simply quoted from the original. The cross of "True Socialists," who have been dead and decently buried for a good century now, we will bear without too much murmur because it exerts not an ounce of weight upon our shoulders. As any reader who *knows* something about "True Socialism" is aware, the only reason it was thrown in was to impress the

easily impressionable with a display of erudition which an impolite smile could suffice to dispose of.

But what is said about "monism" in general and our "pluralism" in particular, that is a little too much. You avert your eyes in embarrassment at the spectacle that that section of the human race which is in the revolutionary movement can sometimes make of itself. Where does the author of the Trotskyist Statement get the courage for his pugnacious illiteracy? Does he really think that there is nobody left in the world to laugh his head off at this pompous jabberwocky, this cool mauling of Big Words and Big Thoughts? It is positively painful to have to deal with such nonsense, which cannot even be termed philosophical mumbo-jumbo because it is just plain, ordinary, uninspired and very puerile mumbo-jumbo. But we have no choice in the matter.

What is the heart of the Marxist system? Its monistic concept. What is our most serious possible break with Marxist "ideology"? An idealistic philosophy of pluralism, which we have substituted for Marxism and, as usual, in passing. And just how have we substituted pluralism for Marxism? By saying that capitalism exists as a social reality; that socialism exists, if not yet as a reality, then, in any case, as a perspective; and—here is our sin—that Stalinism and bureaucratic collectivism exist both as a reality and as a perspective. To this we have added the other sinful thought: the perspective of Stalinism cannot be resolved in a purely theoretical way—it can be resolved only in struggle; it is wrong to deny absolutely in advance the possibility of the triumph of Stalinism in the capitalist world because that question can be decided only in the course of struggle.

That, you see, is the idealistic philosophy of pluralism. What, then, is monism, the heart of the Marxist system?

The development of Marxian thought has known its share of the "monism" that our author is babbling about. Every real student of Marxism is acquainted with Frederick Engels' polemical destruction of Eugen Dühring who—the truth is the truth—although also given to pompous phrasemongering, nevertheless stood intellectually a cubit above all ordinary phraseurs.

All-embracing being is *one* [wrote Dühring]. In its self-sufficiency it has nothing alongside of it or over it. To associate a second being with it would be to make it something that it is not, namely, a part or constituent of a more comprehensive whole. We extend, as it were, our *unified* thought like a framework, and nothing that should be comprised in this concept of *unity* can contain a duality within itself. Nor again can anything escape being subject to this concept of unity. . . .

To which Engels replied in a famous passage: "If I include a shoe brush in the unity of mammals, this does not help it to get lacteal glands. The unity of being, that is, the question of whether its conception as a unity is correct, is therefore precisely what was to be proved, and when Herr Dühring assures us that he conceives being as a unity and not as twofold, he tells us nothing more than his own unauthoritative opinion."

What is the monistic concept of Marxism? In the same *Anti-Dühring* Engels sets forth *all* there is to monism, in the fundamental sense, so far as Marxists are concerned:

The unity of the world does not consist in its being, although its being is a pre-condition of its unity, as it must certainly first *be*, before it can be *one*. Being, indeed, is always an open question beyond the point where our sphere of observation ends. The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved not by a few juggling phrases, but by a long and tedious development of philosophy and nature science.

It is not necessary to read this passage more than once to understand that what the critic has written is *pretentious gibberish*, and nothing more. This is not a harsh but a very restrained judgment.

Let us amend this judgment—but only to show how restrained it really is. Let us try to surmount the insurmountable in order to see if any sense can be made out of the nonsense. In other words, is our critic actually trying to say something and if so, what is it? By painstakingly piecing together some elements of the muddle, we may be able to find out what idea it is he is trying to convey.

Our "pluralism," our "idealistic multiple factors concept" consists in the opinion that "we may have socialism, we may have Stalinism—who knows?" in addition to our opinion that what we actually have in most of the world is capitalism. As the critic puts it so devastatingly, we hold that the old "monism" should now be amended to read: "Socialism, Bureaucratic Collectivism or Barbarism." Whoever says that more than one of these three is actually or theoretically possible in the course of the development of society, sets himself down as a pluralist. So far, so good.

And the monist—what does he say? He says, true monist that he is, true defender of the heart of the Marxist system that he is, true partisan of the perspective of the Trotskyist movement that he is, he says that he holds, without amendment, to "our slogan" and that slogan is (hold your breath, the lights are about to be turned on): "Socialism or Barbarism!"

Blinding light! Pluralism equals three and probably more than three. Monism equals—two. Anyone who does not understand this is an idiot, probably a congenital one. Anyone who disagrees with it, let him beware.

In their first program, Marx and Engels declared that capitalism was a historical society, that it had no basis for permanent existence, that its doom was inevitable, that it would be succeeded by *barbarism or socialism*. They left us very little of a detailed picture of what socialism would be or what barbarism would be, because they rejected the kind of utopian and unscientific thinking that would try to paint such a picture. As Engels said, "Being, indeed, is always an open question beyond the point where our sphere of observation ends." ←

Our sphere of observation today is far more comprehensive than that it was in the days of Marx and Engels. It includes the living phenomenon of Stalinism. Stalinism is precisely one of the forms of barbarism which has manifested itself in the course of the decay of a society which the proletariat has not yet succeeded in lifting onto a rational plane. Marx and Engels did not and could not foresee the Stalinist barbarism. What they could not foresee, we have the duty to see and to analyze. What does this imposing babble about "monism" aim to convey? That Stalinism is not a social phenomenon? That Stalinism is not a reality? That Stalinism is not a material part of the world today? "The real unity of the world consists in its materiality," said Engels. Stalinism is not socialism and it is not capitalism, but it is nevertheless a material part of the *real* (and therefore contradictory) unity of the world.

Can barbarism triumph over socialism? Of course it can! Is that triumph *theoretically* possible? Of course it is! If you deny this, you convert the scientific formula, "Barbarism or Socialism," into mere soap-box agitation, and demagogical agitation at that. Can the question of the perspective (the prospects) of barbarism "be resolved in a purely theoretical way"? Can the question of the triumph of barbarism "be denied absolutely in advance"? Whoever tries to answer that question in a "purely theoretical way," whoever tries to deny it "absolutely in advance," reads himself out of the circles of scientific Marxist thought. He may well remain a socialist, he may well continue to favor the ideal of socialism, but he is no longer *fighting* for this ideal inasmuch as he has denied theoretically and absolutely and in advance the very possibility of any other development except socialism. By this denial, he no longer *needs* to fight for socialism. It will come of itself and its triumph is absolutely guaranteed.

In the same sense, is it theoretically possible that bureaucratic collectivism—the Stalinist barbarism—can triumph over capitalism? Of course it is. Can this triumph be denied absolutely in advance? Not by Marxists! But far, far more important than this is our con-

clusion that the perspective (again, the prospects) of capitalism and socialism and Stalinism *can be resolved only in struggle*. How else? Whoever believes that the perspective is automatically guaranteed (one way or another) by some sort of mysterious natural process which unfolds without the *decisive* and *determining* intervention of the living struggle of the classes—there is the man who has rejected the heart of Marxism and committed the most serious break possible with Marxism. He belongs among those philosophers for whom Marx had such scorn because they only contemplate or analyze the world, but do nothing—or find no need to do anything—to change it. If he nevertheless calls himself a Marxist, he would do well to reflect on the teachings of the old masters on this vital point.

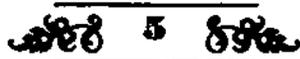
The question if objective truth is possible to human thought [Marx wrote in his famous second thesis on Feuerbach] is not a theoretical but a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and force, the this-sidedness of his thought. The dispute as to the reality or unreality of a thought, which isolates itself from the praxis is a purely scholastic question. (Appendix to Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, etc., Vienna, 1927, pp. 73 f.)

The necessity or, if you like, the *inevitability*, of socialism is demonstrable only in “praxis,” that is, it is a matter that can be resolved only the course of the class struggle.

The empiricism of observation alone can never sufficiently prove necessity. *Post hoc*, but not *proctor hoc* (Enz, I, 84). This is so very correct that it does not follow from the constant rise of the morning sun that it will rise again tomorrow, and in actuality we know now that a moment will come when the morning sun *does not rise*. But the proof of necessity lies in human activity, in experiment, in labor; if I can *do this post hoc*, it becomes identical with the *proctor hoc*.” (Engels, *Dialektik und Natur*, Marx-Engels Archiv, Vol. II, p. 282.)

It would be instructive to learn from our author, who seems determined to make monism synonymous with mumbo-jumbo, just how, in his view, the perspective of Stalinism will be resolved. If it is not to be resolved, as we say, “only in struggle” (or, as the early Marxists would say, in praxis), then we must conclude that the fate of Stalinism will be resolved theoretically or by some other pure and simple thought process. Alas, if the doom of Stalinism depended only on the thought processes and in general upon the theoretical wisdom of the critic, a bright future might well be guaranteed for it.

*April 1947*



## *Trotsky's Letter to Borodai*

### INTRODUCTION

**TROTSKY'S LETTER TO BORODAI**, which we publish here for the first time in English, is of special interest and importance. The document is undated, but it was evidently written during Trotsky's exile in Alma-Ata, toward the end of 1928, shortly before the author was banished from the Soviet Union to Turkey by the Stalinist régime. The importance of the letter lies in the fact that it is the first document known to us in which Trotsky debates with a Bolshevik anti-Stalinist the question of the class character of the Soviet state: Is it still or is it no longer a workers' state?

Borodai, whose subsequent fate is unknown to us, was a militant of the Democratic-Centralist group, or "Group of the Fifteen," as it was sometimes known, who was expelled from the Communist Party by the bureaucracy in 1927 along with all his fellow-thinkers, and sent into exile. The Democratic-Centralist group was founded as far back as 1920 by a number of left-wing communists in the Russian party, who sought to break through the rigid walls of the War-Communism régime and restore a democratic system in the party. The conditions of civil war were not conducive to their victory, and the one-sided emphasis they placed upon the democratic principle earned them the opposition of the most authoritative Bolshevik leaders, Lenin and Trotsky included.

In 1923, when Trotsky and his comrades launched the post-civil war struggle against a meanwhile swollen bureaucracy and for party democracy, they were joined by many of the original Democratic-Centralists, among them their outstanding leader, Timofey V. Sapronov, proletarian, trade-union leader, and old, pre-war Bolshevik of high standing. It was Sapronov who took the initiative in bringing together and presiding over the first joint meeting of the representatives of the Trotskyist (or Moscow, or 1923) Opposition and the Zinovievist (or Leningrad, or 1925) Opposition. This meeting and the ones that followed led to the

formation of the famous United Opposition Bloc, composed of the Trotskyists, the Zinovievists, the remnants of the old Workers' Opposition (led by Shlyapnikov and Medvedyev) and of the Democratic-Centralists (Sapronov and Vladimir M. Smirnov).

Shlyapnikov and other Workers' Opposition leaders soon capitulated to Stalin, as did virtually all the leaders of the Zinovievist Opposition in 1927-28. Most of the Democratic-Centralists, and outstandingly their leaders Sapronov and Smirnov, remained, in exile, incorruptible adversaries of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. There is no reason to believe that any of these militant revolutionists is still alive; they were murdered, gradually or outright, by the GPU.

In 1926, the former Democratic-Centralists broke away from the United Opposition Bloc because of the famous declaration in the middle of that year in which the Opposition pledged itself to refrain from factional activities—provided, of course, that a more-or-less normal internal régime was established in the party. The insurgents elaborated a platform of their own and set up a completely independent group. It became known as the "Group of Fifteen," from the number of signatories to the platform. They were: T. V. Sapronov, V. M. Smirnov, N. Savaryan, V. Emelyanov (Kalin), M. N. Mino, M. I. Minkov, T. Kharechko, V. P. Oborin, I. K. Dashkovsky, S. Schreiber, M. Smirnov, F. I. Filipenko, F. Duney, A. L. Slidovker, L. Tikhonov.

At the Fifteenth Party Congress in November-December, 1927, adherence to the views of the Democratic-Centralists was declared incompatible with membership in the Communist party; so was adherence to the views of the Trotskyist Opposition. All supporters of both groups were expelled and the most prominent leaders and militants first sent into exile and, years later, shot. In exile, a rapprochement between the two groups proved unrealizable and, except for individual shifts from one group to the other, they remained as far apart as they had ever been.

What was the evolution of the political ideas of Sapronov and Smirnov, there is now no way of judging, and there probably never will be until the day the Russian proletariat makes public the confiscated documents in the secret archives of the Stalinist police. But what the ideas of the Democratic-Centralists were in the days of the following letter by Trotsky, that is, around the year 1928, is implicit in the questions put by Borodai. In a word, they were: The proletariat has already lost power; the triumph of Stalin over the Opposition marks the triumph of the Thermidor, that is, the counter-revolution; the working class does not rule in Russia and Russia is no longer a workers' state; it is necessary to prepare a

new social revolution to restore the proletariat to state power.

These contentions Trotsky denied. It is the arguments he employed in refuting Borodai's views that are interesting and important, both for a knowledge of the situation in the Opposition in those days and, much more to the point, for a Marxian evaluation of the present situation in, and the class character of, the Russian state.

In the discussion and polemics over the class character of the Soviet or Russian state, Trotsky, *years later*, found himself obliged to alter his criterion radically from what it had previously been, not only for him but without exception for the entire revolutionary Marxian movement. "Found himself obliged," we say, because of his insistence on maintaining his characterization of Russia as a workers' state long after the objective basis for it had been destroyed by the Stalinist counter-revolution. Trotsky, in later years, argued that Russia is a workers' state because the ownership of the principal means of production is vested in the state, that is, because property is nationalized.

The radical alteration of the criterion lay in converting nationalized property from a *necessary* characteristic of a workers' state into an *adequate* characteristic. In other words, Trotsky began to argue that no matter how degenerated and anti-proletarian and even counter-revolutionary the political régime in the country, Russia nevertheless remained a (degenerated or "counter-revolutionary") workers' state so long as property (the means of production and exchange) remained nationalized or state property.

It should be borne in mind that Trotsky *did not* hold that the existence of nationalized property was in itself adequate for a consistent *development toward socialism*. That required, he rightly emphasized, a socialist proletariat in political power and the victorious revolution in the advanced countries of the West. And, he added, given the absence of the political power of the workers and the revolution in the West, the workers' state would continue to degenerate and eventually collapse entirely. But so long as nationalized property remained more or less intact, Russia still remained a workers' state.

To repeat: for Trotsky, nationalized property was transformed from a *necessary* characteristic into the *adequate* characteristic, and the *decisive* one, at that.

This theory not only cannot withstand a fundamental Marxist criticism, but conflicts with the theory, with the criterion, originally and for a long time put forward and defended by Trotsky himself. The letter to Borodai is one of the many available evidences of this fact.

In his letter, aimed at refuting the thesis that Russia is no longer a workers' state, Trotsky does not once so much as mention the existence of nationalized property! He employs a different criterion, entirely correct and fully decisive, namely, *Does the working class still have political power, in one sense or another, even if only in the sense that it is still capable of bringing a straying and dangerous bureaucracy under its control by means of reform measures?*

Why is this criterion correct and decisive? Because without *political* rule, the *proletariat* simply does not rule at all, and whatever you call the state or government under which it lives and works, it is not a workers' state. This is an iron law that derives from the fundamentally different *nature* of the class rule of the proletariat as contrasted with the class rule of *any private-property-owning class*. For example: Under a Bonapartist régime, be it of the early (Napoleon I or III) or the modern (Brüning or outright fascist) variety, the class rule of the bourgeoisie is maintained and fortified by virtue of two interrelated reasons:

(1) Although the bourgeoisie does not enjoy full or direct political power, it continues *to own*, as individuals and as a class, the means of production and exchange, and to draw profit and power from this ownership, and

(2) The régime which deprives the bourgeois class of full or direct political power uses that power to strengthen, to consolidate, to expand the social order of capitalism, to benefit the bourgeoisie in the most easily ascertainable tangible manner. Similarly, though not identically, under feudalism, where ownership of land was in private hands.

The proletariat, however, is not, never was and never will be a private-property-owning class. It comes to power, and lays the basis for an evolution to socialism, by nationalizing property and vesting its ownership in the hands of the state, making it state property as a preliminary to transforming it into *social* property. The state is not a class, but the complex of institutions of coercion (army, police, prisons, officials, etc.). Once the means of production and exchange have been made state property, the question, "Who is the ruling class" is resolved simply by answering the question: "In whose hands is the state?" It cannot be resolved by answering the question: "In whose hands is the property?" because no class then owns the property, at least not in the sense in which all preceding classes have owned property. To put it differently, the question must be posed in this way (because no other way makes sense): "In whose hands is the state which owns property?" Still more simply and directly: "Who rules politically?"

That is why a Marxist may argue, on the basis of empirical evidence, that Trotsky was right, or was wrong, in saying to Borodai that the workers in Russia (in 1928) still ruled politically, or could "regain full power, renovate the bureaucracy and put it under its control by *the road of reform of the party and the Soviets.*" But he must acknowledge that Trotsky's criterion, his methodological approach to the question of the class character of the Russian state, was incontestable. All that is necessary and correct is stated by Trotsky when he writes to Borodai:

The question thus comes down to the same thing: Is the proletarian kernel of the party, assisted by the working class, capable of triumphing over the autocracy of the party apparatus which is fusing with the state apparatus? Whoever replies in advance that it is *incapable*, thereby speaks not only of the necessity of a new party on a new foundation, but also of the necessity of a second and new proletarian revolution.

And nationalized property? It is, we repeat, not even referred to. Why not? Because, obviously, it is assumed as a *necessary* feature of a workers' state, its indispensable economic foundation, but not by itself *adequate* or *decisive* for a workers' state. That is right, and nothing Trotsky wrote years afterward can effectively refute his original and unassailable standpoint.

The formulation of the question in the letter to Borodai is not accidental. It is to be found in any number of Trotsky's writings of that period and prior to the self-revision of his view. In his letter to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, on July 12, 1928, he wrote:

. . . the socialist character of industry is determined and secured in a decisive measure by the rôle of the party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, and conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc. If we allow that this web is weakening, disintegrating and ripping, then it becomes absolutely self-evident that within a brief period nothing will remain of the socialist character of state industry, transport, etc. (*Third International After Lenin*, page 300.)

That is, the class character of the political power is not determined by industry (nationalized property), as he later contended, but conversely, "the socialist character of industry is *determined* and *secured in a decisive measure*" by the party, that is, in Russia, by the political power. From which it follows that if that political power has been *utterly* destroyed, as Trotsky later acknowledged and insisted on, the class character of "industry" (nationalized property, again) has been *fundamentally* altered.

Again, in his theses on Russia, on April 4, 1931, he returned to the same question, and from fundamentally the same standpoint:

If we proceed from the incontestable fact that the CPSU has ceased to be a party, are we not thereby forced to the conclusion that there is no dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, since *this is inconceivable without a ruling proletarian party?* (*Problems of the Development of the USSR*, page 34. My emphasis.—M.S.)

“This is inconceivable!” Why, then, is it a workers’ state notwithstanding? Because, wrote Trotsky, there still remain powerful and firmly-rooted elements of the party, traditions of the October, etc., *and* by virtue of these the bureaucracy can be submitted to the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard *by means of reform.*

The recognition of the present Soviet state as a workers’ state not only signifies that the bourgeoisie can conquer power in no other way than by an armed uprising but also that the proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it, of reviving the party and of mending the régime of the dictatorship—without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform. (*Ibid.*, page 36.)

It follows unambiguously and inexorably that to recognize—as the further degeneration of the Russian Revolution compelled us all, Trotsky included, to recognize—that the bureaucracy *cannot* be submitted to the proletariat, that the so-called Communist Party *cannot* be revived, that the régime *cannot* be reformed, that a new revolution *must* be organized—is to recognize that Russia is no longer a workers’ state.

Why Russia did not degenerate into a capitalist state; why it did not go the road of capitalist counter-revolution, as Trotsky predicted; and, in general, a fundamental treatment of the class character of the present Russian state—these are the subject of studies made by us elsewhere. It is not necessary to deal with it in this introduction. It is not necessary, either, to dwell further on Trotsky’s letter to Borodai, except to call the reader’s attention to his remarks on the “duality of power” in Russia, concerning which Trotsky also drew erroneous conclusions, based on a faulty analysis, to which we will some day return.

What is worth noting, however, is that those who insisted three and a half a year ago on discussing the “class character of the state” and nothing else, have maintained a most prudent silence since the day we began to develop our criticism of Trotsky’s fundamental position and to present our own analysis. They confine themselves to muttering simple and undigested ritualistic phrases, which have no meaning to them, which they cannot explain coherently and which they justify by one final and unanswerable appeal: “Well, Trotsky said so.” Fortunately, Trotsky also said that it is necessary for a Marxist to “learn to think.”

To the question, "Why is it a workers' state?" they answer, "Because the state owns the property." To the question, "But what is the class character of this state that owns the property?" they answer, "A workers' state"! In this hopelessly vicious circle, the workers are reduced from a living, propertyless, stateless, oppressed and exploited class to a . . . decorative adjective.

To the question, "What are the property relations at the basis of present Russian society?" they answer, "Nationalized property." That is like asking the question, "What are the marital relations under feudalism?" and being given the answer, "Male and female." That is, the answer says nothing. The whole question lies in this: "Just what are the relations of the classes or, if you wish, the social groups to the property? Just what are the production relations? Just what are the social relations?" But the answer, given with an increasingly mysterious look, remains, "Nationalized property."

"The Stalinist Bonapartist régime preserves the nationalized property in its own way," it is said. Correct! But why does that fact testify to the existence in Russia of a workers' state? The bourgeois Bonapartist or fascist state preserves private property not primarily for the bureaucracy (although for it, too), but above all for the very tangible benefit of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, whose economic and social position it protects, consolidates, expands. Does the Bonapartist régime of Stalin preserve nationalized property for the tangible benefit of the working class? If so, what benefit? Does it protect, consolidate, expand the economic and social (to say nothing of the political) position of the proletariat? If so, what sign (not signs, just one sign) is there of it? The present bourgeois Bonapartist state reduces the proletariat to slavery and enormously increases the wealth and power of the capitalists. Which class does the Stalinist Bonapartist régime reduce to slavery, and which class does it accord vast increases in wealth, social position and power, while it is at work preserving nationalized property "in its own way"?

It would be interesting to hear something in detail on these matters from some of our critics not apart from abuse (that is utopian) but, let us say, in addition to it. Our interest, we fear, is doomed to remain unsatisfied. To all that was said, Poe's raven intransigently answered with two words, "Never more!" To all we have said in the past two years about Russia, the post-Trotskyist raven has answered, when he did answer, with two words, "Nationalized property"! It is doubtful if he will some day become more articulate or logical.

*April, 1943*

**OUR DIFFERENCES WITH THE  
DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISTS**

Dear Comrade Borodai:

I have just received after almost a month's delay, your letter of October 12 from Tyumen. I am replying immediately by return mail, in view of the importance of the questions you put to me. Taking your point of departure from the standpoint of the Democratic-Centralist group to which you belong, you put seven questions and demand that the answers be "clear and concrete" and "not nebulous." An altogether legitimate wish. Only, our way of being concrete should be dialectical, that is, encompass the living dynamics of evolution and not substitute ready-made labels which, at first sight, seem very "clear" but are in reality false and devoid of content. Your way of putting the questions is purely formal: yes, yes—no, no. Your questions must first be put upon a Marxist basis in order that correct replies may be made.

1. After setting forth the character of the social composition of the party and its apparatus, you ask: "Has the party degenerated? That is the first question." You demand a "clear" and "concrete" reply: Yes, it has degenerated. However, I cannot answer that way, for at present our party, both socially and ideologically, is extremely *heterogeneous*. It includes *nuclei* that are entirely degenerated, others that are still healthy but amorphous, others that have hardly been affected by degeneration, etc. The régime of apparatus oppression, which reflects the pressure of other classes upon the proletariat, and the decline of the spirit of activity of the proletariat itself, renders very difficult a daily check upon the degree of degeneration of the various strata and nuclei of the party and of its apparatus. But this check can and will be achieved by activity, especially by our active intervention in the internal life of the party, by mobilizing tirelessly its living and viable elements. Naturally, such intervention is out of the question if the point of departure is that the party as a whole has degenerated, that the party is a corpse. With such an evaluation of the party, it is absurd to address oneself to it, and still more absurd to wait for it, or for this or that section of it, that is, primarily, for its *proletarian kernel*, to heed or to understand you. To conquer this kernel, however, is to conquer the party. This kernel does not consider itself—and quite rightly—either dead or degenerated. It is upon it, upon its tomorrow, that we base our political line. We will *patiently explain* our tasks to it, basing ourselves upon experience and facts. In every cell and at every worker's meeting, we will denounce as a falsehood the calumny of the apparatus which says that we are plotting to create a second party; we shall state that

a second party is being built up by the Ustrialov-people\* in the apparatus, hiding behind the Centrists; as for us, we want to cleanse Lenin's party of the Ustrialovist and semi-Ustrialovist elements; we want to do this hand in hand with the proletarian kernel which, aided by the active elements of the proletariat as a whole, can still become master of the party and save the Revolution from death, by means of a *profound proletarian reform in every field*.

2. "Is the degeneration of the apparatus and of the Soviet power a fact? That is the second question," you write.

Everything that has been said above applies equally to this question. There is no doubt that the degeneration of the Soviet apparatus is considerably more advanced than the same process in the party apparatus. Nevertheless, it is the party that decides. At present, this means: the party apparatus. The question thus comes down to the same thing: Is the proletarian kernel of the party, assisted by the working class, capable of triumphing over the autocracy of the party apparatus which is fusing with the state apparatus? Whoever replies in advance that it is *incapable*, thereby speaks not only of the necessity of a new party on a new foundation, but also of the necessity of a second and new proletarian revolution. It goes without saying that it can in no way be stated that such a perspective is out of the question under all circumstances. However, it is not a question of historical divination, but rather of not surrendering to the enemy but—on the contrary—of reviving and consolidating the October Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Has this road been tried to the very end? Not at all. At bottom, this methodical work of the Bolsheviki-Leninists to mobilize the proletarian kernel of the party in the new historical stage has only begun.

The arid reply—"Yes, it has degenerated"—that you would like to get to your question about the degeneration of the Soviet power, would contain no clarity in itself and would open up no perspective. What we have here is a developing, contradictory process, which can be concluded in any way or the other by virtue of the struggle of living forces. Our participation in this struggle will have no small importance in determining its outcome.

3. "Taking the present situation in the country and the party as a whole, do we still have a dictatorship of the working class? And who possesses the hegemony in the party and in the country? That is the third question," you ask further.

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\*N. Ustrialov, a bourgeois professor-expert employed at that time in a Soviet economic institution. Advocated support of the bureaucracy against the Opposition in the expectation that Right-wing elements of the former would lead to the restoration of capitalism.—*Trans.*

From the preceding replies it is clear that you put this question also inexactly, not dialectically but scholastically. It is precisely Bukharin who presented this question to us dozens of times in the form of a scholastic alternative: *Either* we have the Thermidor and then you, Opposition, should be defeatists and not partisans of defense, *or*, if you are really partisans of defense, then acknowledge that all the speeches about Thermidor are nothing but chatter. Here, comrade, you fall completely into the trap of Bukharinist scholastics. Along with him, you want to have "clear," that is, *completely finished* social facts. The developing, contradictory process appears "nebulous" to you. What do we have in reality? We have a strongly advanced process of duality of power in the country. Has power passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie? Obviously not. Has power slipped out of the hands of the proletariat? To a certain degree, to a considerable degree, but still far from decisively. This is what explains the monstrous predominance of the bureaucratic apparatus oscillating between the classes. But this state apparatus depends, through the medium of the party apparatus, upon the party, that is, upon its proletarian kernel, *on condition that the latter is active and has a correct orientation and leadership*. And that is where our task lies.

A state of duality of power is unstable, by its very essence. Sooner or later, it must go one way or the other. But as the situation is now, the bourgeoisie could seize power only by *the road of counter-revolutionary upheaval*. As for the proletariat, it can regain full power, renovate the bureaucracy and put it under its control by *the road of reform of the party and the Soviets*. These are the fundamental characteristics of the situation.

Your Kharkov colleagues, from what I am informed, have addressed themselves to the workers with an appeal based upon the false idea that the October Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat are already liquidated. This manifesto, false in essence, has done the greatest harm to the Opposition. Such declarations must be resolutely and implacably condemned. That is the bravado of adventurers and not the revolutionary spirit of Marxists.

4. Quoting from my Postscript on the July victory of the Right wing over the Center,\* you ask: "Are you thus putting entirely within quotation marks 'the Left course' and the 'shift' that you once proposed to support with all forces and all means? That is the fourth question."

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\*Reference to the July, 1928, Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at which the Right wing (Rykov) won an apparent, but actually a deceptive and short-lived victory over the Center (Stalin) on policy in agriculture.—*Trans.*

This is a downright untruth on your part. Never and nowhere have I spoken of a *Left course*. I spoke of a "shift" and a "Left-zig-zag," contrasting this conception to a consistent proletarian line. Never and nowhere have I proposed to support the alleged Left course of the Centrists, nor did I promise to support it. But I did propose and promise to support by all means every step that Centrism really took toward the Left, no matter if it was a half-measure, without ceasing for a single instant to criticize and unmask Centrism as the fundamental obstacle in the way of awakening the spirit of activity of the proletarian kernel of the party. My "Postscript" was precisely a document exposing the political capitulation of the Centrists to the Right wing during the July Plenum. But I did not and I do not hold that the history of the development of the party and particularly the history of the struggle of the Center against the Right wing came to an end at the July Plenum. We are right now witnesses of a new Centrist campaign against the Right-wingers. We must become independent participants in this campaign. Naturally we see right through all the hypocrisy and duplicity, the perfidious half-wayness of the apparatus in the Stalinist struggle against the Right-wingers. But behind this struggle we see profound class forces which seek to break a path for themselves through the party and its apparatus. The driving force of the Right wing is the new evolving proprietor who seeks a link with world capitalism; our Right-wingers are timid and mark time, for they do not yet dare to straddle this warhorse openly. The functionary of the party, the trade unions and other institutions, is the rampart of the Centrists: in spite of everything, he depends upon the working masses and seems to be obliged in recent times to take these masses into account more and more: hence, the "self-criticism" and "the struggle against the Right." *It is thus that the class struggle is refracted and distorted*, but nevertheless manifested in this struggle; by its pressure, it can transform the quarrel between the Centrists and the Right-wingers in the apparatus into a very important stage in the awakening and enlivening of the party and the working class. We would be pitiable imbeciles if we took the present campaign against the Right-wingers seriously. But we would, on the other hand, be pitiable scholiasts and sectarian wiseacres if we failed to understand that hundreds of thousands of workers, party members, do believe in it, if not 100 per cent then at least fifty or twenty-five per cent. They are not yet with us, to be sure. Do not forget that, do not become ensnared in sectarian trivia. Centrism holds on not only because of the oppression of the apparatus, but also because of the confidence or the half-confidence of a certain part of the worker-party members. These workers who support the Centrists

will enter the struggle against the Right much more readily than they did in the struggle against the Opposition, when they had to be dragged along with a rope around their neck. A serious and intelligent Oppositionist will say, in any workers' cell, in any workers' meeting: "We are summoned to fight against the Right wing—that's a wonderful thing. We have called on you to do this for a long time. And if you're thinking of fighting seriously against the Right wing, you can count upon us to the limit. We will be no strikebreakers. On the contrary, we'll be in the front lines. Only, let us really fight. The leaders of the Right wing must be named out loud, their Right-wing deeds must be enumerated, etc." In a word, the Oppositionist will push the proletarian kernel of the party forward like a Bolshevik, and he will not turn his back upon it on the pretext that the party has degenerated.

5. "Is it still possible to entertain illusions about the ability to defend the interests of the revolution and of the working class? That is the fifth question."

You put the fifth question just as inexactly as the first four. To entertain illusions about the Centrists means to sink into Centrism yourself. But to shut your eyes to the mass processes that drive the Centrists to the Left means to enclose yourself within a sectarian shell. As if it was a matter of whether Stalin and Molotov are capable of returning to the road of proletarian policy! In any case, they are incapable of doing it by themselves. They have proved it completely. But it is not a question of divining the future fate of the various members of the Stalinist staff. That doesn't interest us at all. In this field, all sorts of "surprises" are possible. Didn't the former leader of the Democratic-Centralists, Ossinsky, become an extreme Right-winger, for example? . . . The correct question is this: Are the tens and hundreds of thousands of workers, party members and members of the Communist Youth, who are at present actively, half-actively or passively supporting the Stalinists, capable of redressing themselves, of reawakening, of welding their ranks together "to defend the interests of the revolution and of the working class"? To this, I answer: Yes, this they are capable of doing. They will be capable of doing this tomorrow or the day after if we know how to approach them correctly; if we show them that we do not look upon them as corpses; if, like Bolsheviks, we support every step, every half-step, they take toward us; if, in addition, we not only do not entertain "illusions" about the Centrist leadership but expose them implacably, by dint of the daily experience of the struggle. At the moment, it must be done by the experience of the struggle against the Right wing.

6. After characterizing the Sixth Congress [of the Communist International] and describing certain phenomena inside the party,

you write: "Is not all this the Thermidor with the dry guillotine? That is the sixth question."

This question has been answered concretely enough above. Once more, do not believe that Bukharinist scholastics, turned upside down, is Marxism.

7. "Do you personally," you ask me, "intend to continue in the future to call the comrades belonging to the Group of Fifteen by the splendid epithet of 'honest revolutionists,' and at the same time to separate yourself from them? Is it not time to terminate the petty quarrel? Is it not time to ponder the consolidation of the forces of the Bolshevik guard? That is the seventh and last question."

Unfortunately, this question is not put quite correctly either. It is not I who separated myself from the Democratic-Centralists, but it is this grouping that separated itself from the Opposition as a whole to which it belonged. It is on this ground that a subsequent split took place in the Democratic-Centralist group itself. That is the past. Let us take the very latest phase, when the most serious exchange of opinions took place among the exiled Opposition, resulting in the elaboration of a whole series of responsible documents that received the support of 99 per cent of the Opposition. Here, too, the representatives of the Democratic-Centralists, without contributing anything essential to this work, once more separated themselves from us, by showing themselves to be more papist than the Pope, that is, than Safarov.\* After all this, you ask me if I intend to continue in the future to "separate" myself from the Democratic-Centralists! No, you approach this question from the wrong end. You represent things as if, in the past, the Zinovievs, the Kamenevs and the Pyatakovs, hindered the unification. You are mistaken on this score, too. One might conclude from your remarks that we, the 1923 Opposition, were for the unification with the Zinovievists, and the Democratic-Centralist group was against. On the contrary. We were much more cautious in this question and we were much more insistent in the matter of guarantees. The initiative for the unification came from the Democratic-Centralists.

The first conferences with the Zinovievists took place under the chairmanship of Comrade Sapronov.\*\* I do not say this as

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\*Extreme Left-wing leader of the Zinovievist section of the Opposition, and one of the last of the "Leningraders" to capitulate. Later murdered in the Moscow Trials frame-up.—*Trans.*

\*\*Leader of the Democratic Centralists, who initiated the Opposition bloc in 1926, composed of the 1923 Opposition (Trotsky), the Leningrad Opposition (Zinoviev), the Workers' Opposition (Shlyapnikov) and the Democratic Centralists.—*Trans.*

a reproach at all, for the bloc was necessary and a step forward. But "our yesterdays must not be distorted." After the Democratic-Centralist group separated itself from the Opposition, Zinoviev was always for a new unification with it; he raised the question dozens of times. As for myself, I spoke up against it. What were my reasons? I said: We need the unification, but a lasting and serious unification. If, however, the Democratic-Centralist group split away from us at the first clash, we ought not rush into new corridor-fusions, but leave it to experience to check the policies and either deepen the split or prepare the conditions for a genuine, serious, durable unification. I hold that the experience of 1927-28 ought to have shown how absurd were the suspicions and insinuations of the Democratic-Centralist leaders toward the 1923 Opposition. I counted above all on the principled documents we addressed to the Sixth Congress facilitating the unification of our ranks. That is what did happen in the case of a number of comrades of the Democratic-Centralists. But the recognized leaders of your group did everything in their power not only to deepen and sharpen the differences of opinion but also to poison relations completely. For my own part, I take the writings of V. Smirnov calmly enough. But in recent times I have received dozens of letters from comrades who are indignant to the highest degree over the character of these writings, which sound as if they were specially calculated to prevent a coming-together and to maintain at all costs a separate chapel with a pastor of its own.

But apart from the whole past history of who separated from whom, of how it was done, of who honestly wants unity in our ranks and who seeks to keep a parish of his own, there still remains the whole question of the *basis in ideas* of this unification.

On this score, Comrade Rafael wrote me on September 28:

"Our friends of the Group of Fifteen have begun to conduct a furious campaign especially against you, and there is a touching harmony between the editorial in *Bolshevik*,\* No. 16, and Vladimir Mikhailovich Smirnov and other comrades of the Group of Fifteen. The fundamental error of these comrades is the fact that they attribute too great value to purely formal decisions and combinations in the upper spheres, particularly to the decisions of the July Plenum. They do not see the forest for the trees. Naturally, these decisions are, during a certain phase of development, the reflection of a certain relationship of forces. But in any case, they cannot be looked upon as determining the outcome of the struggle that continues and will continue for a long time. Not a single one of the problems that provoked the crisis has been resolved; the contra-

dictions have accentuated. Even the official editorial in *Pravda*, on September 18, had to acknowledge this. In spite of the 'steel hammer' that drives an 'aspen-wedge' into the Opposition every day (how many times already), the Opposition *lives* and has the will to live; it has cadres tempered in battle, and what cadres! To draw, at such a moment, conclusions like those of the Group of Fifteen, is false to the bottom and exceptionally harmful. These conclusions create a demoralizing state of mind, instead of organizing the working class and the proletarian kernel of the party. The position of the Fifteen cannot but be passive, for if the working class and its vanguard have already surrendered all their positions and conquests without a struggle, then on whom and on what can these comrades count? You do not organize the masses to revive a 'corpse,' and as to a *new struggle*, given the situation of the working class as they picture it to themselves, the time it will take is much too long and and this will lead inevitably to the position of Shlyapnikov." I think Comrade Rafael is perfectly right in characterizing the situation the way he does.

You write that the proletariat does not like nebulous half-measures and diplomatic evasions. That is right. And that's the reason why you must finally cast up a balance. If the party is a corpse, a new party must be built on a new spot, and the working class must be told about it openly. If Thermidor is completed, and if the dictatorship of the proletariat is liquidated, the banner of the second proletarian revolution must be unfurled. That is how we would act if the road of reform, for which we stand, proved hopeless. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Democratic-Centralists are up to their ears in nebulous half-measures and diplomatic evasions. They criticize our road of reform in a very "Left" manner—a road which, I hope, we have shown by deeds is not at all the road of Stalinist legality; but they do not show the working masses any other road. They content themselves with sectarian mutterings against us, and count meanwhile on spontaneous movements. Should this line be reinforced, it would not only destroy your whole group, which contains not a few good and devoted revolutionists, but like all sectarianism and adventurism, it would render the best service to the Right-Centrist tendencies, that is, in the long run, to bourgeois restoration. That is why, dear comrade, before uniting—and I am for unification with all my heart—it is necessary to establish the ideological delimitations, based upon a clear and principled line. It is a good old Bolshevik rule.

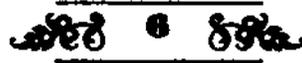
With communist greetings,

L. TROTSKY.



## NOTES ON RUSSIA IN THE WAR





## *The Counter-Revolutionary Revolution*

**GENERAL PRINCE ALEXANDER VASSILIEVICH SUVOROV** was a military figure of great renown who served throughout Europe under the Empress Catherine and, after her, under the Emperor Paul, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He carried the banner of Czarist reaction to the Danube and threatened the power of the Turks. He fought the Napoleonic armies as far West and South as Italy, and learned Milanese remember that the day Suvorov's troops marched into their city marked the death of the Cisalpine Republic.

At the head of a greatly superior army of Russians and Cossacks, he defeated the Poles under Poniatowski and Thaddeus Kosciuszko in 1792, and opened the way for the second partition of Poland next year between Catherine and Frederick William of Prussia. In 1794, when Poland rose in insurrection under the banner of Kosciuszko, who had entered Cracow, proclaimed national independence, and then forced the besieging troops of the Prussian monarch to withdraw, Catherine again sent Suvorov into the field. He emerged triumphant with the capture of Warsaw, which inaugurated the third partition of Poland the following year and its effectual extinction as a nation.

Czarist Russia was the principal pillar of European reaction, the staunchest support of all the black forces that sought to stem the tide of revolutionary Jacobinism set in motion all over the continent by the Great French Revolution. Prince Suvorov was one of the ablest and most odious representatives of this reaction. He even came to be its symbol. The French counter-revolution in 1799 marched through Brittany and Normandy with the royalists shouting: "Long live Suvorov! Down with the Republic!" It was a name with a record and a meaning that it retains to the present day.

These recollections are evoked by the reports that the Order of Suvorov has now been established in Stalinist Russia, sometimes called, out of pure nostalgia (there is no other reason), the "workers' state." The Order of Suvorov, First Class, "may be awarded only to

a commander of an army on the front, his chief of staff or departmental heads who have annihilated numerically superior enemy forces or accomplished break-throughs on major fronts. The Second Class of the Order is given to corps or divisional commanders and the Third Class to lower officers." There is now also an Order of Kutuzov, contemporary of Suvorov, and no less devoted a servant of Czarist despotism. Both of them and others of their kind adorn the breasts of any number of Stalin's marshals and generals.

It is a sign of the times in Russia, and not the first one, and far from the most important one. The old Red Army, which triumphed over the forces of all the imperialist powers sent against it, is gone, and gone of course is the socialist democratism, the internationalism, and the revolutionary spirit with which it was imbued from the start. Only people who do not think twice about how they are insulting the memory of the great founder of that army can refer to the Bonapartist levies that replaced it as "Trotsky's Red Army."

All the old grades and ranks which the Bolshevik Revolution abolished have been restored and new ones added. The comradely relationship between commandant and rank-and-filer has been replaced by the hierarchical relationship between an officer corps and a disfranchised serf-in-uniform that prevails in all imperialist armies. Special guards' brigades and divisions have been created in direct imitation, not of the Red Guards of the revolution, but of the Prætorian Guards regiments set up by Czar Peter the Great. Officers are now prohibited from mingling with the ranks or maintaining an atmosphere of equality with them. Bristling with vulgar decorations, officers from the rank of platoon commander upward are now provided with flunkies, each one has an "orderly" who "takes his meals to his officer, makes tea for him and polishes his boots." A system of exclusive officers' clubs has been set up, thus formally acknowledging what was yesterday a thinly-disguised reality. Trotsky's Red Army knew no officers—the very name was done away with—and no permanent ranks, that is, no officers' corps.

The canonization of Suvorov in the Stalinist army is not altogether inappropriate. Suvorov and his army were the banner-bearers of the counter-revolution of their time. If Stalin harks back to the reaction of yesterday, it is because he represents the reaction of today. It is possible that under the name of Suvorov, the Stalinist army will win its battles; the proletariat will not. It is a class that differs from *all* others in history above all in the fact that it can conquer and rule only in its own name, and thereby put an end to all rule. In this statement there is not an ounce of sentimentality or abstract idealism; it is a profound and profoundly important social truth.

It is now possible to see much more clearly and fully what we saw incompletely and unclearly at the beginning of the war when we first rejected the slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." The analysis of the problem of Stalinist Russia made by Trotsky in his last year, an analysis in irreconcilable conflict with one he had made originally, collapsed under the test of events. His followers, who are less interested in critical Marxian analysis and re-analysis than in iconology, deem it sufficient to say their beads over and over again. But Marxism is not and never was a fully completed dogma, but a developing science.

Trotsky assigned to Stalinism, to the Stalinist bureaucracy, the rôle of undermining the economic foundations of the workers' state. By gradually de-nationalizing the means of production and exchange, loosening the monopoly of foreign trade, Stalinism would pave the way for the restoration of private property and capitalism. Indeed, it would not even survive this restoration, for that social act would be carried out by the forces of the Right Wing toward which the Stalinist Center leaned and repeatedly capitulated, and by which it would be crushed.

Nothing of the sort occurred. It was the Right Wing that was crushed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, and not the other way around. State property was not de-nationalized but, contrariwise, was more securely concentrated in the hands of the state and vastly expanded.

A year before World War II broke out, Trotsky found it possible to assert that the Right Wing, which the old analysis had described as the wing of capitalist restoration, represented a *Left* danger to the bureaucracy. The assertion was altogether abrupt, never motivated, not prepared by anything Trotsky had written previously, and to this day remains unexplained by the bead-sayers. It is nevertheless an assertion of first-rate significance.

As late as 1938, that is, in the same year, Trotsky not only saw an important fascist wing in the Stalinist bureaucracy (i.e., a *capitalist* wing) but declared that the political pendulum has swung more strongly "to the side of the Right, the bourgeois wing of the bureaucracy and its allies throughout the land. From them, i.e., from the Right, we can expect ever more determined attempts in the next period to revise the socialist character of the USSR and bring it closer in pattern to 'Western civilization' in its fascist form." If by the "socialist character of the USSR" Trotsky was referring primarily to state-owned property—and he was—the last five years have not revealed a single sign of attempts by the bureaucracy or any important section to "revise" it, much less "ever more determined attempts," in the sense of restoring private property.

Again, it is the contrary that has happened. One can scrutinize

most closely the serious political press, and even the often interesting summaries of the Russian press in the periodicals of the bead-sayers, but not a solitary concrete reference will be found to even the beginnings of a trend in the bureaucracy toward de-statification of property, toward the restoration of private property. A prediction which continues to be so completely refuted by events should be discarded, and if the analysis on which it was based is not discarded outright, it at least demands critical reëxamination. That is what we have sought to do in these pages on several occasions, without encountering any comment from the devout followers. They continue to say their beads.

Upon the invasion of Poland, the Baltic countries and Finland, and the division of imperialist booty between Hitler and Stalin, we watched closely for the possibility, even the likelihood, that Stalin would maintain private property in the occupied territories. That attitude was based not only on the experience of the Spanish Civil War, in which the Stalinists were the most ardent defenders of private property, but on the old analysis, according to which the social rôle of the bureaucracy was to abolish, or to prepare the abolition, of nationalized property. We were profoundly wrong. After a slight delay, the bureaucracy established the same property relations in the occupied countries as in Russia itself. On this point, Trotsky was unmistakably right. But his statement that the bureaucracy would most probably nationalize property in the occupied territories only deepened the contradictions in his fundamental theory of Stalinist Russia as a workers' state.

In the course of the dispute which led to the split in the Trotskyist International, Trotsky developed his point of view on the "degenerated workers' state" to the stage of a "counter-revolutionary workers' state." We know, he said, of the existence of "two completely counter-revolutionary workers' internationals. These critics have apparently forgotten this 'category.' The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the United States and other countries support completely the counter-revolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie. This does not prevent us from labeling them trade unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state?"

But the difference, even from the standpoint of Trotsky's fundamental theory, or rather precisely from that standpoint, is irreconcilable. We are warranted in placing the label "counter-revolutionary" over the reformist organizations in the capitalist countries not because they are *for socialism* by "bureaucratic methods," but just because they are *against the socialist revolution*,

and have given ample evidence of their opposition to it with rifle and machine gun in hand. They are counter-revolutionary because, at bottom, they base themselves upon and defend the capitalist social order and the capitalist property relations on which it stands.

That the Stalinist bureaucracy (and the state it completely dominates) is counter-revolutionary, needs no elaborate demonstration. That is, it opposes the proletarian socialist revolution, whose triumph would mean the end of Stalinism and its power. But its similarity with the bourgeois labor organizations in the capitalist countries goes no further. The Stalinist state is not only not a defender of bourgeois property and not based upon it, but has destroyed it with all the thoroughness at its command inside of Russia, and, as we now see, even outside of Russia, *provided it had the power to do so*. Its work in the occupied countries shows this sufficiently.

Just what was the nature and significance of this work? The Stalinist state, represented physically by its armed forces (the Russian army and the GPU) occupied a number of capitalist countries, and proceeded to expropriate the bourgeois proprietors, nationalize property under the control of the Stalinists, thus abolishing capitalist property and capitalist property relations. The transformation it effected in the occupied countries is not less than a social revolution. To say that the masses of workers and peasants effected this social change is an exaggeration, to say the least. It was carried out, and in the most thorough manner, by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Trotsky does not characterize the transformation any differently. He speaks of the Stalinist expropriations of the bourgeoisie as "social revolutionary measures, carried out via bureaucratic military means"; and elsewhere remarks: "This measure, revolutionary in character—the expropriation of the expropriators—is in this case achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion."

What is the *class character* of this social revolution? By Trotsky's criterion, it must be characterized as a *proletarian, socialist revolution*, whether carried out "bureaucratically" or "militarily" or not.

We are able without difficulty to grasp the concept (it is more than that; it is a reality too often repeated in our time) of a counter-revolutionary labor organization, which fights to maintain capitalist society and fights against the inauguration of a socialist society. The concept of a counter-revolutionary workers' state which accomplishes a socialist revolution; which establishes thereby a workers' state without the working class and against the working class (Stalin converts the workers, wrote Trotsky, "into his own semi-slaves"); which makes the socialist revolution, establishes a workers' state

and "degenerates" it all at the same time—there is a concept which, as Trotsky wrote, "did not disturb *our* dialectic," but which certainly destroys a number of fundamental teachings of Marxism, dialectical materialism included.

It would now be necessary to teach that there are not only counter-revolutionary *opponents* of the socialist revolution, but also counter-revolutionary *proponents* of the socialist (bureaucratic, to be sure, but from a class point of view, socialist) revolution. It would be necessary to modify the theory that the overthrow of capitalism and the laying of the foundations of socialism can be the work only of the proletariat, by adding that the same task can be accomplished, "via bureaucratic military means," without the proletariat and against it. The Marxian dialectic has often been abused in the revolutionary movement, as is known. But it has never been invoked in justification of a more fantastic theory than the one to which Trotsky was driven in presenting us with the counter-revolutionary socialist revolutionists.

The Stalinist bureaucracy did indeed carry through a social revolution in the occupied countries. A social revolution means a change in class rule. What class was put into power in the Baltic countries? The proletariat? If this is so, someone should bring it the good tidings to console it for the bitter memories of totalitarian enslavement it enjoyed while it "ruled" under Stalin. The new class that was really brought to power by the Russian army, the GPU, and its Bonapartist plebiscite, was the Russian bureaucracy, and the social régime it established, against capitalism but not less oppressive and exploitive of the masses than the latter, is best characterized as bureaucratic collectivism. Such a régime cannot exist without nationalized, or more accurately, state property. Far from undermining it or weakening it, much less replacing it with private property, the new bureaucracy bases itself upon it, draws its sustenance and power from it, and employs it as the economic basis indispensable to the savage exploitation of the masses over whom it rules.

The bead-sayers, when they are forced to deal with the basic question at all, prefer to do so indirectly and on a sufficiently vulgar plane.

What is a vulgar plane? Let us take an example.

The ex-socialist Max Eastman writes an article in *Readers' Digest* containing emphatic assurances of his desire for a Russian victory and for American collaboration with Stalin. But, as he suggests by the title of his article, "To Collaborate Successfully—We Must Face the Facts About Russia." Eastman is now a one hundred per cent imperialist patriot, but also an anti-Stalinist. We have

nothing in common with his approach to the problem, with the purposes of his article, or with his political conclusions. That is not the point, however. The point is that on the whole the *facts* he gives about the régime and the vast concentration camp into which it has converted Russia, are commonplaces to the Marxist press and to informed people in general. The Stalin apologist, Professor Max Lerner, the new political writer of *PM*, sets out to answer Eastman, and he has one central refutation of the facts marshalled by the latter: "As I read Eastman on Russian poverty and the subjection of the people, I kept thinking: if these people are slaves, why do slaves fight so well?" (*PM*, July 1.)

There it is, the whole crushing reply, just as it was written by the learned Professor Lerner, who never heard in all of history, ancient or contemporary, of nations of slaves fighting well, at least for a certain time.

Germany is not a nation of free men but of slaves. What would Professor Lerner say about the state of its morale? Has the state of the morale of the Japanese army, which so often fights till the last soldier is dead, come to the attention of the Professor? Or doesn't he find time to read the public press?

"Those who deny that the Soviet Union is a workers' state," says the resolution adopted by the last convention of the Trotskyists, "cannot explain the unprecedented morale of the Soviet workers and peasants." The same pathetic thought was repeated at a public meeting by the distinguished Marxian scholar who leads the party.

If this has become the criterion, or at least important proof, of the proletarian character of the Russian state—or, lest we forget, of its "counter-revolutionary proletarian" character—then objectivity demands that Germany be included in the category of workers' states of one kind or another, for there has thus far been no serious sign of a break in its "unprecedented morale." Nor would it be possible to exclude Japan, and one or two other countries.

The "deniers" may not be able to explain the "unprecedented morale." How do the "believers" explain it? We read: "Above all, the system of nationalized property provided the basis for the unprecedented morale of the Soviet workers and peasants. The Soviet masses have something to fight for. They fight for their factories, their land, their collective economy."

Such good tidings should not be kept from the people either. The "Soviet" masses should be informed that the factories, the land, the economy in general, is theirs, belongs to them. On second thought, it is not at all necessary for the latter-day Trotskyists to bring the Russian people this news. The Stalinists have been feeding this treacherous falsehood to the masses for years. Trotsky,

however, repeatedly denounced it as a falsehood. In 1936, for example, he wrote:

The new constitution—wholly founded as we shall see, upon an identification of the bureaucracy with the state, and the state with the people—says: “. . . the state property—that is, the possessions of the whole people.” *This identification is the fundamental sophism of the official doctrine. (The Revolution Betrayed, page 236. Our emphasis.)*

More of the same may be found in the chapter of Trotsky's work devoted to social relations in Russia. But the quotation above will suffice to emphasize that the popular explanation of the “unprecedented morale” of the Russians is based directly upon what Trotsky rightly calls the “fundamental sophism” of the bureaucratic counter-revolution.

In the last issue of their magazine, the Trotskyists strike a highly virtuous pose on the question of Russian morale. They compare their own writings and those of Souvarine to show that the predictions of the latter on the subject were wrong while their own were right. But that is not the only thing they “foresaw” and “forecast.” In their voluminous and violently contradictory writings on the subject can be found all sorts of mutually-exclusive predictions, precisely on the question of Russian morale in wartime. They have a wide choice to draw upon. For example, in the May, 1941, issue of the *Fourth International*, John G. Wright, their specialist on Russian questions, quotes with evident approval from an article by Freda Utley as follows:

This method of [repressive] government can be successful only where there is no threat from abroad. A dictator who lacks popular support dare not risk a war in which weapons would be placed in the hands of the subjects who might be more anxious to use them against him than against the foreign enemy.

Miss Utley was expressing no more than the thoughts of Souvarine against which the June, 1943, issue of *Fourth International* fumes with such hypocritical piety and pretensions of superiority. In 1941, Wright did not find himself called upon to fume, but only to quote with approval. On the next page (125) of the same issue, Wright, commenting on another article in the bourgeois press, summarizes the situation as follows:

*The factor of morale is worst of all.* The workers and peasants are no better than serfs. The cost of living is going up and wages down. Youth are now deprived of education. According to the Soviet press itself, the new decrees cut short the studies of some 600,000 students. Pupils in secondary schools have to pay 200 rubles per year, in universities and technical schools 400 rubles. This rule was applied even to pupils and students

in their last year. In some provincial universities and technical colleges, eighty per cent were obliged to quit and seek employment. Boys of fourteen to seventeen were conscripted for labor. After one year's training they are obliged to work for four years anywhere they are sent. *In short, Russia is a volcano ready for revolt.* (My emphasis—M.S.)

Before venturing upon another spree of pompous self-adulation, the editor of the *Fourth International* could do worse than read a file of his own periodical. It will help tighten a loose jaw.

The appraisal of morale in wartime is an exceedingly difficult and complicated matter. This is especially true in the totalitarian countries, where truth is an outlaw, statistics a court tool, and super-censorship is king. The conventional explanation says too little and too much at the same time. Yet it is possible to make an objective appraisal which approximates the truth as closely as that can now be done.

Wide sections of the Russian people entertain an active hatred of their régime. The rest are divided between those who tolerate it in one way or another, and those who are fanatically enthusiastic in support of it, either out of self-interest or out of persistent indoctrination (above all, this holds true of the youth). But the invader holds out no hope whatsoever for relief from tyranny. The masses are ready to resist him with whatever weapons are at their disposal, as is the case in so many other countries.

The Russian people have almost always fought well against a foreign invader, even when the odds against them were much greater than they are now. They are fighting better and with more conviction against the Germans now than they did during the adventure against Finland, when indifference and even cynicism was the rule. The feeling of attachment to the soil is very strong throughout Russia, even among the working class, which is not many years removed from the land. They do not want their country overrun and ruled by a foreign oppressor. And this is no ordinary foreigner, but a fascist. For long years, from Lenin's day through Stalin's, the Russian people have learned to feel a horror and hatred of fascism. The record of fascism's conquests in Europe has only deepened this feeling. Their feelings in this matter are more than justified, and correspond with the interests and ideals of the international proletariat. So, also, do the feelings of those British workers who support the war against Germany because they fear a victory of fascism which would destroy their national independence and above all their democratic rights and working class institutions. The British worker has postponed, so to speak, his settlement of accounts with his own rulers until he has removed the threat of the Nazi knife at his throat. So has the Russian worker.

The task of the revolutionary Marxists can be fulfilled only by taking these progressive sentiments into full account, while continuing their "patient enlightenment" of the masses as to the imperialist and reactionary nature of the war itself, the harmfulness of political support of the war and the war régimes, the need of breaking with imperialism and the ruling classes, the urgency of an independent, internationalist road for the proletariat of all countries.

Are the Russian masses fighting "in defense of nationalized property"? Of course they are! The British workers are fighting willy-nilly in defense of capitalist property. The Russian people have shown no sign of wanting the restoration of capitalism, with its bankers and industrial monopolists. That is all to the good, for otherwise they would be the poor dupes of world reaction. The road to freedom for Russia does not lead backward but forward.

*Right now*, the "defense of nationalized property" means the defense of the economic foundations of bureaucratic totalitarianism and imperialist expansion—that is the point. The bureaucracy is perfectly well aware of this fact, and that is why it keeps its economic base intact. That is why it fights for it with such tenacity, with such indifference as to what alliance it makes with what capitalist-imperialist powers at the expense of the working class, with such cruel disregard for the legions of cannon-fodder it hurls wastefully into the breach against the enemy. That is why it fights to extend its base—and thereby its social rule—to whatever other country, from Sinkiang to Poland, from Finland to Turkey, that it has the power to take from its enemy and to be granted as its share of imperialist booty by its allies.

The morale of the Russians is high. Meanwhile, however, they are paying heavily with their life's blood for the rule of the bureaucracy and for the alliance with the capitalist imperialisms that were imposed upon them. The older generation, which knows something about the great proletarian revolution, is too exhausted, on the whole, to carry out the task of liberation from the new despotism. The younger generation, again, on the whole, is for the time being fanaticized and blinded by the doctrines of the totalitarian régime. But it will learn, or re-learn. The war will teach it, and so will the social upheavals that the war accelerates.

*July 1943*



## *The Program of Stalinist Imperialism*

AS THE WAR GOES FROM ONE STAGE TO ANOTHER, the rôle of Russia seems to become more enigmatic. Neither the friendly press nor the unfriendly shows a clear understanding of Stalinist policy. More than one political writer freely admits his perplexity over the matter in its fundamental aspect.

"It all comes down to an issue of whether Stalin is out to make the strongest Russia he can make on national lines or whether Moscow still nurses dreams of international communism." This is the way the plainly baffled foreign editor of the *New York Times* states the problem, without being able, for all his wisdom and authoritative connections, to supply the answer. The formation of a London counterpart of the Moscow "Free German National Committee," with identical objectives, leads a London correspondent to the gloomy but not very enlightening comment, "What those objectives are is anybody's guess." Raymond Clapper acknowledges that "We do not know what Mr. Stalin wants to do about Germany." Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick writes that "Washington is puzzled" by the publication of the Moscow Committee's manifesto, and "nobody in our government pretends to know" what it means. Even such an old hand at European politics as Friedrich Stampfer, the former editor of the social-democratic Berlin *Vorwärts*, finds that "Russia's real intentions toward Germany are still very obscure." These are only sample comments; they all read alike.

Whatever else is not known or understood, this much is: there is a breach between Russia and her Anglo-American allies, and as the war progresses the breach widens in spite of the daily prognostications of an impending common understanding.

First and foremost there is the question of the "second front." Especially since the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, which marked the turning point for the war in Russia, Moscow has persistently and with increasing bluntness demanded that the United States and England open up a large-scale land front in Western

Europe. No explanation for the delay in opening this front, good or poor, valid or invalid, has met with the slightest sympathy from the Kremlin. Rather, it has set in motion an active pressure movement of all its supporters in the Allied countries to back its demand.

Secondly, there is the question of the territories "acquired" by Russia between the birth and death of the Hitler-Stalin pact. The Kremlin not only demands that its Western allies acknowledge its sovereignty over these territories, but makes it as plain as words can do that it is in no way disposed to negotiate or even discuss the matter on any grounds but its own.

Thirdly, there is the question of the post-war organization of Europe. The differences here boil down to this: Russia wants a continent cut into as many more or less weak parts as possible, all friendly to her, none under exclusive British or American domination. The United States, to the extent that its policy has been worked out—and it is not definitive, given the unsettled political disputes of the ruling class, its uncertainty about the future action of the European masses, and uncertainty about British policy, on the one side, and Russian on the other—wants the destruction of Germany as a potential economic and military rival, the establishment of "order" all over Europe, and the financial-economic, if not the physical, domination of the continent by itself, with England as junior partner. England's policy is identical save in one most important respect: she proposes to substitute herself as master of Europe in place of the American claimant, and hopes to achieve this aim by balancing off one power or group of powers on the continent against another, including the balancing off of Russia and the U.S.A.

Flowing from these differences or connected with them is a series of others which make up Russia's complaints and grievances.

The Polish and Yugoslav governments in exile are execrated by the Kremlin but supported by Washington and London. Russia is at war with Finland but her allies are not. Franco's "Blue Division" is at war with Russia, but Washington and London maintain friendly relations with Madrid. Washington, in particular, has flirted openly with all sorts of European reactionary, clerical and semi-fascist elements—like Otto Habsburg, Tibor Eckhardt of Hungary, and others—who represent anti-Russian encirclement to the Kremlin and are decidedly unacceptable to it. Toward de Gaulle, on the other hand, Moscow has displayed a warmth that contrasts with her allies' coolness and even hostility. There are other points of friction and conflict, but these will suffice.

During the period when the war was going badly for Russia,

the complaints of the Kremlin were subdued or retired to the obscure background, and the differences presented in the most moderated form, if at all. Only the call for a second front was heard, and far more as an anguished appeal than as a truculent demand.

Now, however, the accent and tone are different. The moment of greatest peril from the Reichswehr seems to have passed for Russia. She has displayed recuperative powers that no one foresaw or expected. Hitler suffered a terrible defeat at Stalingrad and has certainly had nothing to boast about in Russia since. The Russian armies keep pressing him backward on one front after another, regardless of cost.

Russia's "moral" position, so to speak, or more accurately, her military and political position, is stronger by far than it ever was. "Backward" Russia, after losing millions of her population, tens of thousands of square miles of her territory and no one knows how many millions of her soldiers, is not only continuing her fight upon the longest front in the war, but is engaging the great bulk of the Axis military forces, something around two hundred divisions, and carrying the fight to them at a mounting pitch of intensity. In contrast, her "advanced" Anglo-American allies make the most sensational parade of the fact that they have managed, after weeks or even months of fighting, to throw back the three or four Axis divisions they engaged in Africa, the four or five in Sicily, or the five or six in Italy. The world-wide total casualties of the United States since it entered the war hardly compare with what Russia loses in a few weeks.

These comparisons are not unnoticed in Russia. Now that her position is so greatly improved, and her dependence upon her allies not so acute, the appeal for a second front is presented as a brusque demand, not just a front anywhere, but precisely at the point nominated by the Kremlin. Looming behind the demand is the implied threat: *If you do not open such a front, be warned and watch out!*

Watch out for what? That is precisely what Stalin does not tell his allies in the great war for freedom and democracy. Or rather, what he does tell them, directly or indirectly, is so ambiguous, or so incomplete, or so seemingly contradictory, as to drive them frantic with conjecture and bafflement. No calm, and certainly no clarity, prevails nowadays when Russian aims and policy are discussed in the chancelleries of Washington, London, the various governments in exile and, for that matter, of the Axis countries. It is alarm that prevails, and it is heightened by every Russian advance.

Among the various dissociated liberals, the alarm has reached the point of hysteria characteristic of this gender in every crisis.

If only the three great statesmen (sometimes the fourth great statesman, Chiang Kai-shek, is included) would sit down in a room and talk over their differences "frankly and sincerely," the whole problem (and they are now quite sure there *IS* a problem, whatever it may be) could be solved, or pretty nearly. At least, such a meeting of minds might reveal just what the devil the problem is.

But it is just such a meeting with Stalin that Roosevelt and Churchill have sought to arrange, up to now without spectacular success. Churchill's first meeting with Stalin in Moscow was a notorious fiasco. Since then, Stalin has been not too politely deaf to the urgent invitations sent him; he has as much said:

People who are only fighting three or four German divisions and a handful of Japanese regiments at the periphery of the world may have plenty of time for conferences. We, however, are not in such a fortunate position. Open the western front, take a few dozen Axis divisions off our backs, and we will have more time for talking. As for discussing the fate of the Baltic countries, for that we have no time at all, now or later.

It is therefore quite certain that the forthcoming meeting of the second-rank minds (not the great statesmen themselves, but only their foreign secretaries) will produce nothing worth serious mention so far as solving the fundamental question of Anglo-American-Russian relations is concerned. They may some day get near to a patched-up solution, but much time must yet elapse, many events take place, and many, many more meetings be held before that is accomplished.

Meanwhile, what is to be watched out for? There is the enigma! Let us try to make it less enigmatic.

The ruling class in Russia is the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is composed of the leaders of all economic and political (including military) life in the country. They are organized, led and controlled by the political machine of the bureaucracy, the so-called Communist Party. This bureaucracy came to power in one of the bloodiest counter-revolutions in history. To achieve its unchecked totalitarian mastery of the country, it not only wiped out all the great achievements of the socialist revolution of 1917 but physically exterminated a whole generation of revolutionists with a thoroughness and cold-blooded cynicism unmatched by any reactionary power in the world, and reduced both worker and peasant to a new kind of state-serf.

This bureaucracy came to power under exceptionally favor-

able circumstances. Its domain was one-sixth of the world's surface, endowed with tremendous, barely-exploited resources and a population greater than that of any modern power. It was able to traduce the sympathy of toilers throughout the world by adopting as a guise some of the outward trappings of the great working-class revolution of the Bolsheviks which it was itself destroying. Its consolidation was favored by the fact that the surrounding capitalist world was gripped for years by the most paralyzing economic crisis in history, and by the fact that there was relative peace in the world.

The causes and circumstances of the rise of this new class have been detailed by us elsewhere. Here it is enough to point out that the Stalinist bureaucracy came to power not only by overturning the power of the proletariat and reducing that class to its subject, but also by just as ruthlessly crushing the elements of capitalism in Russia and the classes representing it. Under Stalin, forced labor went hand in hand with the "extermination of the kulak as a class" and the wiping out of the NEP and the Nepmen. This point is of special importance in understanding Stalinist policy in and after the war. The collectivist bureaucracy does not tolerate sharing power with capitalism (to say nothing of the working class!) *wherever it has the strength to take power exclusively for itself.*

What is the economic basis of the Russian bureaucracy's power? The state-owned, state-centralized, state-managed, state-exploited property which belongs to it collectively and to it alone. From it, it derives its strength, its power, its privilege, its rule. Unless faced with a superior force (and none has yet presented itself), it will not divide this power with any other class, be it capitalist or proletarian.

To defend its rule and privilege, it must defend the economic basis upon which it rests, and repel all social forces that covet it. Throughout her history, Russia has been defeated by one power after another because she was weak—the master of platitudes and the bureaucracy once said in a speech—and that is why we must become strong. "To become strong" meant, for the bureaucracy as well as for any other modern class, to industrialize the country, to modernize it, to "catch up with and outstrip" the advanced countries. The bureaucracy proceeded to do just that and, as the war has shown, on a titanic scale and with unexpected success. A socialist success? In no way! For the successes of Russian economy were accomplished at the drastic expense of the social position of the working class and to the benefit of its exploiters and rulers. At the same time, however, the successes were accomplished without benefit to the capitalistic elements or classes in Russia, but rather to their detriment. The bureaucracy will not share its power with any other class.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, at least as well educated politically as the other ruling classes of the world, understood all along that war is inevitable in the modern, capitalist world. In order to strengthen itself, it required time, and if possible, a time of peace. Its foreign policy was therefore directed to postponing the outbreak of the war as long as possible, but also to making such alliances with sections of the capitalist world, or maintaining such divisions and antagonisms within that world, as would reduce the magnitude of a possible attack upon Russia or, inasmuch as war must come sooner or later, to have it occur as an inter-capitalist conflict. Hence, Stalin's famous "pacifism," the Litvinoviad, the "collective security" policy, coupled with less publicized attempts to ally Russia with one bloc of capitalist nations against another.

That kind of "pacifism," however, is related to war as reactionary nationalism is related to expansion and conquest—it precedes it and prepares for it. The inevitable Second World War, as the rulers of the world, Stalin included, knew and know, would have for its aim the redivision of the world in favor of the victors. More clearly than any of the other powers, perhaps, the Stalinist bureaucracy understood that the war meant redrawing the map of Europe, of Asia and all the other continents. Hitler was a pacifist for years—in preparation for the war, a nationalist for years—in preparation for conquest. Similarly (though not identically) with American imperialism. Likewise, Russia.

Russia? Russia expand? Is that possible? What about Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country"? And his protestations that he does not covet an inch of foreign soil, any more than he will yield an inch of his own? He did yield; and he did covet. Now he intends to yield nothing, and to acquire as much of what he covets as possible.

To think of the Stalinist bureaucracy as guided strictly by some abstract formula ("socialism in one country"), is itself the sheerest abstractionism. It does not sit down before a meticulously drawn map of the Soviet Union and say: "We go as far as these frontiers and not an inch farther. Within them we shall always sit tight because our theory of socialism in one country will not let us go beyond them."

The Russian bureaucracy is inhibited by nothing but superior force—not by theoretical considerations or any other abstractions. And it is a ruling class whose rapacity has few equals in the world. In none of the democratic capitalist countries, at least, is labor so intensely exploited as in Russia. In none of them are the rights of the masses so shamelessly ignored. In none of them is the disparity

between the social position of the aristocracy and that of the masses so great. But it is not mere desire, "free will," that impels the bureaucracy to expand wherever its strength makes expansion possible. There is a stronger, more compelling force.

No country in the world today, whatever its social character, can stand still and remain independent, at any rate, not for long. The present world tends more and more to be divided into a few of the advanced and powerful economic countries who enjoy independence, and the others that stagnate or retrogress economically and inevitably fall into economic and then political dependency upon the few. For a country (and the ruling class in it) to survive as an independent entity, in our time especially, requires an extension of its economic (and therefore its political) power. That holds for the capitalist countries. That holds for Stalinist Russia, which is not capitalist. (That would hold for a working class republic, even if in a different sense.)

The idea that Russia can expand its economic power indefinitely within the frontiers of what was the Soviet Union on August 22, 1939, and in disregard of the expansion of the big countries outside those frontiers, is a first-class illusion which is not, however, shared by the Stalinist bureaucracy. It understands the world situation; it realizes the problem; it knows better, even if some of its apologists do not.

Living amidst a hundred countries of more or less equal strength which would themselves be living a static existence within their own respective frontiers, Stalinist Russia would, or at least might, also continue a static existence within its former frontiers; that is, it would continue to "reproduce" itself or to expand only "internally." But this is of course a fantasy of fantasies. In actuality, Russia, like all other countries, lives in a world partitioned by a declining number of great powers, each of which can survive only at the expense of the others. That is what "expand or die" means for the old capitalist powers like Germany, the United States, England and Japan. Russia must keep pace with their expansion. In a physically limited world, this also means: resist, or confine, their expansion. Otherwise, Russia would eventually be overwhelmed by one or another of the powers that had succeeded in becoming the single, or one of two, super-giants in the world.

In other words, for all the social (not socialist!) differences that mark her off from the capitalist world, Russia is nevertheless confronted with the same problem and driven by the same impulsion as every other country in the world. The important difference between country and country (other considerations—like geographical position, for example—being equal) lies in comparative physical

strength, backed, of course, by economic strength. Norway cannot dream of aspiring to the ambitions of Yugoslavia, or Italy to those of France, or France to those of Russia, or Russia to those of the United States.

It may be, and has been, said: Is it not a fact, however, that Russia's occupation of border countries is merely a defensive measure, aimed at acquiring strategical outposts that would discourage or blunt attacks from aggressor nations? And is it not a fact that these border countries were not really sovereign in the first place, or that, in any case, their occupation for defensive purposes by Russia saved their tenuous sovereignty from being overturned by aggressor nations? Is it better for Lithuania to be under Hitler's domination, or Stalin's? Does not Bessarabia really belong to Russia, not to Rumania?

Implicit in these questions are the arguments made by really innocent people, but above all by the Stalinists, by their apologists of the Arthur Upham Pope type, by the liberals who trail them and, alas, by some "Trotskyists." But the arguments are replete with confusion, chauvinism, cynicism and downright mendacity.

*IF* it could be shown that the seizure of these countries brought *freedom* to the peoples of the occupied territories, and thereby advanced the cause of freedom in other subject or semi-subject countries, it would be the right and duty of every real socialist, and even of every consistent democrat, to defend the action. But nobody in the wide world can show that.

Let us take the case of Poland. The incorporation of its eastern section into Russia reduced the inhabitants to slaves of the bureaucracy, or, as Trotsky put it with an incomprehensible modification, to "semi-slaves" of Stalin. What is more, it was accomplished as a by-product, or a joint product, of the reduction of Western Poland to "full-fledged slaves" of Hitler. The same holds true for the other seizures. The same will hold true for the other "defensive" conquests made by Russia in collaboration with its present imperialist allies.

Given the above consideration, the second argument stands out in its hoary reactionary nakedness. The United States occupied the Philippines to "protect" them from Spain and continued to occupy them to "protect" them from Japan. Japan now occupies them to "protect" them from the United States. Similarly, England protects India from other aggressors and, just incidentally, exploits and oppresses the Indians. Germany's "protectorate" over Czechoslovakia and the rest of Europe is equally notorious and instructive.

In every such case, the imperialist apologists will say, informally, to be sure, "Granted, we are not ideal overlords. But the others who would take over if we withdrew are so much worse!" The more blatant imperialists simply say, "This is our mission." The language is classic. But we still believe that the Philippines belong to the Filipinos, who must have the right to rule themselves, and Bessarabia belongs to the Bessarabians, and not to a "Russia" which actually means a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy.

The third argument is also classic and no less mendacious. Washington on the Potomac had to be defended by occupying the Gulf of Panama under the first Roosevelt, and by occupying Iceland under the second. To defend London on the Thames, England established a world empire, each part of which was occupied to defend the part preceding it in the series. To defend Berlin, Hitler first took the Rhine, then the Danube, then Danzig and found that he required for the defense of all of them—Cairo on the Nile. If the defense of Leningrad on the Neva and Odessa on the Black Sea requires the seizure of Kaunas on the Niemen and Jassy on the Pruth, why does not the defense of Kaunas require the occupation at least of Königsberg, if not of Warsaw on the Vistula; and so on and on and on?

If, as Stalin said in his 1942 May First order of the day, "We want to free our brother Ukrainians, Moldavians, White Russians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Karelians from the insults to which they have been subjected by the German fascist beasts"—why not "free" in the same way the other peoples who have been subject to insults no less gross? What is the criterion? The 1939 frontiers of the Soviet Union? But that would exempt at least the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians from the blessed freedom. The frontiers of old Czarist Russia? But that would mean a "gay, prosperous and happy" life not only for the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, but also for the Poles and Manchurians, and a virtual protectorate over Serbia and Bulgaria. "Blood brotherhood?" But the "racial" criterion would bring under Stalinist "freedom" half the populations of Europe and Asia. Are the Poles and Slovenes less racially akin to the Great Russians than the Lithuanians; the Hungarians and Finns less than the Karelians; the Chinese and Tibetans less than the Kirghiz and Buriats; the Turks and Iranians and Afghans less than the Turkmen, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tadjiks and Beluchistanians? (To mention the Volga Germans would be indelicate.)

The incorporation of any or all such countries and peoples into the USSR would be fitting, desirable and greatly contributive

to progress and freedom, *IF* it was a free Union, *IF* it was Soviet, *IF* it was Socialist, *IF* it was a Republic. But it is none of these. It is as much a republic as Germany; it is the land where socialists are the most fiercely hounded in the world; the soviets have been abolished in it; and the "Union" is an empire of the Great-Russian bureaucrats who have deprived the people of the peripheral "republics" of their most elementary rights, including autonomy and self-rule.

That the Russian ruling class wants the "border" countries for defense, is true, but not in the sense of its apologists. It aims to conquer and keep them for the defense and extension of the bases of its power, its privilege, its rule. It seeks their natural resources, their industrial plants and their populations—control, exploitation and militarization of which would enhance its wealth, its power, its resistivity to attack, and the weight of its voice in world affairs. This should not be so hard to understand after the events of recent years.

Naturally, there are limitations to the imperialist ambitions of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But these are not limitations set by some fundamental principle, or an abstract theory or formula. They are determined concretely, at every given stage, by the relationship of forces. Specifically: by the relationship of forces between Russia and both its capitalist allies and opponents, on the one hand, and by the relationship of forces between Russia and the working class and revolutionary socialist movements, on the other.

This dual relationship expresses itself in an apparent duality of foreign policy. It is this duality that creates the dilemma in the mind of the bourgeois politicians and analysts as to just what Russian aims are. The famous enigma is revealed when the duality is analyzed, separated into its parts. In doing so, we get a clearer idea of the radical difference between the policy of Stalinist imperialism and the policy of capitalist imperialism.

*First part:* Where the Stalinist bureaucracy does not dominate the working class and the labor movement, be it by persuasion or by violence; and where an attempt to overturn capitalism (we are assuming conditions when such an attempt is possible) would promptly bring reprisals against Russia by strong capitalist powers in a position to execute them; and especially where geographical remoteness makes the physical control of the country by Moscow extremely difficult—in such countries the Russia bureaucracy works to prop up capitalist rule, and to maintain a capitalist government. It prefers a democratic government, so that its agent, above all the Communist Party, may be free to work and exert pressure in its

behalf, and a "strong" democratic government which will hold in check or suppress anti-Russian extremists from the right or working-class and revolutionary anti-Stalinists from the left. In any case, the government must be friendly to Russia, if not outrightly pro-Russian.

Thus, the Russian ruling class is interested in preserving capitalism only if a genuinely socialist revolution threatens. Against such a revolution, it always has and always will unite with the capitalist class. In this respect, as in all others, it shows that it is a thousand times closer to capitalism in its social type, its social inclinations, interests and instincts, than it is to socialism. The most striking example of how this policy worked out was the rôle played by Russia and its henchmen in the Spanish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. It is playing the same rôle today in the revolutionary situation in France and Italy, and *may* (we shall soon see why the word "may" is used) follow the same rôle tomorrow in the revolutionary situation in Germany.

*Second part:* Where the Stalinists do dominate the mass movement; and where the world bourgeoisie is not in a very good position to prevent an overturn of capitalism by the bureaucracy; and where geographical conditions facilitate not only such an overthrow but also physical control by the Kremlin and its police—in such countries the bureaucracy tolerates neither the rule nor the existence of the capitalist class, democrats and fascists included. Such countries, under such conditions, it seeks to annex and subjugate. The well known examples are the three Baltic countries, Bessarabia, etc. It will be remembered that they were seized and, unlike Spain, capitalist property in them was wiped out, at a favorable moment, that is, when neither the Axis nor the Allies could do anything to prevent it.

Once this is understood, the heart of the enigma has been reached, the mystery is unveiled. Then, retracing our steps to the differences between Russia and her capitalist allies, we can see that they all pertain not so much to the "conduct of the war" as to the post-war period or, more specifically, to the repartitioning of the world after the war, to the division of the spoils. This applies as much to the difference over the "second front" as to the others.

Russia's imperialist program for the post-war world is not too difficult to ascertain. To describe it is to see how reactionary it is in every respect.

*In Eastern Europe:* The annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Southern Finland, the Western Ukraine and White Russia,

Bessarabia and Bukovina is openly demanded and declared to be beyond debate.\*

But these annexations are not the limit. Always remembering the indispensable prerequisite of a favorable relationship of forces, Russia aims at having, as a minimum, vassal governments in Poland proper, in Finland, in Bulgaria and if not in all of Yugoslavia, then at least in Serbia. As a maximum, the complete occupation, domination and annexation of all these countries, including the expropriation of the native capitalist class (as well as, remember, the working class and peasantry) and the seizure of all property by the bureaucracy. Success in such an audacious program means also, as the map will immediately show, the finish of Rumania as well.

*In the Near East:* As a minimum, "free passage" through the Dardanelles and down to the Persian Gulf. As a maximum, return of the territory lost to Turkey through the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (Kars region), the occupation of bases on the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, and either a protectorate over or occupation of Iran, in whole or in part. The Russian demands on Turkey were revealed to Hitler and von Ribbentrop (according to these gentlemen) in the famous meeting they had with Molotov just before June 22, 1941. There is no particular reason, in the given case, for granting greater credence to Molotov's subsequent denials than to Hitler's and Ribbentrop's asseverations.

*In Asia:* A minimum of the northwestern provinces of China, including most of Sinkiang, Shensi, Suiyuan, Kansu, Chinghai, Ninghsia and Sinkiang, with a population of over 20,000,000. A maximum—provided there is a collapse and defeat of Japan—of most or all of Manchuria.

Is the realization of so breath-taking a program guaranteed?

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\*We will no more allow a discussion of whether Lithuania belongs to us than the United States would discuss the frontiers of California or New Mexico, argue the Stalinists. The comparison is revealing. The southwestern states referred to by the Stalinists were acquired by the classic methods of imperialist rapine! Do the Kremlin and the *Daily Worker* mean to say that the Baltic states were acquired in the same way? Moreover, states like California, New Mexico and Texas, whatever their origin, have been an integral part of the U.S.A. for almost a hundred years. They enjoy equal rights with all other states, and differ from them in no important cultural, linguistic or political respect. In none of them is there any movement or desire for "national independence." To compare them with the three Baltic states is at once odious and stupid, i.e., Stalinistic. One might wonder why the Stalinists do not make a really appropriate comparison, namely, with the countries forming the *colonial* empire of France, England or the United States, countries like Morocco, India, Hawaii and Panama. The answer is, *They do!* See, for example, Alter Brody, in the *New Masses*, June 15, 1943. His article is a magnificent example of the Stalino-imperialist mentality and argumentation. We hope this footnote rescues it from undeserved oblivion.

Let us underscore right here that we believe no such thing. Is it the *program* of the Stalinist bureaucracy? This we most decidedly believe. Is its realization *possible*? Yes, entirely possible, in our opinion—provided the Kremlin finds the circumstances favorable for it. The circumstances are of two kinds: one, the weakness of the revolutionary socialist and nationalist movements; two, inability, for any reason, of Russia's allies to stop her expansion.

What indications are there that this is the Stalinist program and that steps have been taken in the direction of realizing it?

1. Stalin has successfully maneuvered a break with the Polish "government-in-exile" in London. In Moscow, he has set up a completely servile Polish National Committee, with a full-sized apparatus, including a radio station and, what is more important, a now highly-trained, highly-mechanized Stalinist division of Poles, the Kosciuzcko Division. How successful the agitation and organization work carried on among Polish prisoners and deportees in Russia has been, we do not know. But undoubtedly it has been intensive. Stalin can appear in Poland tomorrow with a well-integrated force, not only Polish, but backed by the vast apparatus (to say nothing of the "Red" Army of the Kremlin). How much resistance will the "government-in-exile" be able to offer? In any case, much more will be offered by the rank and file revolutionary underground movement. Just how much, remains to be seen.

2. Finland seems to be just about at the end of her rope. The fact that Stalin has remained ice-cold and silent to the recent all-but-public appeal by the Finns for a "decent" peace, is significant. Stalin is in no mood for a "decent" peace with the Finns. If the military situation continues to improve for him, tomorrow will find the Kremlin even more peremptory and exigent in its demands on Finland. For Germany, it does not ask "unconditional surrender." For Finland, it may very well ask just that. Meanwhile, somewhere in the Kremlin files lies the easily-dusted-off "Finnish People's Government" of O. W. Kuusinen.

3. In Yugoslavia, from all reports, the Stalinists have been steadily gaining strength at the expense of the Greater Serbian imperialist force of Mikhailovich. The "Partisans" do not seem to be a Stalinist army, but the fact of Stalinist control (or at the very least, Stalinist decisive influence) in it seems to be well established. In one respect, the situation is more favorable in Yugoslavia for the Stalinists than in Poland—in the former country they have a substantial armed force right on the spot, with the only other armed native claimant for power, Mikhailovich, increasingly discredited, even though by no means a negligible force for that.

4. In Bulgaria, in spite of the savage persecutions to which it has been subjected for more than twenty years, the Communist Party, whose strength is difficult to judge, nevertheless seems to be the only organized force among the masses, apart from the army. Among the population in general, and even in higher circles, including the military, a pro-Russian orientation has not only been maintained but, it seems, strengthened. Bulgaria is not yet officially at war with Russia and very likely will not be. A collapse in that country, originating there or following a general European collapse, would undoubtedly create conditions favorable to Stalinist control or, at least, to decisive Russian political influence.

5. In Iran, something like half the country is already occupied by Russian troops and the "Iranian government" is just about as independent as the Slovenian government of Father Tiso. Although the other half is formally occupied by the British, there are indications that it is American influence and control that are growing in the country. Oil has an attractive smell. Nevertheless, Stalin is there and is fairly well entrenched. It is hard to believe that "after the emergency is over," the Russian troops and commissars will simply walk out of the country of their own accord and with a brief "Good-by and thank you."

6. The Stalinists—Russian, not Chinese—have been dominant in Sinkiang for several years now. Russian "advisers," who are to be found everywhere in this Chinese province, pretty much dictate all policy. Not only has the provincial army been built and trained by Russian officers and equipped with Russian armaments, but Russia has long maintained garrisons of her own troops in a number of strategic Sinkiang cities. Freedom of speech is generously allowed if you say nothing anti-Russian. How closely controlled Sinkiang's political life is may be judged from the fact that the "purges" in Russia are paralleled in the province. When the GPU head, Yagoda, was shot in Moscow, his man, head of the Bureau of Public Safety in Tihua, Sinkiang's capital, was shot immediately afterward! You can get into Sinkiang only with the approval of Moscow or the Russian diplomatic agent in Lanchow, and if any foreigner has succeeded in entering in the last few years, the fact is certainly not widely known.

The whole of Northwest China could be dominated without too much difficulty from a series of very well equipped Russian air bases, centering in Alma-Ata (where Trotsky was once exiled!), which is just outside the Russian border from Sinkiang, and directly related to the larger air bases built by the Russians, with Chinese aid, at Lanchow, Ansi, Hami, Tihua and Ili, and largely manned by Russians. It is hardly necessary to mention the independent

and powerful Stalinist Eighth Route Army, which dominates Yen-an with reputedly 100,000 regulars and many times that number of co-operating partisans. For all its self-transformations and avowals of loyalty, it has remained what it was, an arm of the Stalinist régime, successfully exploiting the peasant discontent, and therefore a permanent thorn in the side of the Chinese bourgeoisie. It is noteworthy that just recently the Russian Stalinist press made a special point of its critical attitude toward the Chungking régime of Chiang and his circle, as if to go out of its way to emphasize that in China, too, Russia is intent on playing an independent rôle, by no means confined to altruistic gifts of aid and best wishes to the Chungking government.

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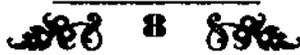
Even if all this is granted, it does not yet take up the question that has arisen recently to the top of people's thoughts, namely, what are Russia's intentions toward Germany? No matter how much importance is attached to such countries as Russia's border states, they are not of world-deciding significance. A country like Germany is.

Germany is the key to Europe. Will Russia be the key to Germany? Does Stalin aim to "communize" Germany, as the bourgeois press would say? Can he? Or does he merely want a good, strong, friendly, democratic neighbor in Germany? Just what is the meaning of the mystery-creating "Free German National Committee" set up in Moscow? Are Russia's difference with the Allies over the question of Germany's post-war fate irreconcilable? If not, along what lines may they be reconciled? What rôle may the German workers be expected to play in all this?

Obviously, these are vital questions. For Europe, they are becoming *THE* vital questions, because at bottom Germany remains what she always was—the key to the European (and therefore to the world) situation. But to pursue our analysis along this line requires another chapter, and we shall come to it in due course.

*October 1943*





## *Germany and the Control of Europe*

"IT IS THEREFORE QUITE CERTAIN," WE WROTE previously, "that the forthcoming meeting of the second-rank minds (not the great statesmen themselves, but only their Foreign Secretaries) will produce nothing worth serious mention so far as solving the fundamental question of Anglo-American-Russian relations is concerned. They may some day get near to a patched-up solution, but much time must yet elapse, many events take place, and many, many more meetings be held before that is accomplished."

The almost universal enthusiasm with which the agreements at the Moscow meeting of Hull, Eden and Molotov was hailed in the press seems to refute this prediction.

"A great beginning has been made, and that Russia has shared in the task is a further demonstration . . . of Russia's willingness to coöperate," said the *New York Times*.

"In Moscow was put together the four-cornered frame within which the questions of the war and the peace must henceforth be settled," wrote Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick.

"This is a happy day," exclaimed the leading Scripps-Howard paper, the *New York World-Telegram*.

"The declaration of Moscow is a start from which a new age can come," wrote Raymond Clapper, and his fellow-commentator, William Philip Simms, spoke of "the momentous declarations of the Foreign Ministers at Moscow." "What a victory for the United Nations and what a promise!" added Edgar Ansel Mowrer. "The Moscow balance sheet is superbly profitable." And more of the same from Miss Dorothy Thompson, and of course, much more, in half-hushed awe, from Samuel Grafton.

However, the closest scrutiny of the main declaration of the Moscow Conference makes all the delirious glee extremely puzzling. Especially when it is borne in mind that the declaration says nothing, or nothing that has serious meaning, about all the problems which the now so jubilant commentators said, prior to the conference,

would have to be settled firmly and clearly when the foreign secretaries assembled.

The *key* question—What is to be done about Germany?—is dealt with only indirectly, vaguely, and ambiguously enough to allow of several interpretations. The other key question, inseparably connected with the first—What is to be done about Europe's various national boundaries?—remains just as obscure. These problems, after all, sum up, or at least express most clearly, the main question of the *war aims* of the Allies. That is the question that the Allies have not agreed upon, and cannot agree upon to their mutual satisfaction.

Time was when Mr. Churchill could content himself by saying that his war aim was—to win the war. This objective did not help greatly to distinguish him from Hitler or anyone else who ever fought a war. Now that the fear of Hitler victory has declined among the people, Mr. Churchill's unenlightening declaration no longer suffices. The demand for a clear statement of objectives grows stronger among the people and in the needs of the objective situation. The Moscow Declaration is a substitute for a clear statement, a stalling for time, an agreement to defer consideration of an agreement.

There are, nevertheless, points on which agreement has been reached, at least in so far as words mean anything on the scraps of paper which imperialist diplomats sign and file for discardment at any indicated moment.

First, there is agreement upon joint efforts to prevent or suppress the coming revolution in Europe. On this score, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin can agree with the fullest sincerity and with every determination to keep their pledge. To the Stalinist bureaucracy, the socialist revolution in Europe is not less a threat than it is to the bourgeoisie of England and the United States. Hence, there is real unity among them on what the Declaration calls "the necessity of insuring a rapid and orderly transition from war to peace" and mutual consultation and joint action "for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security pending the reestablishment of law and order."

There can be no two constructions placed on those classic words: "law and order." The "rapid and orderly transition from war to peace" means, of course, preventing the "disorderly" intervention of the masses in the solution of their problems and the determination of their fate. That is to be determined for them.

Second, there is agreement that the "united action" of the Big Three "will be continued for the organization and maintenance of peace and security" and that they "will act together in all matters relating to the surrender and disarmament of that enemy."

It is this statement that really generated the enthusiasm. Out of it has been read Russia's decision to remain on the side of the United States and England throughout the war and the post-war period. If such a declaration has been greeted with such obviously hysterical relief, it is only because the prospects of Russia remaining in the "democratic" alliance were secretly regarded as not very bright before the Moscow conference took place.

*England and the United States have been fearful of a separate peace between Stalin and Hitler, which would give Stalin a good deal of what he wants but would leave his whilom allies to face Hitler alone.* How concrete were the possibilities of a Russo-German peace, is of course hard to say. Specific information on that score is at a minimum, particularly information about the extent of the differences between those in the upper German circles who regard the war with Russia as a mistake and those who do not. But what is indubitable is that Stalin played his hand for all it was worth, and played it in a situation which made the hand worth a lot.

How did England and the United States counter this threat? *By an agreement, at least tentative, to give Stalin much of what he wants in order that they shall not have to face Hitler alone, but face him with the invaluable collaboration of Russia.* Or, to be strictly accurate, by an agreement *not to deny* Stalin what he wants.

In other words, if we discount the possibility of secret agreements in Moscow as being unthinkable in people as rectitudinous and morally elevated as the spokesmen of Anglo-Saxon imperialism (to say nothing of the *Vozhd* of all the Russian peoples), Messrs. Hull and Eden may not yet have agreed to grant all of Stalin's imperialist demands, but neither did they rule them out of the question.

The problem still remains to be solved, and as we said, "much time must yet elapse, many events take place, and many, many more meetings be held before that is accomplished." At bottom, it will be decided by superior force, by the power most favored by the relationship of forces, and consequently the power in a position to take what it wants and impose approval of its seizure upon "friend" and enemy alike.

However, without for a moment wishing to reflect upon the uprightness and candor of the delegates from Washington and London—God forbid!—we are of the opinion that in so far as these questions can be settled in the closed upper circles of imperialism (the time for the masses to say their word is yet to come), they have been settled far more in favor of the Kremlin than of England and the United States. In the given situation, Stalin is in a better posi-

tion to dictate the terms of an agreement to his allies than they are to dictate to him.

First, Stalin is determined to annex at least southern Finland, all of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, all of the western Ukraine and western White Russia that were formerly ruled by the Poles, all of Bessarabia and Bukovina. Neither Roosevelt nor Churchill, Hull nor Eden, have dared to say him nay. Any doubts on this score that may have been propped up by the hopeful muddleheads of the bourgeois press were promptly dispelled by the statement of Stalin's Ambassador to Mexico, Oumansky, a few days after the Moscow Conference.

Second, Stalin aims to place all the countries east of Germany under the domination of the Kremlin. Such a policy already has the support of responsible circles in England, which advocate the division of Europe into two parts, the western half under English control and the eastern half under Russian. "Under the domination of the Kremlin" means one of two things for eastern Europe, depending on circumstances and the strength of Stalinism:

1) Outright rule by the Stalinists proper. Toward this end, Stalin already has his "National Committees" for Poland, for Yugoslavia, recently, according to reports, for Greece and even for Austria, under the leadership of the Stalinist Johann Koplenig.

2) If the more preferable choice of direct Stalinist rule, through an open or concealed Stalinist party, backed by the Russian army and the GPU, is not possible, then domination of these countries by régimes entirely subservient to Stalin, that is, a system of vassal states such as France established in eastern and southeastern Europe after the First World War. On both these parallel-running roads, Stalin has already advanced very far.

Third, whatever the success of his "maximum" program, Stalin aims at the very least to maintain and even aggravate the "Balkanization" of Europe. Hitler sought to unite Europe, by reactionary means, that is, inside a German jail. Stalin, who cannot expect to unite all Europe within his jail, wants to keep it as split-up as possible, also by reactionary means.

Europe's only hope for survival, to say nothing of progress; its only way out of the barbarism into which it is sinking; its only weapon against being exploited, disfranchised and degraded, either by British, American or Russian imperialism, or a combination of them—is the economic and political unity of the continent. Such unity is an essential necessity for the life of the Old World now. It is realizable only in the form of a United Socialist States of Europe.

Stalin, like Churchill, requires the splitting-up of Europe in order to facilitate the domination of the peoples and the nations that compose it. That, far more than any fear of an impossible *cordon sanitaire* around Russia like the one set up after World War I, is what makes Stalin adamant against any combination of European countries. Along this line, Stalin has met with success thus far. He has torpedoed the plan for a Polish-Czech alliance, and is signing a pact with Benes to bring Czechoslovakia within his own sphere of influence. What he intends to do with Czechoslovakia and with Benes, is another matter. But no doubt he remembers that Bismarck said: "Whoever has Bohemia, has Europe."

It is control of Europe that is at stake. It is highly significant—not to say astounding!—that at the Moscow Conference, which was considering the fate of Europe, not a single continental-European country was represented, except for Russia herself. Europe is not to decide its fate; that is to be decided for it. When de Gaulle warned, after the Moscow Conference, that "France thinks that any European settlement and any major world settlement without her would not be a good settlement," grief vied with impotence. And if that is how de Gaulle, of once mighty France, speaks, it is easy to imagine the thoughts of Queen Wilhelmina, King Peter, King George of Greece, King Albert, to say nothing of King Victor Emmanuel. The Powers grow fewer in number, the Pawns more numerous.

Bismarck's aphorism about Bohemia is limited by its context. More to the point—there is no control of Europe without control of Germany. The converse is not less true—there is no control of Germany without control of Europe. The Allies know the truth of the first statement, just as Hitler knows the truth of its converse. Hitler's days, however, are shorter in number than the days of the Allies. The problem stands before the Allies.

What are the Allies going to do about Germany? All the disputes among them lead to this question. Assuming the defeat of Germany, the United States and England have the general aim of crushing Germany economically and politically, eliminating her as an imperialist rival, and subjecting her to joint domination. As to just how this is to be done concretely, there is the greatest uncertainty. The source of their uncertainty—leaving aside the danger of a proletarian revolution in Germany which they count on smashing without too great difficulty—is Russia.

What does Stalin want with Germany, or in Germany? In the first place, he does not want a Germany ruled by England and the United States. It is the greatest of absurdities to imagine that when

the war ends Stalin will say to his allies: I now have Estonia; you may take Germany. Failing a revolutionary victory in Germany, the United States and England will have to share control of the country with Russia. If the Hitlerite armies collapse, the Anglo-American forces will march in from the West (and perhaps the South), but the Russian army will not come to a halt at the eastern frontier out of fear of violating Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country"; it will march in, and meet its allies at an agreed-upon point in Germany, much in the same manner as it met its German ally in 1939 in Poland.

Does this mean that the two armed forces will face each other in open hostility? Most likely not. Both have too much to lose by such a conflict. It is far more likely that every effort will be made to establish a "joint" occupation of Germany, and "joint" responsibility for it. But underneath this joint responsibility, the conflict would nevertheless continue.

There are points of agreement on Germany, in the first place. Czechoslovakia will be "restored," in one form or another. It has already been announced by the Moscow declaration that Austria will be separated from Germany, and that the Allies will seek to maintain this head-without-a-body in much the same state of artificial animation by which Russian scientists keep alive the severed head of a dog, that is, by rigid control of its bloodstream. In the West, there may be another attempt at what the French tried to set up after the First World War, an "Independent Rhineland Republic." In the East, the Russians may seek to "compensate" a controlled "independent Poland" by attaching to it the territory of East-Prussia. But whatever else the Allies agree upon, Russia does not want a completely dismembered and disemboweled Germany.

Germany crushed economically and politically means Anglo-American domination of the continent, or at least of the most important part of it. Anglo-American domination of most of Europe means greater Russian dependence upon the United States after the war. The war is bleeding Russia more than any other country. After the war, she will be dependent to a great extent—upon foreign aid, in the form of food and, above all, in the form of capital goods, for the reconstruction of the country.

Where is this aid to be obtained? American imperialism counts upon its tremendous economic superiority, and its indispensability to Russian reconstruction, not only for a market in Russia but also as a means of getting approval for *its* European political program from the Kremlin. Guarded expressions of this expectation have

already appeared in the American press. But this is precisely what Stalin does not want. The difference between Stalin "not wanting" and, for example, de Gaulle "not wanting," is that the former has trumps to play whereas the latter is hunting desperately for deuces and treys.

The only other important source of materials for the reconstruction of Russia is Germany. To escape dependence upon the United States, Russia must have at least considerable control over Germany. The official press (there is no other) in Russia has already said: We have suffered most at German hands, we must come first in reparations. By reparations is meant: German labor and the products of German industry, the machine-tool industry especially, to be used to reconstruct Russia. In this respect, Stalinist imperialism stands on the same plane as Clemenceau and Lloyd George in 1919.

How to appear before the German people as its despoiler and plunderer, who makes it pay for the crimes of its ruling class, and at the same time as its "liberator," who does not want it humiliated, dismembered and crushed, as the other Allies do—that would of course be a tremendously complicated problem for Stalin, and may bring him more grief than glory. But he has instruments at his disposal that Churchill and Roosevelt do not have. The chief instrument is a *native political force*, or one that operates as such, in the capitalist countries, Germany included. That force is the Stalinist movement, in all of its guises and transmutations.

The disguise now assumed by Stalinism in Germany is the "Free German National Committee" in Moscow, plus its "Union of German Officers," plus a network of affiliates in Sweden, England, Mexico. Neither its significance nor its strength can be underrated.

The Stalinists have won over, by one means or another, the vast majority of the politically active German emigrés, social-democrats included. Among the Germans taken prisoner in Russia, a most intensive campaign of Stalinist agitation and organization has been conducted for a long time, and not without success. The literature issued by Moscow for German consumption is enormous, and makes the efforts of the OWI look like a publicity campaign to put across a Kiwanis convention. This is on the record. What efforts are made behind the scenes to establish contact in Germany with that element among the ruling classes, above all in the Junker officer caste, which is for the "Bismarckian orientation," that is, an alliance between Germany and Russia against the Western powers, is only hinted at by the special efforts the Stalinists have directed at gaining the allegiance of captured officers.

The propaganda of the Stalinists is concentrated against Hitler

and his immediate circle, and promises immunity to all who break with him. There is no end to its praise of Russia as the friend of Germany, as her liberator, as the indicated partner in political and economic collaboration after the war, as the "decisive guarantee of the freedom and independence of Germany." Every printed page recalls that Russia was always opposed to the Versailles Treaty, and that without alliance with Russia now, Germany will get an even worse treaty imposed upon her. Praise for Allied England and Allied America is not even muted—it just isn't sung at all. Each point in this propaganda speaks volumes.

Stalin may pledge himself, along with his partners, to ever-so-democratic a régime in Germany after Hitler is overtuned. He has already made such a pledge for Italy. But if every one of the seven "guarantees for democracy" contained in the Declaration on Italy of the Moscow Conference were to be repeated for Germany, Stalin would have no difficulty in concretizing them in the form of a "democratic" government, ranging from some of the "anti-fascist" Junker officers to out-and-out Stalinists, with some democratic figures in between. If a government of the monarchists and social-democrats was possible in Germany in 1919, a government of generals and Stalinists is certainly not out of the question for the present-day Kremlin. Besides, is not Russia herself the world's greatest democracy?

Would it merely be influenced by the Stalinists? Or dominated by them? Or under their outright control? The answer lies entirely in the realm of the relationship of forces, and has not at all been decided *a priori* by Stalin. He will go as far as he can in gaining control over Germany—and not a step less. The limits will be set not by any reluctance on his part, but by the given strength of his allies, on the one side, and the revolutionary resistance of the German proletariat, on the other. As for the German bourgeoisie itself, without the support of England and the United States, or the support of the people, it would not be a decisive force.

This is what England and the United States fear, and no agreement has yet been reached to dispel their fear. Wherever Stalinist Russia advances and establishes its domination, it inspires antagonism in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, whether momentary considerations make it expedient to express this antagonism or not. From this point of view, those who see the conflict between Russia's "nationalized property" and bourgeois "private property," are quite right, even if they do exaggerate tremendously the weight of the conflict.

But to point this out, and this alone, is to tell a half-truth which is the worst kind of falsehood and deception to the working

class. A far greater conflict is produced by the advance of Stalinism—the conflict between the conquering bureaucracy and the masses it reduces to economic and political slavery. That Churchill is not delighted at the prospect of Stalin annexing Poland, goes without saying. It does not follow, however, that the class enemies of Churchill, the proletariat of Poland and all other countries, *should* be delighted at the prospect. For the working class, Stalinist domination means a new totalitarian slavery.

Woe to those revolutionists and woe to those workers who fail to understand this and to lay the necessary emphasis upon it.

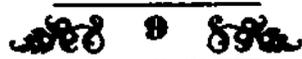
The *aims* of the imperialists are not too difficult to understand. The *aims* of Stalinist imperialism are no more mysterious. They are ambitious and sweeping aims, for the Stalinist bureaucracy is not only under great compulsions to expand and conquer, but has gained a great self-confidence in undertaking the expansion.

*IF* the aims of all the imperialists were assured of realization, a dark period would be ahead for all peoples. But while the imperialists, the Kermlin gang in particular, take the masses into account in working out their aims, their reckonings are based on the assumption that the masses will not get into motion for their own class interests and under their own class banner, or that if they do, it will again be possible to traduce or crush them.

There is the real “flaw” in all the ambitious lusts of reaction. The antagonisms and conflicts in its ranks have opened crevices before, and the masses have poured through. That will happen again and again. Churchill may dispose of de Gaulle as impotent; but the masses at whose head de Gaulle formally stands are not impotent, and they will yet say their word. Stalin will find that the corruption and acquisition of a few Nazi officers is one thing, and the subversion and enslavement of the German proletariat another. The imperialists have their aims. The working class has its own. To clarify these aims is the task of the time. One of the most important elements of that task is to gird the proletariat for the war against Stalinism, to the bitter end.

*November 1943*





## *Seeds of a Third World War*

**THE IMPERIALISTS, MEANWHILE, ARE NOT INACTIVE.** If they offer nothing to the masses of the people, it is because they have reserved everything for themselves. On this score, there are no differences among them. The differences occur exclusively over which of them is to get what and how much. These differences led to World War I; they brought about World War II; they are laying the basis for World War III.

The advance of the Russian army into former Poland is the clearest case in point right now, not so much for what it is in itself as for what it represents and symbolizes.

The war with Germany was justified by the Allied spokesmen, among other things, on the ground that Hitlerism violates the national sovereignty of nations and peoples, does not allow them to live as they see fit and to rule themselves. There is no need to prove this case against Hitlerism beyond the use of facts which are known to every child.

Now that the Allies are beginning to speak of an early victory over the Axis, the question arises: what is to become of the countries overrun by the Nazis once the latter have been put to the sword? Is their national sovereignty to be restored, at least to the extent that they enjoyed it before the war began?

If we are to judge by the fight developing over Poland, there is no reason to believe that the Allies hold out any such hope.

The fight over Poland is not just a battle over the eastern territories of the former Polish Empire, it is a fight for that part of Europe which is unmistakably and unchallengedly Polish by tradition, common language and culture and all the other recognizable traits of a nation.

So far as the eastern territories are concerned, the claims of the government-in-exile are as notoriously fraudulent as they are old. They are today's remnants of the old dream of a Greater Polish Empire "from sea to sea"—from the Baltic to the Black. Inhabited principally by non-Polish peoples—White Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Jews—who have neither cultural, linguistic nor even religious characteristics in common with the Poles, the only

claim that the Polish *Pans* and their colonels ever had to rule over them was the need to sate an imperialist greed. The persecutions these peoples underwent from the day the Versailles map-makers concocted an "independent" Poland constitute one of the cruellest and bloodiest chapters in the annals of modern oppression. Nobody can say exactly how many of the people in these lands were murdered, how many sent to rot in prison. What can be said, because it is common knowledge, is that the cultural aspirations of these peoples were trampled under foot with the same cynicism and the same methods employed in the days of the Romanovs, their religious feelings and institutions were systematically offended (the anti-Semitic outrages of the Polish ruling class preceded Hitler's), their political rights were never taken off paper, and above all their economic status was kept at the lowest possible level. Only the most rabid Polish imperialist could expect any allegiance from these peoples. The blusterings and stutterings of the government-in-exile, a gang of authentic reactionaries and pupils of the colonels, plus a handful of social-democratic house-pets, will be pointed out to future generations as typical of imperialist effrontery and hypocrisy.

It does not follow in any way from this that the territories properly belong in what is sardonically known as the "Soviet" "Union." By virtue of what right? The fact that these territories once formed part of the Czarist Empire? Or the fact that they once were part of the Soviet Republics—without quotation marks—and were wrested from the workers' state by the superior force which Pilsudski's armies imposed upon the weak and exhausted Red Army? Such a right would exist and be valid, provided the incorporation of these territories into the Union meant the liberation from oppression, or the beginning of such a liberation, of the people inhabiting them. That would have been the case in 1920. It is in no sense the case today.

The torments suffered by these peoples under Polish despotism are so widely known that even the bourgeois press refers to them, however discreetly. But they pale beside the organized, systematic, centralized, totalitarian terror against the "blood brothers" of these peoples who have lived for the past decade and more under the rule of the Stalinist autocracy. The Ukrainian and White Russian "Soviet Republics" are nothing but national fiefs of the Kremlin bureaucracy. They have neither independence in the "Union" nor autonomy. Their rulers are picked and unpicked by this bureaucracy, whom they serve in the same capacity and with the same rights and privileges as the Czar's governor-generals. Their economic strength has been sapped so that the bureaucracy might fatten on it; their economic position has been reduced to the status of *serfs*

of the régime. The Polish knout stings no more brutally than the Stalinist knout. The cemeteries of the Western Ukraine are no less numerous than those of the "Soviet" Ukraine, filled as the latter are with the corpses of millions of peasants condemned to death in the Stalinist "collectivization drive" alone. It is not without significance that in their initial drive Hitler's legions encountered less resistance from the native population of the Ukraine than from the people of the northern part of the "Union."

The fact that "even" the Anglo-American bourgeoisie has given its sanction to Stalin's demand, should cause only a shrugging of the shoulders and not a bending of the knees. What else could it do? Stalin's "moral" position is flawless, *from the imperialist standpoint*. What could Churchill, for example, possibly say in reply to a blunt accusation from the Kremlin statesmen: "You want us to give up our Poland, but you cling to India like a leech." You want your colonies? We want ours. You have your amusing elections in India? We have our funny plebiscites in the border states. More important than the "moral" position is the military position. Neither Churchill nor Roosevelt has as much as a toe-nail on Polish or ex-Polish soil. Mikolajczyk & Co. are better off only in so far as the Polish underground gives them reluctant and suspicious support. Stalin, however, not only has good, solid boots on more and more Polish (or ex-Polish) soil, but has the power to extend a friendly hand to Hitler if an Allied attempt is made to challenge the rights of his boots.

Stalin is not, however, interested in Western White Russia and the Western Ukraine alone. Those territories are taken for granted, and he leaves it to Eden and Hull to find a convenient formula—diplomatic archives are filled with all kinds of them, like the "Curzon line," which can be tapped for each particular occasion—to justify his seizures and to make the Mikolajczyk toe the mark—or else. Stalin wants Poland as well, if he can—directly; if he cannot—then indirectly. If he gets thar fustest with the mostest men, Mikolajczyk might just as well retire to Cleveland, like the recently-deceased Smetona of Lithuania. Then, *finis Poloniae!* There is no question about it: the Polish government-in-exile is worried far more about Poland itself than about her former eastern territories. More accurately, its apprehensions over the eastern territories are due to its apprehension over Poland.

Stalin's great advantage lies, as indicated, in the military force at his disposal, and the position it has gained. But political preparations are also at an elevated stage. There is not only a Polish armed force in the Russian army, a force that has undoubtedly been politically organized and "worked on" for some time, but also a half-

government in the form of the Union of Polish Patriots. This immaculate creation of the Kremlin is headed by Madam Wassilewska, Führerin of the so-called Polish Communist Party, who arrived at this Kremlin appointment by standing by in prudent silence (or in clamorous approbation?) while the finest heads and hearts of the genuinely communist movement in Poland were stilled by pistols fired in the cellars of GPU prisons. The latest Kremlin proposal on Poland, which proposes some trifling wiggle of the "Curzon line," makes no mention of the government-in-exile but takes good care to recognize the status of the Wassilewska Quislings.

Does this mean that if Stalin reaches Warsaw, the GPU will install a Wassilewska government right off the reel? Not necessarily. All sorts of mutations and transitional arrangements are possible for Stalin. Everything depends upon the relationship of forces. It is possible, for example, that Stalin may, temporarily, and under pressure, reconcile himself to a "friendly" government in Poland, that is, a government operating at one or another level of vassaldom to Moscow. The most reluctant vassal would then find itself under constant pressure to make room for the Wassilewskas and other GPU puppets, until the point is reached where the reluctant vassal gives way entirely to the zealous and most subservient tool.

Is there a substantial flaw in the Stalinist scheme of imperialist expansion? There is, but it is not to be found in the Anglo-American allies. England is already orienting toward an acceptance of a division of Europe between herself and Russia. Her imperialist press has spoken for some time in favor of such a partition, with an eye toward excluding the dominant influence of the American colossus. The London *Times* is in the forefront of this agitation, and its strong advocacy of Stalin's "rights" in eastern Europe, especially in connection with the fight over Poland, is neither accidental nor isolated. So astute and influential an Empire statesman as Smuts has recently spoken out bluntly in the same spirit. The imperialists are carving up the Old World again, this time with even deeper and bloodier incisions than ever before.

The "flaw" is—the Polish masses. Mikolajczyk has no power to speak of, but the workers and peasants in Poland have a strength and a determination to be free which not even the GPU could easily master. What is more, they are organized into one of the best and politically most advanced underground movements in Europe. If Mikolajczyk & Co. should capitulate to Stalin, in the hope of gaining a few concessions that would make it possible to keep body and soul together, this would in all likelihood have an effect upon the underground movement opposite to the one calculated. Such a capitulation would most likely result in deepening the gulf that

divides the common people, whose aim is not imperialistic but liberationist, from the remains of the Polish bourgeoisie and its social-democratic aides-de-camp. It would enhance the growing realization in the ranks of the underground that the struggle for national freedom is intertwined beyond separation with the struggle for social freedom, and that the only worthy and reliable banner-bearer of both is not Stalin or Churchill or Roosevelt or Mikolajczyk, but the Polish proletariat allied with the proletariat of the rest of Europe.

The fight over Poland underlines what may be called the two most important ideas of our time:

The struggle for national independence and freedom cannot be conducted in a progressive spirit and with consistency and honesty except by the proletariat and its peasant allies. The others are interested in anything but national freedom for all peoples. Conducted by the proletariat, the fight for national freedom must be linked with the fight for social freedom, in which it would find its highest realization. Its highest realization, finally, can come in Europe only in the form of a Socialist United States of Europe, freely entered and equitably and jointly ruled by the independent workers' governments that alone can save Europe from the disintegration, subjugation and chaos to which capitalist barbarism is dooming it.

And second, the seeds of the Third World War are being sown already. World War II is not yet over, decidedly not yet, and the conditions for speeding World War III are being laid. This idea is not peculiar to the revolutionary Marxists. Many bourgeois understand it. Many even fear it, for the bourgeoisie does not *want* war, and especially does it not want the revolutions that come with it. But it is helpless to prevent it, as utterly and completely helpless as it proved itself to be in 1939. The military struggle between the two big camps is accompanied by a feverish political struggle inside the Allied camp. The attempts made in it to come to an agreement on the division of the spoils are condemned in advance to the failure which the essentially temporary character of any imperialist agreement bears from the moment it is adopted. They agreed before, once, twice and ten times. Their very agreements contained the germ of conflict. The agreement over Poland simply injects one of the many germs of tomorrow's conflict.

The two most important ideas of our time are simply the reverse of each other. The continuation of capitalism means war and barbarism. The struggle of the proletariat, consistently developed, means peace and socialism. The time for the choice was long ago. But even now, it is not too late.

*January 1944*



# PORTRAITS OF STALINISM

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## *Trotsky's "Stalin"*

**THE EMERGENCE OF RUSSIA AS A POWER** of first magnitude is indissociable from the name of Stalin. Now that Mussolini is gone, there is nowhere a government chief that has ruled his country for so long a continuous period as Stalin, or ruled it so completely. His mark upon the destiny of Russia and for that matter of the rest of the world has certainly been deeper than that of any other man alive today. Few other lives in a century rampant with thunder and strife have been as stormy as his or have aroused as much controversy. In the face of this, the paucity of serious biographical literature about Stalin—as compared, let us say, with the available literature on the life and work of Lenin or Hitler or even Roosevelt—is astonishing.

This paucity is not so astonishing upon reflection, however. Like all other outstanding personages, Stalin has both a personal history, linked with his character, and a social history; he is at once an individual and a social phenomenon. To treat of the individual "alone" offers virtually no difficulties in the case of a Hitler or a Roosevelt. Their lives are pretty much an open book and what they have to conceal can be laid bare with a good sneeze. As social figures the problem is no more difficult: each in his own way was a child of a social order whose anatomy has long been familiar to modern science. Not so in the case of Stalin. His true personal history is not only obscure in large part, but it has been covered up, nailed down and overlaid with a history manufactured and disseminated on a scale that is utterly unprecedented, stupefying and, for its purpose, effective. His true social history is, if anything, far more baffling, for here we are faced not with a familiar but with a new, unfamiliar, unpredicted, unanalyzed social order, of which Stalin is both the child and the parent.

The biographer thus faces a dual handicap without equal in history. Superficiality, glibness, gullibility, impatience, carelessness, sensationalism, lack of a sympathetic understanding of the movement which nursed Stalin and out of which he rose, personal animus, lack of scientific method, lack of scrupulous objectivity—all

or many of these characterize the authors of the biographical attempts made up to now. Hence, even the best of them only come abreast of the handicap but do not surmount it. No man of our time had the qualifications for coping successfully with the dual obstacle that Trotsky had. We know that he had to drive himself physically, so to speak, to write his study of Stalin,\* for the subject is not very attractive. But he was able to bring to the work an archaeological patience and thoroughness in digging past layer upon layer of falsification to reveal the bare bones of truth; a direct personal knowledge of the Bolshevik movement in its rise and decline, of its protagonists big and small, of the country and the conditions in which they lived and worked; a personal objectivity which is all the more striking in a man whom Stalin rightly considered his greatest and most dangerous adversary; and such a unifying and illuminating grasp of the riches of the Marxist method of analysis and synthesis as the philistines of Marxism, let alone the philistines in general, cannot possibly comprehend. (For them Marxism says: only classes exist, there are no individuals; man is made by history but history is not made by man; politics is a passive, automatic reflex of economics; man's actions are determined by the amount of cash in his purse; and more of the pitiful same.) As for Trotsky's universally-acknowledged literary qualifications, they need to be mentioned at all only because they help sustain interest in the narration and analysis of a life—Stalin's whole early period—which would otherwise be unbearably tedious.

Trotsky was not permitted by his subject to complete the work. He was murdered by a Stalinist gangster in the very midst of the biography. Only parts of the book can be considered Trotsky's finished product. To give greater coherence to the work, the translator has interpolated sections of his own, carefully set off between brackets, which, while based in large measure on notes and rough outlines by the author, are nevertheless so written as to conflict (in some places violently) with the thinking and the purpose of the author himself. The reader will do well to be on guard against this.†

\**Stalin, An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, by Leon Trotsky. 421 pp. with appendix, glossary and index. Illustrated. Translated by Charles Malamuth. Harper & Bros., New York, \$5.00.

†Between brackets, to be sure, and on his own responsibility, the translator permits himself such phrases as "the vaunted democracy of the Soviets" and "centralization, that sure precursor of totalitarianism" and "the 'rule or ruin' attitude of the Bolsheviks," to cite a few. Trotsky never used and never could use such phraseology, with all it implies, and would never have authorized their use by his translator, even as bracketed-off interpolations. They are an offense both to the author and the readers, and mar a felicitous translation.

Bearing all this in mind, the net result is an outstanding and durable triumph over the difficulties whose nature and dimensions we have indicated. It is a first-rate success. If, in our view, a qualification must be added to this, it is for reasons we shall venture to set forth as we go along.

Russian Czarism left its serious opponents no parliamentary alternative to the organization of a conspiratorial revolutionary movement. The historical peculiarities of Russia's backwardness left consistent democracy no alternative to the struggle for proletarian power and socialism. Bolshevism—with all that was singular about it as well as all that identified it with the international Marxian movement—can be understood only against the background of these two circumstances.

To overturn Tsarism and lay the democratic foundations for socialism, argued Lenin, to overturn this centralized, autocratic monster which sprawled over vast and variegated lands and peoples, over such economic, political and cultural backwardness, which combined the refinements of contemporary imperialism with semi-feudal anachronisms—required a trained fighting force having at its command all the science and skill of modern class warfare. Lenin's appeal was answered by the most advanced workers of the country, and also by brilliant intellectual forces of the kind which, a century or two earlier, had made up the vanguard of the revolutionary bourgeois democracy of the Western countries.

In the Bolshevik Party Lenin fused these two elements by unremitting efforts to raise the workers to the theoretical level of the intellectuals who, by mastering Marxism, placed themselves at its service, in order that they could unitedly raise the entire people to the level of a thoroughgoing revolutionary struggle against Tsarism. In one of the first of his writings that revealed him as standing high above all his socialist contemporaries (*What to Do*), Lenin inveighed against the prevailing looseness, dilettantism and amateurishness of the Russian social-democratic movement and developed (far more broadly, profoundly, consciously and systematically than anyone before him) the concept of the "professional revolutionist."

Among the young students who had joined the Social Democracy was Stalin (in Georgia, at the age of 18). In 1904, a year after the split of the party into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, and after some five years of revolutionary underground activity behind him, Stalin associated himself with the Bolsheviks. He became one of Lenin's professional revolutionists, always at the disposal of the party, working illegally from one town to another to spread revolutionary ideas, to build up units of the party among the

workers, to edit party periodicals and popular literature, to organize unions and strikes and demonstrations—even “expropriations” of Tsarist funds with which to finance the underground activity—and to serve more than the usual number of years in Tsarist prison and exile for his work.

For all that, we do not recognize the young Stalin in the Stalin of today; there does not even seem to be a strong resemblance. Trotsky marshals with meticulous attention to detail and overwhelming conclusiveness the facts that have been no secret for a long time:

Stalin was not particularly distinguished in that large group of intellectuals and workers turned Bolshevik professional revolutionists, with respect to grasp of theory, outstanding political ability and independence, or even success in organization—hundreds equalled him at his best and scores were his superior. Stalin was not always an unwavering Bolshevik, if by that is meant a consistent supporter of Lenin's views. Stalin, when he took a position “independent” of Lenin, only disclosed his own provincialism, theoretical backwardness and political mediocrity. Stalin, even after years of direct contact with Lenin and the party leadership, never contributed a positive original idea, never fully grasped the theories and spirit of Bolshevism, was indeed organically alien to them.

Stalin was never really a leader of masses, feared and shunned them in fact, and felt most at home in “committee meetings,” in intrigue, in cunning combinations and mean maneuvers. Stalin was always devoid of idealism, nobility and a socialist passion for freedom, but he is characterized by rudeness, trickiness, brutality, lack of principle, vindictiveness and similar dark traits. More than that: the last year or more of the life of Lenin, founder of Bolshevism, the most authoritative and popular voice in the party as a whole, in the party leadership and the country as a whole, was devoted to increasingly stiff blows at Stalin, culminating in the rupture of all personal relations between them and in Lenin's recommendation that Stalin be removed from his most prominent position, general-secretaryship of the ruling party.

Near the high point of Stalin's power, Trotsky insisted that he was only the “outstanding mediocrity” in the party, and this opinion is reiterated in the biography. But to this must be added facts such as these: the comparatively young Stalin was coöpted, under Tsarism, to Lenin's Central Committee; remained a member of that Committee throughout Lenin's lifetime; was entrusted by Lenin and the leadership with highly responsible tasks; was linked with Trotsky by Lenin in his testament as one of the “two most able

leaders in the present Central Committee"; was nevertheless crushingly assailed by Lenin at the same time in the proposal that he be removed from his post for rudeness, disloyalty and inclination to abuse power; was opposed and combatted at one time or another by virtually every well-known leader of the Bolshevik Party, yet emerged victor over them and in possession of such power and authority as probably no single individual has ever enjoyed in all history.

We seem to be in the realm of irresolvable contradictions. Trotsky did not set himself the mere pedantic task of tabulating the record of a man. Among the aims of the biography is the resolution, by analysis and explanation, of the contradictions, real and apparent.

Against a backdrop of the times—the country, the people, their social relations—Trotsky depicts for us, trait by trait, the personal character of Stalin. More truly, he patiently scrapes away and washes off the encrustation of false strokes and false colors with which Stalin's court painters have concealed his original portrait. That so much time and space should be devoted by a Marxist to personal characteristics in the writing of a political history (Trotsky's biography is nothing but a *political history*) must appear strange and out of place to those whose "concepts" about Marxism are vastly greater than their knowledge of it. Yet Trotsky is *entirely* in the Marxian tradition and a master-hand with the Marxian method. It was the old teacher Marx himself who once wrote in a letter to his friend Kugelmann that world history would indeed be of a "very mystical nature if 'accidents' played no rôle in it. . . . But the acceleration or slowing-down [of the general course of development] are very much dependent upon such 'accidents,' among which also figures the 'accident' of the character of those people who at first stand at the head of the movement."

In restoring the portrait, Trotsky gives us the anatomy of its character. If we abstract each of its features and classify them (rather arbitrarily, as we will see) into "the good" and "the bad" we find, under one heading, firmness, courage, perseverance, will-power, and under the other, rudeness, low cunning, vengefulness, theoretical and political mediocrity, narrowness of horizon and lack of intellectual profundity or breadth, and so forth. The trouble is precisely the fact that these features of character simply cannot be abstracted. In fact, once they are "abstracted," that is the end of all sense in the study of Stalin.

Lenin valued Stalin for his characteristics—for most of them, at any rate—and was able to utilize them in the interests of the movement. And in this he was right. To appreciate this judgment,

it is necessary to understand something about the class struggle in general and about working-class politics, and it is of course necessary to live in this world and not in an imaginary one. Before Lenin got to know Stalin personally—in 1913, during Stalin's first really important trip abroad in Cracow and Vienna where he came into intimate contact with the Bolshevik leader—he knew about him from reports, correspondence or through the opinions of other party men. Even if the views which Stalin ventured now and then to express in opposition to Lenin's had impinged on the latter's consciousness, they could not possibly have made a very deep impression. Lenin undoubtedly made allowances for that. He held no malice toward comrades who differed with him (after all, comrades much more prominent than Stalin and much closer to Lenin differed with him on countless questions of theory and policy without losing his esteem), and then Stalin was still a pretty young comrade and only of local importance in the organization. Yet Lenin, before really knowing him, successfully proposed his coöptation into the Bolshevik Central Committee, in 1912, only a month after the candidacy had been rejected at the party conference in Prague. How could this happen?

The revolution of 1905 was followed by a deep and widespread reaction. It was not long after its defeat that the whole social-democratic movement, the Bolshevik faction included, began to disintegrate. Those around Lenin who remained steadfast felt the vise of isolation tightening around them year after year, with no let-up until the resurgence began seven years later, in 1912. It should not be too hard for our own generation, which has also seen the consequences of defeats in the form of desertions, disorientation, skepticism, to understand what the movement must have gone through in Russia between 1906 and 1912. It does not, alas, sound altogether unfamiliar when we read Trotsky's description of the times:

Desertion assumed a mass character. Intellectuals abandoned politics for science, art, religion, and erotic mysticism. The finishing touch on this picture was the epidemic of suicides. The transvaluation of values was first of all directed against the revolutionary parties and their leaders. . . .

News dispatches from local organizations to the party's central organ, which was again transferred abroad, were no less eloquent in recording the revolution's disintegration. Even in the hard-labor prisons, the heroes and heroines of uprisings and of terrorist acts turned their backs in enmity upon their own yesterdays and used such words as "party," "comrade," "socialism" in no other than the ironic sense.

Desertions took place not only among the intellectuals, not only among those who were here today and gone tomorrow and to whom the

movement was but a half-way house, but even among the advanced workers, who had been part and parcel of the party for years.

. . . In 1909 Russia still had five or six active organizations; but even they soon sank into desuetude. Membership in the Moscow district organization, which was as high as 500 toward the end of 1908, dropped to 250 in the middle of the following year and half a year later to 150; in 1910 the organization ceased to exist.

Bolshevik leaders were no absolute exception to the trend. Some turned Menshevik; some turned "God-Seekers"; more than a few dropped out of the movement altogether, and if even the official biographies of many of those who became prominent again after the Bolshevik revolution say nothing about their activities from 1906 to 1912 (and sometimes to 1914 and even to 1916), it is because there were no activities to record.

In such times, Stalin's characteristics were of positive value—especially if the reader maintains simple historical balance and remembers that the Stalin of 1946 is not the Stalin of 35-40 years ago. Stalin was one of the not-too-many who did not flinch and did not quit. His tenacity stood out. He continued without perturbation to risk his life and freedom. If it is said that there were others like him even in those hard days, it is no less true that there were far more unlike him. Lenin could see in him perhaps not an inspired but a stubborn organizer, perhaps not a distinguished but a versevering party man, taking prison life or exile in his stride, returning to his party work without a breathing spell. It is not necessary to idealize the pre-war Stalin to understand this.

Such attributes of character as slyness, faithlessness, the ability to exploit the lowest instincts of human nature [writes Trotsky] are developed to an extraordinary degree in Stalin and, considering his strong character, represent mighty weapons in a struggle. Not, of course, any struggle. The struggle to liberate the masses requires other attributes. But in selecting men for privileged positions, in welding them together in the spirit of the caste, in weakening and disciplining the masses, Stalin's attributes were truly invaluable and rightfully made him a leader of the bureaucratic reaction. [Nevertheless] Stalin remains a mediocrity. His mind is not only devoid of range but is even incapable of logical thinking. Every phrase of his speech has some immediate practical aim. But his speech as a whole never rises to a logical structure.

And again, in dealing with the reaction of the July days between the February and October revolutions, Trotsky writes:

The mass movement had in the meantime weakened considerably. Half of the party had gone underground. The preponderance of the machine had grown correspondingly. Inside of the machine, the rôle of Stalin grew automatically. That law operates unalterably throughout his entire political biography and forms, as it were, its mainspring.

It is hard to contest a single word in the sentences quoted. They describe qualities which explain Stalin's rise not only in the post-Lenin reaction, but his slower and much more modest rise during Lenin's lifetime. The incapacity for logical thinking prevented him from developing as an independent political thinker, but he had a quality which enabled him to repeat day in and day out, in his own peculiar style, the simple, hammer-logical ideas of Lenin, and that made him a sufficiently reliable party organizer. His quality of vindictiveness was directed, in the pre-revolutionary days, primarily against backsliders and all other opponents of the party, so that he gave the impression, apart from isolated incidents and expressions of which few could have been aware, of political firmness. Even his quality of exploiting "the lowest instincts of human nature" must, in those days, have taken the form, so far as was generally known, of appealing to the popular hatred of Tsarism and its social iniquities.

As for that law which Trotsky calls the mainspring of Stalin's rôle and evolution—rightly, we believe—its operation, too, was different at different times and under different controls. The period of post-1905 reaction was not the period of mass action. It was a period of trying to hold the party together, of preventing complete disintegration. The party was reduced to its local committees, important in general, exceptionally important in countries with an illegal movement, trebly important in the days of reaction. In the "committee" Stalin felt at home and probably discharged well the task of tasks—imbuing others with tenacity, with contempt for the deserters and liquidators, with contempt for bourgeois public opinion about Bolshevism and especially about its then prevalent "expropriations."

What held true before 1917 must have held true during and after 1917.

Stalin, *by himself*, was and certainly is incapable of logical thinking, let alone thinking in terms of revolutionary socialist internationalism and of the Marxian scientific method. He could repeat what Lenin said, not as well as some but better than many. But for that he had to know what Lenin said or thought. When Lenin's views were not yet known, during the first period after the overturn of Tsarism, Stalin showed that he understood Bolshevism to mean that the proletariat, once the autocracy is destroyed, supports bourgeois democracy as a radical but more-or-less loyal opposition. The socialist perspective was only a perspective and a remote one. He supported the bourgeois Kerensky régime "in so far as it is not reactionary"—the same formula that some self-styled Trotskyists today use to support the Stalin régime.

But his rôle before Lenin's return to Russia did not and could not rule him out of the party leadership, in Lenin's eyes. Far more prominent leaders of the party took a position not one whit better than Stalin's and often worse. What's more, they maintained it more persistently than Stalin. Stalin had made disastrous mistakes from the standpoint of political leadership. But Lenin could not make lasting reproaches for that. He did not regard him as an outstanding political leader in his own right, and consequently did not apply to him the severe criteria to which others had to submit and to which they were, so to speak, entitled.

You might almost say that it was Stalin's very lack of political distinction, the fact that he laid no claim to independence of political and theoretical thought, his very characteristic of reiterating Lenin's thoughts (even if not very brilliantly), or of carefully reducing his disagreements to brief brushes followed by silent but prompt leaps on to the bandwagon—that made him valuable in the leadership. This is not to be construed in the least as an apology for political servility to the "party chief." It is simply that, politically speaking, Stalin was most useful when he faithfully repeated, as best he could, the ideas of Lenin. Not laying claim to being a politician in his own right, his errors could all the more easily be corrected.

So far—the negative. But positively, his usefulness in the days of preparing for the insurrection and in the days of the civil war that followed it assured him a place in the leadership, if not an eminent place then a solid place nevertheless. He had a "hand that did not tremble," and for those who are interested in the revolution getting off the paper to which it is normally confined, this is not a quality to sneeze at. By his very nature and bent, he was able, better than many others, to get the coöperation of all the lower ranks of the party machine—the committeemen of yesterday and today—and to protect the interests of the party, which he identified more and more with the party machine. Where a merciless hand was needed—as it so often is in revolutionary times, the critical observers to the contrary notwithstanding—his was always available, often used and sure to be merciless. In negotiations and such-like activities, he could more often than not be well trusted to represent the interests of the revolution: he had will-power; he could not easily be swayed by arguments of the adversary; his brutality could easily appear as imperious insistence; his cunning and slyness as effective ruse and guile in outwitting and outwitting the enemy; his penchant for intrigue and forming a clique around himself as a sympathetic and tender ear for the woes and vicissitudes of the misunderstood comrade.

In the period of revolutionary rise and under the control of a revolutionary party, not all of Stalin's characteristics were negative. In the service of the revolution, many of them could be and were put to such uses as explain without too much difficulty his specific place in the leadership and Lenin's evaluation of him as a leader. A leadership, not on paper, but at the head of a real revolutionary party, cannot be made of men with uniformly high qualifications or with qualifications equally applicable in all fields.

A leadership composed only of Lenins and Trotskys is an alluring but utopian idea. *With all things properly arranged*, the Zinovievs and Stalins and all other first-class second-raters also find their place in the leadership and enrich its capacities. You cannot have an opera with only lyric sopranos in it, or a complex machine of fine steel without bronze or brass or baser alloys in it.

Calling Trotsky and Stalin the two most able men in the leadership was no mistake on Lenin's part. As we understand it, he meant that either of them, by virtue of the qualities each possessed, could hold the party together and lead it—each, that is, in his own way. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, Bukharin—the only other men Lenin mentions in his testament—were all leaders of the highest caliber. All belonged incontestably in the leadership. But none had the qualifications to hold the party firmly together and *lead* it. But because Lenin was not concerned merely with holding it together but with *how* it would be held together and *by whom*, he ended his testament with the appeal to remove, not Trotsky, but Stalin from his post and from his power. The appeal proved unsuccessful.

To explain the rise of Stalin and the unsuccess of Lenin's appeal—which was at the same time an appeal for the restoration and burgeoning of workers' democracy—Trotsky wastes little more than a passing comment on the ludicrous and infantile assertion that "Bolshevism leads to Stalinism" which has been popularized in recent years by deserters from the socialist struggle who would like to cover their retreat behind the cloud of a "theory," and by some helpless and hopelessly disoriented victims of Stalinism who take the odd revenge of supporting Stalin's claim to Lenin's succession. One of these "anti-Stalinist" deserters, who, in quick succession, abjured Bolshevism, Trotskyism and socialism itself, and then remembered with such indignation that Marx could not make a respectable living for his family that he sped with unerring instinct to a job which keeps him in the style to which his poetry did not accustom him—now calls himself a "radical democrat."

Irony! If Lenin had not appeared in April, 1917, and if the Bolshevik Party had not re-armed itself to make the Bolshevik revolution; and if (what was most unlikely) bourgeois democracy

had consolidated itself in Russia—it is more than likely that the “disintegration of Bolshevism” would have taken the form of conversion into the mere left-wing opposition of bourgeois democracy, into the party of “radical democrats,” with Stalin most probably that party’s boss. That was how many Bolshevik leaders, Stalin prominently included, practically conceived of Lenin’s formula of the “democratic dictatorship of proletarian and peasantry” that was to be established on the ruins of Tsardom.

But Stalin’s transformation from revolutionist to reactionary—a not uncommon change, unfortunately, as Mussolini showed—did not take place under conditions of the maintenance of bourgeois society, or of its restoration. His transformation is unique. Hence the complications; hence the mystery. To this transformation, Trotsky devotes a long and, alas, the unfinished section of his book. Enough remains of the draft, however, to preclude ambiguity about Trotsky’s views.

Trotsky seeks the cause of the change neither in the alleged inherence of Stalinism in Bolshevism nor in the all-determining power of Stalin’s personal character. He looks instead for those social and political factors which lent themselves to the actual evolution of Stalin and Stalinism and which were, in turn, significantly influenced by this evolution. Risking misunderstanding and vulgarization, Trotsky nevertheless does not hesitate to trace the Stalinist type, in embryo, to the old pre-war Bolshevik militant, the “committeeman.”

We have often heard the argument made in the small revolutionary group: “How can we have bureaucrats among us? Bureaucratism is a social phenomenon. There are bureaucrats in the trade unions, because they have an economic base and a stake in capitalism. But among us? Aren’t our officials poorly paid—when they are paid at all? Be a Marxist—show me the economic base for our alleged bureaucratism! You cannot? Then be off with you, and let’s hear no more about bureaucratism in our little revolutionary party!” This is sacred ritual in some radical circles. You are puzzled to know if the argument is made out of village ignorance or know-better demagogy. In either case, Trotsky smothers it—for good, we hope—in a couple of paragraphs. He is speaking, understand, of Lenin’s Bolshevik Party, which was small, revolutionary, self-sacrificing from top to bottom, and worse than poor.

The habits peculiar to a political machine were already forming in the underground. The young revolutionary bureaucrat was already emerging as a type. The conditions of conspiracy, true enough, offered rather meager scope for such of the formalities of democracy as electiveness, accountability and control. Yet undoubtedly the committeemen narrowed

these limitations and considerably more than necessity demanded and were far more intransigent and severe with the revolutionary workingmen than with themselves, preferring to domineer even on occasions that called imperatively for lending an attentive ear to the voice of the masses.

One of the keys, and not the least important one, to the mystery of Stalin's rise, is in understanding of the relationship between the bureaucratism and power of the "committeeman"—"the young revolutionary bureaucrat"—on the one side, and the activity of the masses, their capacities at any given stage for effecting social changes, on the other. It gives clearer meaning to what Trotsky calls the "law" governing the change in rôle and evolution of Stalin.

Even the Bolshevik Party cadres [Trotsky continues elsewhere], who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training, were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown. What, then, could be expected of these cadres when they became an all-powerful state bureaucracy? It is unlikely that Stalin gave this matter any thought. He was flesh of the flesh of the machine and the toughest of its bones.

In the course of the decay of the Bolshevik revolution, these bones acquired such flesh and muscles and flesh and mind and *social purpose* as nobody expected or foresaw, not Lenin or Trotsky and not even Stalin (in making this last point, Trotsky is entirely correct).

The revolution will flower into socialism provided it is soon followed by successful revolution in the more advanced countries of the West. The very barbarism of Tsarist Russia made it possible for the working class of that country to be the first to take socialist power. In this respect, Trotsky's brilliant theory of the "permanent revolution" was brilliantly confirmed in 1917. But the same barbarism, to mention no other considerations, will prevent the realization of socialism by national efforts alone. This, too, was confirmed, not only tragically but in a unique and unprecedented way. If the revolution in the West does not come, said *all* the Bolsheviks, our revolution will perish. "Perish" simply meant: capitalism will be restored in Russia; the outside capitalist world will lend its overwhelming forces to the remaining capitalistic elements inside of Russia and crush the workers' government and its ruling party—all of it.

This did not happen. But the revolution did perish. Given the continued failure of the proletarian revolution to win in the West, the power of the working class was doomed in Russia—nothing else could save it. But if the prospect of maintaining workers' power

in Russia alone was hopeless, the prospect of restoring capitalism in Russia was not hopeful. Fifty years earlier, the failure of the Paris Commune meant its automatic replacement by capitalist rule. First, the revolution that established the Commune was purely spontaneous, unprepared and did not have the enormous advantage of the directing brain and spinal column of a modern revolutionary political party. Second and more important, capitalism everywhere was still on the powerful upswing.

The Russian revolution, on the other hand, was planned, prepared for and carried through by an increasingly powerful and integrated political machine, in the best sense of the word. It overthrew a putrescent régime and destroyed almost overnight a small and economically feeble capitalist class, so that whatever capitalistic elements remained in the country, the peasantry primarily, had no important and strong *urban* counterpart and consequently, no national class capable of giving it leadership in the struggle to restore capitalism. Capitalism cannot be restored or established by the "blind workings" of economy in general, but only by the living classes that these "blind workings" create. The capitalist class of the rest of the world, however—what of it? For reasons we need not dwell on—the fact alone suffices for the moment—it proved incapable of crushing the revolution by armed force in the early years. In the second and, we think, more decisive place, the decay of the revolution—what Trotsky calls the "unwinding process"—took place simultaneously with the decay and agony of capitalist society itself—a most significant conjunction of processes. Trotsky is more correct than is explicit in his own views when he writes: "The Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world."

In agony itself, capitalism could not overturn the workers' state. Yet the rule of the workers could not be saved. What could be saved, and what was saved, and what was extended and expanded and rooted as deeply as never before were the special privileges of a new bureaucracy. It is in the course of this process that Stalin's qualities took the form they did, for that is what they were best suited to. In the process he emerged as traitor to the proletarian revolution and socialism—but hero, and rightly so considered, to the beneficiaries of the new régime.

For reasons already mentioned—more and even more cogent reasons could be adduced without number—the counter-revolution could not take place in the name of capitalist property or in its interests. The reaction in Russia took the form of a vast weariness of the masses. But if they were worn out in the rigorous struggle

to maintain socialist power, they were not so worn out as to tolerate, let alone welcome, a restoration of capitalist rule. They would not surrender power to the classes they had overthrown in 1917. In this determination, they were joined not only by the ruling party in general, but by the party bureaucracy in particular. The restoration of capitalism would mean the crushing not only of the working class, *but of the bureaucracy as well*, whether in its 1923 form or in its form today. Whatever else the bureaucracy is ready to endure, that is a fate that is too much like death; it in no way corresponds to its aspirations or its evolution.

The counter-revolution could be carried through successfully only in the name of the revolution and for its ostensible preservation. What was really involved was the preservation and extension of the privileges and power of the bureaucracy.

Here it is necessary to be most precise, to distinguish between bureaucracy and *bureaucracy*, to avoid the imprecision which undermined Trotsky's analysis after a certain point. What must be distinguished, and clearly, is the stratum composed of "the young revolutionary bureaucrat" of the revolutionary and early post-revolutionary period, and the *present-day* Stalinist bureaucracy. The former was a *working-class bureaucracy*, or if you please, a revolutionary working-class bureaucracy. Its fate was tied up, consciously and in fact, with the working class, its revolution and *its rule*. In its struggle against the proletarian socialist opposition (Trotskyism), it *reflected*, like every labor bureaucracy, the pressure of hostile classes, but it was animated by the conviction that the maintenance and consolidation of the power of the bureaucracy was the only way in which to save the achievement of the socialist revolution itself. In this case, Trotsky is quite right about Stalin when he says that he did not "think through to the social significance of this process in which he was playing the leading rôle."

But even in this conviction, the bureaucracy was profoundly mistaken. Quite unconsciously, in all probability, it identified its rôle, *mutatis mutandis*, with the rôle of the bureaucracy in bourgeois society. In the latter case, it is absolutely true that, especially as capitalist society decays, the *only* way the rule of capitalism can be maintained is by the bourgeoisie surrendering its *political* power to an all-pervading bureaucracy in order to preserve its social power which is based on the ownership of capital.

The contrary is true in the transitional workers' state. There the political power exercised democratically by the working class can be replaced by a ruling bureaucracy, however beneficent and well-meaning, only in the most exceptional circumstances and for

the briefest of periods (civil war, for example), for the decisive reason that the *peculiarity* of the rule of the working class lies in the fact that if it does not have political power (if it is not the "proletariat raised to political supremacy"), it does not have any power whatsoever and is in no sense the ruling class.

For this fundamental mistake, the already not-so-very "young revolutionary bureaucrats" paid the heaviest toll. After the opening of the factional struggle in the Bolshevik Party, Trotsky repeatedly declared that the party bureaucracy is opening the road to capitalist restoration, is the channel through which capitalism was pouring. This was popularly understood to mean—and Trotsky unfortunately contributed to this misunderstanding by saying it explicitly on more than one occasion—that the bureaucracy *aimed* at restoring capitalism. Entirely wrong! It could be held to be true only in one specific and limited sense: the bureaucracy was so undermining the revolutionary resistance of the proletariat as to deprive it of the strength with which to fight off the encroaching capitalist restoration which would enslave it as it would crush the power of the bureaucracy itself. As is known, this is not what happened. The bureaucracy could not rule *for* the proletariat. Consequence? It could not rule for itself either!

By the bureaucracy here, we are referring primarily to the old Bolshevik bureaucracy and not to its successors—and exterminators. This cannot be overemphasized. For the proletariat *to hold Russia together* required the world revolution which would assure a socialist development for Russia. Without the world revolution, the bureaucracy which shouldered out the working class not only could not assure a socialist development for Russia but *could not hold it together*. That bureaucracy took several political forms: from the "trinity" of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin which began the open struggle against "Trotskyism," *i.e.*, workers' rule—down to the "all-Leninist" bloc of Stalin-Bukharin-Tomsky. It continually weakened the proletariat, undermined its will and power, and brought such chaos into the country as threatened its very integrity. Again and again, "the revolutionary bureaucracy" as a substitute for the proletariat could not hold the country together, could not give it any kind of strength.

What was needed was a "new corps of slave-drivers" (as Trotsky calls it in another book)—what we call the new ruling class in Stalinist Russia, bureaucratic-collectivist Russia. The decaying "revolutionary bureaucracy" contributed not a few members to this new ruling class, but the two are by no means identical. That is why the achievement and consolidation of power by the new bureaucracy was preceded not only by the destruction of the work-

ing-class socialist opposition (Trotskyism) but also by the political and physical destruction of all the Zinovievists, all the Bukharinists, all the "conciliators," all the capitulators and virtually all the *original* Stalinist cadres as well, that is, *all* the sections, wings, tendencies, strata of the Bolshevik Party. This important fact is obscured but not refuted by the accidental and purely personal phenomenon of the presence in the leadership of the new régime of a *handful* of the old revolutionists (that is, ex-revolutionists) like Stalin, Molotov and a very few others, a phenomenon with little more significance than the accidental presence in the leadership of the fascist régime of ex-socialists like Mussolini and another handful of turncoats like him.

The fact is symbolically but inadequately represented in a significant passage in Trotsky:

The bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev restrained Stalin. Having undergone long periods of schooling under Lenin, they appreciated the value of ideas and programs. Although from time to time they indulged in monstrous deviations from the platform of Bolshevism and in violations of its ideological integrity, all under the guise of military subterfuge, they never transgressed certain limits. But when the triumvirate split, Stalin found himself released from all ideological restraints.

The passage would be adequate if put in other terms. The Zinovievs, and even the Bukharins (in another way), represented the "revolutionary bureaucracy" and only *deviated*, however monstrously, from Bolshevism, that is, from the concept of workers' power and socialism. The Stalin of today and the class he defends represent an irreconcilable *break* with Bolshevism, an *anti-working-class* force in every respect, including the most fundamental.

To bring this new reactionary class to absolute power was a task which, however unconsciously performed, coincided with Stalin's personal ambitions and was enormously facilitated by his personal characteristics. For this task, he was eminently indicated and useful. Who could more easily lead in the destruction of Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks in the very name of Bolshevism—an old monarchist or Menshevik or an old Bolshevik? Who could more lightly undo the basic achievement of the revolution—the establishment of the working masses as the ruling class—than one who felt organically alien to the masses, who saw in them nothing more than an instrument for the revolutionary "committeemen" whom he regarded as the only safe repository of what he understood by socialism? To whom would socialist science and Marxian tradition be a more superfluous burden when sailing before the winds of

social reaction than to a man who never fully grasped them at his best and who regarded them as the toys of intellectuals at his worst? His very incapacity for logical thinking was invaluable in the performance of his social task.

The rising bourgeoisie was capable of logical thought, of logical presentation of its historic claims to the public and in the name of progress. The rising proletariat, in its socialist form, is even more capable of doing the same thing and under an even greater necessity to do so. The new ruling bureaucracy in Stalinist Russia need not present an "independent program" in its own name, or in the name of logic. In fact, it cannot, by its very nature, do so. Bastard of history, it can do nothing but falsify history and falsify thought. Given his character, it found in Stalin its eminently "logical" exponent. Will-power to destroy a revolution in its own name, nerveless brutality in the execution of as monstrous a task as history knows, craftiness of the highest (lowest?) order in the successive cutting down of one section of Bolshevism after another or in getting one section to cut down another until there was nothing left—these qualities were required in highly-developed form. Stalin had them.

By himself he accomplished nothing, nor could he. He had social winds in his sails. He was pushed—with what degree of consciousness on his part or theirs is hard to say—by a gathering and powerful social force, the new bureaucracy. It saw in him, all things considered, an ideal representative. It did not hesitate to use the more-or-less capitalistic peasantry to destroy the power of the proletariat and the revolutionists. But not, by Heaven! for the sake of the peasantry or any capitalistic claimant to power. Restore capitalism? Why?

In his important appendix to the biography, Trotsky says, without any supporting argument (we do not think there is any) that "the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration." In the text, however, Trotsky writes differently and far, far more correctly. The struggle between the new bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie "was a direct struggle for power and for income. Obviously the bureaucracy did not rout the proletarian vanguard, pull free from the complications of the international revolution, and legitimize the philosophy of inequality in order to capitulate before the bourgeoisie, become the latter's servant, and be eventually itself pulled away from the state feed-bag." And further on: "To guard the nationalization of the means of production and of the land, is the bureaucracy's law of life and death, for these are the social sources of its dominant position."

A thousand times right! To understand it is to begin to intro-

duce the necessary corrective in Trotsky's old position which is implicitly abandoned in the above passages. The "social sources" of the bureaucracy's dominance are assured them, however, *only* by virtue of their political power, their control of the state—just as the nationalized means of production were the social sources of the proletariat's dominance *only* when it was assured of political power.

*Political power, and therefore all power, to the bureaucracy is what Stalin's triumph gave this new ruling class.* More—far more—than any other individual, he organized the "new corps of slave-drivers" and its system of exploitation so as to build up the mightiest (we do not say "the most durable" but only "the mightiest") of Russian Empires and thus endowed the slavedrivers as a whole with the greatest power and privilege a ruling class ever enjoyed.

What does this achievement, which it would be foolish to deny, do for Stalin as an historical figure? The recent "controversy" over the question: "Is Stalin a great man?" seems to us academic and sterile, a semantic quarrel at best. Everything here depends on your criteria. The English aristocracy still looks upon the great Napoleon as nothing but a miserable monster; the French damn Robespierre as a perverse gnome and—the Stalinists now glorify Ivan the Terrible. It can be freely admitted that Stalin was "underestimated" in the past, but only because, in our view, the social capacities of the new bureaucracy (which should not now, in turn, be overestimated) on which he bases himself were underestimated.

Trotsky is right, we think, in arguing that even Stalin's rise to a super-Caesaro-Papist totalitarian dictatorship is not due to his "genius." He was pushed to power by the bureaucracy which has no small share in the enjoyment of it. Yet the fact is that as he moved toward his power, Stalin pulled the new bureaucracy along with him, assembled it, gave it what self-confidence it has, codified and assured its privileges and, in general, lifted it to power next to his own throne.

To imagine that the bureaucrats look upon him as a mediocrity is to imagine that they have greater intellectual and cultural capacities than he, greater devotion to ideals in general or socialism in particular. Nothing of the sort is true. The ruling bureaucracy idealizes and worships Stalin with a certain enthusiasm and conviction, to say nothing of gratitude. To them he is a great man, perhaps the greatest in history, and according to their lights they are not far from right. How many men can you find in history who have been so ruthless and thoroughgoing in establishing and protecting the power of a ruling class? Bukharin compared Stalin with Genghis Khan. There is a big difference—the difference between

primitive Asiatic despotism riding on Mongol ponies, as it were, and modern totalitarian tyranny whose GPU rides tractors and tanks. From the standpoint of the Stalinist bureaucracy, its *Vozhd* is by far the greater of the two!

There is another standpoint. The great man is the one who by thought or deed or both, and under whatever circumstances, by whatever methods or for whatever class, helped lift mankind a few feet closer to the light, helped it to acquire greater knowledge of itself, greater mastery over nature and society so that it might more speedily free itself from subjection to nature and from all physical and intellectual fetters. From this standpoint, it is doubtful if Stalin qualifies even as the "outstanding mediocrity" of Bolshevism. In measuring Stalin, Trotsky could not but employ the criterion which is, in our times, if not the only one, then at least the overwhelmingly decisive one: What contribution has he made to advancing the cause of working-class emancipation? Hounded into obscure exile, isolated, writing in the shadow of an assassin in the hire of the all-powerful victor, Trotsky gave his answer: "To me, in mind and feeling, Stalin's unprecedented elevation represents the very deepest fall." We who continue to share the deepseated socialist convictions which sustained Trotsky to the very end, share this terribly just judgment and comprehend it to the full. No great man ever wore to his death, as Stalin will, the brand of Cain and the stigma of traitor.

*October 1946*



*Bertram Wolfe on Stalinism*

THE READER OF WOLFE'S BOOK is at a certain disadvantage. The volume, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, is only the first of a contemplated trilogy. It brings the "historical biography" to the outbreak of the First World War and ends abruptly with the quotation of *Seven Theses on the War* which Lenin presented to a small group of Bolsheviks early in September, 1914. The period of the war, the year 1917, the unfolding of the Bolshevik revolution and then the rise of Stalinism are left for the two volumes to come. The author's views on the basic problems of the Russian Revolution and counter-revolution are therefore not set down as systematic conclusions from the main events themselves. They are only indicated or suggested in the parenthetical projections, so to say, which are made in comments on the period in which these events germinated.

Through no fault of the author, who cannot be reproached for not dealing in one book with all the questions that three books are needed to cover, the reader is left with judgments not elaborated to the extent to which, presumably, they will be when the final volume of the series is at hand.

But the parenthetical comments are as adequate for our needs as they must have been for the author's. The indications and suggestions may not be rounded and complete, but the basic points of his views are plain enough.

Wolfe sets forth his aim early in the book. Writing of the effects of the first revolution of 1917 in loosening all the bonds of the people, except the bond of war, he adds: "Why freedom did not come to flower and fruit in that swift growth is one of the tragic problems with which we shall have to deal." If that were the only problem to be dealt with (actually, it is the only real problem Wolfe deals with), it would justify not only one or three but a dozen volumes and the work of a lifetime. It is not too much to say that this is *the* problem of our time. Not one serious political question but is related to it or dependent upon its solution—its solution not in the realm of theory, or not alone there, but in the realm of action.

Only a gross incomprehension of the social problem can challenge or deny the validity of this statement. As for ourselves, we take it for granted. Socialism, human freedom, cannot advance except at the expense of Stalinism; it can triumph only by destroying it utterly. Anything that contributes to clarifying the socialist understanding of Stalinism, to helping in the socialist struggle against it, is a welcome addition to our arsenal.

If, to take an extreme example, it would really be proved now, looking back upon all the properly arranged facts with a fresh but objective eye, that this totalitarian monstrosity has its natural origins in Bolshevism or even Marxism in general, it would be insane fanaticism to cling to the ideas of Lenin or Marx. The socialist movement does not exist to serve their ideas; they are worth defending only if they serve the socialist movement, but certainly not if they serve only to usher us into a new slavery.

Man is not made for the Sabbath, the Sabbath is made for man. But before we can even think of deserting the tradition and theoretical structure of socialism to build a new one from cellar to attic, we would have to see that proved, and thoroughly! Up to now, nobody has proved it. Nobody, we think, will. This notwithstanding, we unhesitatingly and unreservedly agree that, in view of the present outcome of a revolution that was carried out in the name of the ideas of Marx and Lenin, the whole history of the Russian revolutionary movement (and not it alone) bears examination and reëxamination with a critical mind that eschews all hero-worship, all blind subservience to tradition, all dogmas and . . . all superficiality.

In the reëxamination undertaken by Wolfe, the reader is immediately impressed—especially after a trip through the effluvia of Duranty and Shub—by its serious scholarship. It is not exhaustive and is not meant to be, but there is not, to our knowledge, a single other work in the world that gives such an extensive and detailed survey of the pre-1914 Russian revolutionary movement, its ideas, its problems, its leaders and its conflicts. The immensity of the research into original sources is matched by the carefulness with which the important material is presented. Errors of fact are very few in number and, on the whole, of minor importance. The solidity with which the facts are mustered enables the author to breach all sorts of myths and falsifications. The products of the Stalinist lie-and-myth factory take especially heavy blows, for most of which the author acknowledges his debt not only to Souvarine but especially to Trotsky's autobiography and his unfinished biographies of Lenin and Stalin. In passing, almost, other legends receive the treatment they deserve. (For example, Alexinsky's in-

vention about Lenin's love affair with "Elizabeth K.," which Shub swallowed so avidly, is dismissed in a contemptuous footnote).

Unfortunately, the gratification that should be felt about such a work is vitiated by the method which the author employs in his analysis. It results in a completely erroneous and misleading appraisal of the Russian revolution and leaves the reader no more enlightened about the "tragic problem"—the rise of Stalinism—than he is after reading Shub's book. It is a harsh thing to say about a work which is so distinguished from the tawdriness and vulgarity of Shub's, but to say less would be to say too little.

Wolfe describes the position taken before the revolution by the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks and by Trotsky. But, he adds:

What actually happened would not fully justify any one of the three positions. History, a sly and capricious wench, would show that she had yet other tricks up her sleeves. The unity of all oppositional forces would indeed suffice to overthrow the Tsar and set up a democratic republic (the formula of the Mensheviks plus Lenin). But Lenin, who in 1905 had been in favor of entering a "provisional revolutionary government," would refuse to enter; and the Mensheviks, who had regarded such a coalition with the bourgeois parties as impermissible "ministerialism" or opportunism, would take a leading part in the Provisional Government. Further, revolutionary will and a power-centered party organization would suffice to overthrow the republic and set up a minority dictatorship (the formula of Trotsky). But it would not suffice to bring into being a world revolution and a socialist society (the further expressed calculation of Trotsky and Parvus, and the unformulated hope of Lenin). In short, History—with that capital H which these men who knew her every intention were prone to use—would decide neither for Axelrod-Martov, nor for Trotsky-Parvus, nor for Lenin-Trotsky, but for yet another variant, undreamed of by any, the chief embodiment of which would be that third one of our protagonists, Joseph Stalin, whom we are shortly to introduce into our story.

This well serve to introduce us to Wolfe's style: the polite mockery, the faint air of condescension, the misplaced irony, the elderly skepticism toward the Russian Revolution and its leaders which is so fashionable nowadays. Not unrelated to it, but more important, is Wolfe's method.

We are struck in the above quotation, first of all, by the obvious anachronism. If, as Wolfe goes into such special detail to show, Trotsky, if not Parvus, was such a vehement adversary of Bolshevism, from as far back as 1903, precisely because of the "power-centered" character of its party organization, it could hardly have been an element in his formula for setting up "a minority dictatorship" or in his calculation of what would suffice for a world revolution and a socialist society.

In the second place, neither Lenin nor Trotsky nor *anyone* else in the Marxist movement could even have thought in the

terms ascribed to them by Wolfe, terms which are, in a sense, ridiculously meaningless. Revolutionary will, Lenin and Trotsky always had. But it never occurred nor could it occur to them that that would *suffice* to set up a dictatorship of any kind, let alone bring about a world revolution and a socialist society. It would not suffice even if it were coupled with a "power-centered party organization," for Lenin, at least, had such an organization early in life.

If it is argued that Wolfe does not mean just any "power-centered party organization" but only one which has, in addition to revolutionary will, a certain amount of strength, then his case is even worse off. For it should be obvious that to achieve this strength (which would certainly have to be more-than-trifling for so by-no-means-trifling a task as a socialist revolution in Russia *and* throughout the world), the party organization would first have to win the support of large social forces. And it should be no less obvious that such support could be won only in times when social developments reached a revolutionary tension that would impel these forces to give their support to the avowedly "power-centered" party.

That the quintessential and decisive importance of these social forces for the revolution (bourgeois or socialist) was always obvious and central to the thinking of Lenin and Trotsky is so clear from the numerous quotations which Wolfe himself adduces from their works that his reference to their views as to what would "suffice" is incomprehensible. Rather, it is comprehensible only in terms of Wolfe's own tendency to ignore the power and significance of broad social forces, whose interests and conflicts make up history—with or without a capital H, slyness or caprice. His attention is centered almost exclusively upon disembodied ideas and programs, including those that were "unformulated."

In any case, we know now that the sly and capricious wench, in playing tricks with the Russian Revolution, decided in the end for the variant of Stalinism which was not even dreamed of by any of the early revolutionists in spite of their absurd belief that they knew her every intention. Let us allow that the reference is an acceptable literary liberty and that it does not mean to say that Stalinism is a product of historical caprice. The problem still stands of "why freedom did not come to flower and fruit," and literarious flourishes do not suffice for the answer.

Wolfe has an answer. His first volume already indicates it clearly. The final variant was undreamed of, in one sense. But in another sense it was dreamed of and predicted, even brilliantly predicted. How? In the warnings that each of the three outstanding leaders of Russian Marxism gave against the course of the others.

Wolfe starts with Lenin and Trotsky, early in the century. Lenin insisted upon the need of a highly-centralized party of professional revolutionists. It would introduce socialist consciousness into the working class which, if left on the level of spontaneous struggle, would be unable to rise above a mere trade-union consciousness. Against Lenin's "organizational principles," Trotsky wrote the warning that "The organization of the party will take the place of the party itself: the Central Committee will take the place of the organization; and finally, the dictator will take the place of the Central Committee."

Trotsky insisted that the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia could be solved radically only if the struggle were led by the proletariat, supported by the peasant masses, but that the revolution would encounter the hostility not only of the Czarist bureaucracy and the landlords but also of the "liberal bourgeoisie." In the struggle it would therefore pass over into a socialist revolution in the very course of solving the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. Against this theory of the permanent revolution, Lenin put forward the idea of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry."

Just as Trotsky was concerned with democracy in the party, Lenin was concerned with democracy in the country as a whole. "The proletariat constitutes a minority. It can only command a mighty overwhelming majority if it unites with the mass of the semi-proletarians, the semi-property owners. . . . Such a composition will naturally reflect itself in the composition of the revolutionary government," Wolfe quotes Lenin as writing. And also: "Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois character of the present democratic revolution. Only the most naive optimists can forget how little as yet the masses of the workers are informed of the aims of socialism and of the methods of achieving it. And we are all convinced that the emancipation of the workers can only be brought about by the workers themselves; a socialist revolution is out of the question unless the masses become class-conscious, organized, trained and educated by open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie\* . . . Whoever wants to approach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at absurd and reactionary conclusions, both economic and political." These two warnings, concludes Wolfe, have an organic connection with each other and contain the explanation for what

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\*This does not look very much like a belief that "revolutionary will and a power-centered revolutionary party organization would suffice" for a world revolution, or even a socialist revolution in Russia. If, as Wolfe writes, this was Lenin's hope, it was indeed . . . unformulated.

actually happened years later, that is, the triumph of Stalinism. He is worth quoting in detail:

Thus, in 1904 and 1905, did the two future collaborators solemnly admonish each other of the dangers of minority dictatorship in the Party and the State. Who can doubt in the light of subsequent events that each of them at that moment had a brilliant prophetic vision of the dangers in the other's approach? But when they joined forces in 1917, each withdrew his warning against the other. Trotsky accepted Lenin's party machine; Lenin accepted Trotsky's "absurd, semi-anarchist view that the conquest of power for a socialist revolution can be achieved immediately," and Trotsky's conception of a minority "proletarian dictatorship," or more accurately, a single-party dictatorship. This fusion was the most natural in the world, for there is an indubitable structural and psychological connection between minority dictatorship in the Party and minority dictatorship in the State. Both are based upon the same assumption: namely, that a self-selected elite or vanguard, properly armed with expert knowledge (Marxism), and properly credentialed by a lifetime of experience and devotion, can dispense with the toilsome and hazardous democratic process, and still avoid the "absurd and reactionary conclusions," the dangers of "personal dictatorship," the pitfalls of totalitarianism, and the corrupting potentials of absolute power.

One more segment is needed to complete the hub of Wolfe's analysis, from which radiate all the important spokes of his argumentation, to which he tries to fit in as much of his documentation as possible. This segment relates, again, to the Russian peasantry. The Populists (Narodniks) and their successors, the Social-Revolutionists, represented an "indigenous peasant socialism." Lenin, it is true, "was almost alone [among the Marxists] in his sensitivity to the peasant question, and constantly engaged in thinking about it." But Marxism, in Russia, at least, was apparently doomed to anti-democratism because

. . . most important of all—according to Lenin and his co-religionists—the mind of the Russian peasant was not "naively socialist" at all, but "naively bourgeois," or rather, "petty bourgeois," the mind of a small proprietor on-the-make. It was this distrust of, and unconscious antagonism toward, the peasant majority of the Russian nation which would, in the end, sterilize all Marxist protestations in favor of democracy. For, how can you have democracy where there is no trust in the majority of those who make up the nation?

This disastrous distrust of the peasantry led, or contributed to, the ruin of the revolution. Yet, Wolfe discovers, this too was predicted. At the Stockholm Congress in 1906 of the united Russian Social-Democracy, the Menshevik program of municipalization of the land was countered by Lenin's proposal for nationalization of the land. Plekhanov took issue sharply with Lenin. He pointed out that in the history of France and England,

. . . the wide sweep of the revolution was followed by restoration. . . . True, not the restoration of the remnants of feudalism. But in our country we have something that resembles these remnants, to wit, the fact that the land and the tiller of the soil are tied to the state, our own peculiar form of "land nationalization"! And, by demanding the nationalization of the land, you are making the return to this type of nationalization easier, for you are leaving intact this legacy of our old, semi-Asiatic order. . . .

Whereupon Wolfe observes:

Thus was lifted for a moment the curtain that obscured the future. It was a prevision as brilliant as that of Lenin when he warned Trotsky of the consequences of an undemocratic revolution and minority party government, and that of Trotsky when he warned Lenin of the dangers inherent in his hierarchical, centralized, undemocratic party structure. They were like three blind men who grasped three different parts of an elephant. Marxists contend that their method of sociological analysis enables them to predict the future. If these three Marxists' prophecies could but have been added together, and acted on together, they would indeed have constituted a brilliant example of foresight and forewarning.

It is all very plausible, even ingenious—this explanation of Stalinism. Elements of it have enjoyed their days of popularity among all schools of anti-Bolshevism. Wolfe is superior to most of them in that he has given his explanation a more rounded and systematic character. But although he enjoys all the advantages of time over the three blind men whom he chides for their lack of co-ordinated foresight, he makes lamentable use of the hindsight which is within the power of anyone living almost half a century after the blind ones uttered their speculations about the future.

For Wolfe's explanation is plausible only at first sight, and even then only if the glance cast over it is speedy. It is specious and flimsy from beginning to end, and shows that scrupulous scholarship does not always go hand in hand with analytical perspicacity. Indeed, it is positively astonishing that in order to explain why Stalinism and not freedom came out of the Russian Revolution, he has selected and combined the very predictions that were *not* confirmed by events, and did not even have very much to do with the events that actually took place in Russia from 1917 to the present day! Now that we know Wolfe's opinions, let us see what value they have.

We will start with Lenin's "warning" against Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution.

The February (March), 1917, revolution took everybody by surprise, Trotsky less—far less—than anyone else, but him too. If the 1905 revolution is called a rehearsal for 1917, that is true only

in the most general sense of the word. In 1905, the Soviets were few in number, isolated pretty much from the peasantry, without serious effect upon the army and navy. Above all, they were pitted not against a bourgeois-democratic regime but against the Tsarist autocracy. In 1917, the situation was radically different.

The revolution took place spontaneously, and embraced all the toiling masses—workers, peasants and millions of both in uniform. The bourgeoisie, its “democratic” wing included, did not lead the revolution, but unlike the 1905 days, when it kept its lips closed and its hands in its pockets, it sacrificed the Tsar in order to preserve the rule of the classes on which Tsarism rested, much as the German bourgeoisie was to do with the Kaiser a couple of years later. Once the Tsar was done for, the bourgeoisie sought to *take over* the leadership of the revolution, not in order to carry it through but to harness, domesticate and emasculate it. It did not for a moment cut off its alliance with and reliance upon the Tsarist bureaucracy, the Tsarist military machine, the Tsarist landlord class. Was that inevitable? No, not in the American colonies or in France at the crossing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But we are dealing with semi-feudal Russia of 1917, to which the old patterns of bourgeois revolutions did not apply.

From the start of the revolution, the Russian bourgeoisie faced a new phenomenon for the first time in history, one that had been only very dimly foreshadowed in 1789 and 1848: an advanced, modern, compact proletariat, totally organized in new and very remarkable formations, the Soviets; closely combined with a vast peasantry organized in the same kind of formations; both combined in turn with millions of Soviet-organized soldiers and sailors no longer automatically obedient to command; and this entire huge mass in a triumphant revolutionary mood, confident about its irresistible strength, convinced of the justice of its demands and impatiently exigent about their speedy fulfillment. Their demands, summed up, were: peace, land, bread, and a representative democratic government that would guarantee them.

Every single one of these demands, invested with a power and stormy passion that is generated only in revolutionary times, ran counter to the interests and desires of the bourgeoisie. Add together all the programs and predictions written about the coming Russian Revolution before 1917 and multiply them many times, and they are as nothing by the side of this decisive fact. To whom else could the “democratic” bourgeoisie, itself so tiny and weak in Russia, turn for aid and comfort against this turbulent mass than to the reactionary forces in Russian society? If it is brilliant predictions we are interested in, the most important one for a historical

biographer to note and underline is the one that was shared by Lenin and Trotsky: the Russian bourgeoisie is not a revolutionary class and the revolution will have to be carried out without it and against it.

When the revolution actually took place, writes Wolfe, "Lenin accepted Trotsky's 'absurd semi-anarchist view that the conquest of power can be achieved immediately,' and Trotsky's conception of a minority 'proletarian dictatorship,' or more accurately, a single-party dictatorship." But elsewhere in his book Wolfe writes almost eulogistically about "Lenin the democrat." He adds, "For, up to his seizure of power in 1917, Lenin always remained by conviction a democrat, however much his temperament and will and the organizational structure of his party may have conflicted with his democratic convictions."

What impelled this life-long democrat to abandon his convictions overnight and to swallow whole the "dictatorial" conception he had fought for a dozen years? His temperament and will, the will to seize power no matter what? But that temperament and will he had in 1905 as well as in 1917. The organizational structure of his party? But the party and its "structure"—the big bulk of the articulate leaders of the party machine—opposed his new "Trotskyist conception" in 1917, and Lenin had to fight his way through in his own party for the policy he put forward after arriving in Russia. Yet there is an explanation, even though Wolfe leaves us without one, or at best, with the superficial kinds so popular among "psychobiographers."

In 1917, all the theories about the Russian Revolution were put to the most decisive test. By the side of the Provisional Government stood the Soviets, directly representing the revolutionary people. Their authentically representative character was acknowledged almost universally; the Mensheviks and SRs referred to them as the "revolutionary democracy"—no less! The demands of this revolutionary democracy cannot possibly be called into question. But it was precisely these demands that were continuously sabotaged by the Provisional Government, which was tantamount to sabotaging the tasks which the democratic revolution was called upon to perform. And the Mensheviks and SRs? They were part and parcel of the Provisional Government. They shared responsibility for a régime which succeeded only in arousing the hostility of the workers, soldiers and peasants.

For years, Lenin argued that the revolution would establish a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." But no polemical attack could compel him to be consistently specific

about the relationships between these two classes in the democratic dictatorship or about the relationships between the political parties that would represent them in it.

When the revolution finally occurred, the formula proved to be disorienting and worthless. The revolution took on an unexpected form—not of a revolutionary provision government in conflict with Tsarism, but of a revolutionary democracy (the Soviets) in growing conflict with the Provisional Government run by the bourgeoisie.

Lenin was no dogmatist. To the dismay of his own comrades, he discarded his old formula. The most he would say for the “democratic dictatorship” in 1917 was that it was “realized in the dual power”—that is, in conditions of the antagonistic co-existence of the Provisional Government and the Soviets—and even then only “in certain forms and up to a certain point.” But precisely because a duality of state power is in its very nature precarious, creating a state of tension, uncertainty and instability which society cannot long endure, the living social forces, the classes, all of which are at white heat in the revolution, are forced to intervene quickly and decisively in order to tip the scales in one direction or the other. In the person of Kornilov, the bourgeoisie sought to crush the Soviets. The lash of the counter-revolution whipped forward the revolution. With a final surge, the workers and peasants overturned the discredited Provisional Government and established the power of the Soviets.

In actual life, Lenin’s old formula could not achieve the purpose of guaranteeing the democratic revolution which he had assigned to it. He saw that the dual power in which the formula was partly realized meant in reality the subordination and thwarting of the aims of the revolution: the Provisional Government was able to maintain its anti-democratic régime only by virtue of the authority with which it was clothed by the collaborationist representatives of the revolutionary democracy—or by crushing the Soviets. The democratic revolution could be guaranteed only by the Soviets taking over all power. The Bolsheviks led in this taking of power, not because revolutionary will and a power-centered party organization sufficed for that purpose, but because, in addition, they won the freely-given support and leadership of the Soviets. In championing the struggle for all power in the Soviets, Lenin was indeed abandoning an obsolete formula, but not by a hair’s-breadth did he violate his democratic convictions.

The Bolshevik government which was set up was confirmed by the two Congresses of the Soviets, representing the workers,

soldiers and peasants. These Congresses adopted the decrees by which the basic problems of the democratic revolution were formally resolved or by which the seal of approval was placed upon the actions of the masses (the peasants in particular) who were carrying out the revolution of their own accord. Again it was Trotsky's analysis that was confirmed.

The most thoroughgoing measures to carry out the democratic revolution were taken only when the proletarian party took over the state power with the active support of the peasantry. It is noteworthy that the Bolshevik régime *did not immediately propose any specifically socialist measures*, and even though Lenin "accepted Trotsky's conception" of a proletarian dictatorship, the régime did not contemplate such measures. In fact, Lenin wrote specifically against them throughout 1917. But the revolution itself is a fast teacher that has little tenderness for formulas. The Mensheviks almost ruined the revolution by their dogmatic insistence that the bourgeoisie must be at the head of it and not be "alienated" by too imperious demands of the people.

And *long before* the tragedy of Stalinism, it should be remembered that there was the tragedy of Menshevism, whose loyalty to the doctrine brought it into collaboration with a reactionary bourgeois régime and into opposition against what it had itself called the revolutionary democracy. If the Bolsheviks finally proceeded to take socialist measures (confiscation and nationalization of the means of production and exchange), it was because they found these anti-capitalist actions indispensable to the defense of the conquests of the revolution. Lenin accepted Trotsky's conception only in the sense that he accepted the logic of the class struggle, accepted it just as the bourgeoisie and landowners accepted it.

The latter launched an armed struggle against the Soviet power not because it had already carried out a socialist revolution, but precisely because it was carrying out the democratic revolution—to be sure, with all the social implications that Trotsky had so penetratingly foreseen.

The armed struggle aimed at depriving the peasantry of the land which the Soviet revolution had conquered for them, to destroy the Soviet power that guaranteed this conquest. The same armed struggle picked up the banner of the Constituent Assembly, not because it had or could become the watchword of democracy in Russia but precisely because it could be nothing but a cover for destroying the democratic conquests. Even the Mensheviks, or some of them, came to understand this important fact, at least in words. A year after the revolution they would formally acknowledge that

even with new elections the Constituent would be converted into a weapon of the counter-revolution and not of the revolution; wherefore they formally abandoned the Constituent as an immediate fighting slogan because it threatened the achievements of the revolution.

To defend land to the peasants and peace to the land, both of which were directly imperilled by the bourgeoisie and their monarchist and imperialist allies, the Bolsheviks were forced to take measures against them which, in their very nature, were socialist. Lenin's earlier "warning" was *not* confirmed! His old argument that the democratic revolution in Russia would not weaken but strengthen the domination of the bourgeoisie, proved to be wrong. His fear that if the revolution went over to a socialist attack on capital, that would interfere with the democratic revolution, proved groundless, and Trotsky was right in foreseeing that only such an attack could protect the democratic revolution and those it was intended to benefit first and foremost—the peasantry. Had the old Leninist theory that the revolution could (or should) stay within the framework of capitalism and go no further, been imposed—as the Mensheviks tried to impose it—the revolution would not even have gone as far as bourgeois democracy.

But were not the Bolsheviks thereby obliged to establish a "minority 'proletarian dictatorship,' or more accurately, a single-party dictatorship," as Wolfe writes? Yes and no, depending on what the question really aims to ask. Wolfe seems to be as aware, today, of the equivocal and unrealistic character of Lenin's old formula of a "democratic dictatorship" as Trotsky was from 1905 onward. He writes that Lenin's forecast "changes from page to page and from article to article, becomes a restless spark leaping up and back between the fixed points of his dogmas and his will. It is no longer a formula but a series of rival hypotheses, competing *perhaps*." The hypotheses simply did not materialize in the revolution itself.

To carry through the democratic revolution to the end, the Bolsheviks could not find a single political party with which to share government power. The Mensheviks, like the "big" peasant party, the SRs, were with Kerensky, and the peasants had to take the land without them and against them. That is why the November Congress of the Peasant Soviets, even though convened by the right wing, endorsed the Bolshevik régime and turned down the proposal for a coalition government with the SRs. There were, it is true, the left-wing SRs. After the Peasant Congress, the Bolsheviks unhesitatingly established a coalition government with them.

Jointly, they dispersed the Constituent Assembly. But shortly thereafter the unstable nature of even the left SR party revealed itself.

The Bolsheviks decided in favor of signing the onerous peace treaty with the Germans. The left SRs insisted on "revolutionary war" in face of a peasantry that could not be mobilized for so hazardous an enterprise. With colossal irresponsibility, the SRs plunged into the adventure of trying to overturn the Bolsheviks by armed force. They failed, and it was not long before they vanished as a serious political movement. The peasantry was incapable (not on the books, perhaps, but in the life of the revolution) of producing a political party of its own at once independent of the proletariat and of the bourgeoisie, let alone a party capable of carrying through the revolution. In proving this again, the Russian Revolution confirmed the analysis which Marxism made of the peasantry in modern society, and which Trotsky in particular applied with incomparable penetration to the position, role and prospects of the peasantry in Russia.

Wolfe is familiar with Trotsky's analysis. He also gives, more or less, the views of the Marxists and the Narodniks on the Russian peasant. His own attitude is interesting. He asks: Were the Narodniks right in regarding the peasant as a primitive socialist, or were the Marxists right in regarding him as a petty bourgeois or would-be property-owner? Wolfe himself does not answer his questions! He does not take the sociological analyses made by the Narodniks, or the Marxists in general, or Trotsky in particular, and subject them to an analysis of his own, so that one or the other may be confirmed or a substitute for both of them presented. In face of the immense importance of the peasantry in the Russian Revolution and in all the disputes which preceded it, this omission is almost unbelievable, unless it is borne in mind that the concrete analysis and juxtaposition of *social forces*, class forces, does not seem to exist anywhere within the range of Wolfe's interests. When he writes rather disdainfully about the Russian intellectuals that they had "a common belief in the sovereign efficacy of ideas as shapers of life," he is not far from describing his own belief, to which must be added his belief that intentions and desires are even more important than ideas.

With such an approach to the problem, it is not surprising that he finds no need to base his examination upon social forces or at least to relate it inseparably to them. He simply points out that, given their views on the peasantry (the validity of which remains untreated), the Marxists looked upon the peasants with "distrust and suspicion," which opened the way for . . . Stalinism.

This "distrust and suspicion" did not, however, prevent the

Bolsheviks from becoming the most vigorous leaders of the peasants in the struggle for land. It did prevent them from entertaining illusions about the peasantry. "Peasant" demagogues have played upon the prejudices of the rural masses of all countries in order to turn them against the socialist movement since the earliest days of the *Communist Manifesto*. This game has never been anything but reactionary. And all the sympathy, real or assumed, which is extended to the peasantry does not change the social fact, underscored again and again in all modern history (latest example: China), that the peasantry is capable of tremendous contributions to social progress but also of no less important contributions to social reaction. The first, only if it allies itself and follows the leadership of a progressive urban class. The second, when it follows the leadership of a reactionary urban class. *Nowhere* has the peasantry, by itself, acting independently, been able to take the leadership of a nation, organize the life of society and keep the reins of government in its own hands. For that, it is *socially incapable*, as has been proved over and over not only in the modern West but in the backward, overwhelmingly agrarian countries of Asia as well. It simply suffers from a social position which Marxism at any rate, did not create, but an understanding of which is indispensable to the eventual elimination of all classes.

Without concealing their views on this score, the Bolsheviks therefore appealed to the peasants for an alliance with the revolutionary working class in the Soviet régime. The appeal was answered enthusiastically. But it was not an alliance between equal classes and it could not be. Every worker, for example, had the right to five times as many votes as the peasant. From the standpoint of formal democracy, this is surely indefensible. But from the standpoint of the real struggle for the defense and preservation of the revolution, it was entirely justifiable. (We say: justifiable, but not necessarily justified, an important distinction we will deal with later.)

To believe that the democratic revolution could have been carried out and its achievements maintained against the hordes of world reaction, or that the Russian nation could even have been held together as an economic and political unit, if the peasantry had been at the helm and charted the course, is to reveal a fixation which, however democratic it may seem, makes for an extraordinary immunity to the influence of social reality. The leadership of the proletariat could be replaced only by the domination of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, and that meant death to the aspirations of the peasantry. It was an exceptionally backward peasant who failed to see this in 1917. That the leadership of the

proletariat in the alliance involved a "minority dictatorship," is incontestable. Equally incontestable, however, is the fact that the peasantry, voluntarily and democratically, chose this leadership and the party which most clearly expressed it.\*

But how did this "minority dictatorship" lead to Stalinism? If "single-party dictatorship" means nothing more than the fact that the government administration is entirely in the hands of one party, that is far from reprehensible in itself and does not make the government a dictatorship in the invidious sense Wolfe gives it. The Truman administration is one example of single-party rule; the British Labour government is another. The principles of democracy are not violated in either case.

If Wolfe uses the term to mean that the party in office allows no other party to exist legally, that is another matter. It is true that after a few years in power, the Bolsheviks deprived all other political parties of legal rights and existence. But that in itself enlightens us very little. What we need to know is what prompted the Bolsheviks to act as they did, and what action they should have taken instead. On this score, the critics of the Bolshevik revolution seldom go beyond angry but incoherent mutterings. The Bolshevik régime was established by a revolution, the most profound and convulsive in history. Yet it is hard to recall one

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\*This Wolfe cannot deny. He admits that "the land-hungry peasants, above all the peasant-in-uniform, the peasant-under-arms, would assure victory on his [Lenin's] side." He scoffs, however, at the idea that the Bolsheviks set up a dictatorship of the proletariat, referring with his misplaced irony to the fact that the leadership of all the Russian unions was not won by the Bolsheviks till after the revolution. "The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' had to be set up in 1917 against the will of the majority of the organized proletariat." This looks bad, especially if it conjures up in the reader's mind the spectacle of the dictatorship of the proletariat being set up in the United States against the will of the majority of the proletariat organized in the CIO, the AFL and the other unions, a good 16,000,000 of them. However, it only looks bad, especially as Wolfe puts it. The trade unions played a comparatively negligible role in both of the 1917 revolutions and in the period between them. The reasons for that require more space than is here available. But the fact remains. At the beginning of 1917, some weeks before the Czar was overturned, the combined membership of all the unions in Russia was estimated at only 1385 members! After the February uprising, a big increase took place, but the trade-union membership as late as June, 1917, was just less than 1,500,000 members. Even by January, 1918, the membership figure for the trade unions barely passed the 2,500,000 mark. In 1917, the Mensheviks dominated many of the unions, perhaps most of them. But compared with the unions, the Soviets—the workers' Soviets—were ten times more representative, ten times more democratic, a hundred times more active, important and decisive politically, for they embraced virtually the entire working class and occupied a position which the trade unions could not hope to achieve under the conditions. In the workers' Soviets, the Bolsheviks had gained the decisive majority before October. To contest this, is impossible. To omit reference to it is, however, quite possible, for how otherwise could a writer be ironical in the wrong place?

revolutionary government in all history that was more democratically established, that received a more direct endorsement by such authentically representative popular bodies as the Soviets.

Hardly set up, the new régime was assaulted by reactionary armies, by calls for insurrection, mass disobedience and sabotage against it. A revolutionary government, like any other, for that matter, has both the right and duty to defend itself, just as every individual has the right and duty to choose his side in an armed conflict and to take the consequences of his choice. This defense includes the right, exercised for centuries to the dismay only of philistines, to deprive the armed opponents of political liberty. The bourgeois parties took up arms against the Soviets and combined openly with foreign foes of the régime who subsidized them with arms and funds. So did most of the Mensheviks and the right-wing S.R.s. The left-wing S.R.s and even some of the anarchists also challenged the Soviet régime with arms in hand. Would the North have allowed a Confederate Army sergeant to open a recruiting office in New York in 1862? What *should* the Bolsheviks have done? They placed these parties outside of Soviet legality. Should they have wagged a reproachful finger at them instead? There were undoubtedly many excesses and injustices and even outrages committed against oppositional parties, as is the case in all revolutions. But on the whole, the Bolsheviks had no choice, unless capitulation is considered a choice. If, at the end of the most savage and exhausting civil war in modern times, the Bolsheviks emerged not only in power but as the only legal party, it is positively grotesque to trace the responsibility for this condition to the Bolsheviks or their "conception." It makes sense, on the contrary, to say that the bitter opposition which the Mensheviks and the S.R.s offered to the Soviet power—the handiwork of the revolutionary democracy—created a situation in which the Bolsheviks were left to head a "single-party dictatorship."

Our viewpoint is the very opposite of Wolfe's, and it is ours that is borne out by the real course of the events in Russia—and the rest of Europe. To Wolfe, the eventual tragedy of the Russian revolution was caused by the very fact that the Bolsheviks led the working class to the socialist seizure of power. To us, the tragedy was caused by the fact that such violent and exhausting attempts were made in Russia to undermine and torpedo the socialist power and that the attempts to seize power in the more advanced European countries failed.

However, as we pointed out a few years ago, since the non-Bolshevik parties were outlawed because of the rigors and exigencies of the civil war, that is evidence enough that no universal principle

of revolution was involved. It is here that the Bolsheviks, before the advent of Stalinism, made a crucial mistake. Necessity was turned into virtue, imposed expediency into principle. Where they had begun with the view that it was perfectly in order—as it was—for one party to be in the government and the others in critical opposition with all legal rights that would enable them to replace the government party democratically, they shifted to the indefensible view that there was indeed room for all sorts of parties in Soviet Russia—as Tomsky, we believe, put it—but with only one in power and all the others in prison.

Looking backward now, it seems clear to us that the Bolsheviks would have strengthened their position in the country, facilitated the restoration of Soviet democracy, which was almost completely crippled during the civil war, and enormously facilitated their work among the socialist workers of Europe, if they had declared, at the end of the civil war, when the régime had consolidated its position, that all other political parties would henceforth enjoy all the rights and privileges of political activity provided only that they renounced counterrevolutionary activity and abided by the elementary norms of Soviet legality. It should also be added that the failure of the Trotskyist opposition to champion this policy weakened its own fight for party democracy and workers' democracy more generally. What was permissible and necessary under conditions of fierce and open civil war, became pernicious after the civil war came to an end. And there is no doubt in our mind that it contributed greatly to the withering away of the Soviets as the democratic organs of popular rule and to the subsequent rise of the Stalinist reaction.

But to see in this anything more than a contributing cause to this rise, is to lose your sense of proportion. The main cause must be sought in the conflict of big social forces and their respective strength. By their own strength, the Russian proletariat, leading the peasantry, was able to make the revolution and crush the forces of imperialist and "democratic" counterrevolution. More than that was not asked or expected of it by anybody. Left in isolation to its own restricted resources, the proletariat had to decay, and with it the revolution itself decayed. The exact nature of the degeneration, the forms it would finally take, were unclearly foreseen—understandably so—by the Bolshevik leaders. But they were right, alas, a hundred times over, in foreseeing that the revolution would certainly degenerate if it remained isolated in Russia, left in the lurch by the rest of Europe. Again, it is not the fact that the workers took socialist power that produced Stalinism, but the fact

that the other European workers did not take power. Is this a singularly "Trotskyist" explanation of Stalinism, is it perhaps a theory devised to whitewash the régime of Lenin-Trotsky? All that Trotsky did was to invest this explanation with irresistible sweep and unshakeable roots.

But it was not his alone. In his history of the Russian Social-Democracy, the Menshevik leader, Theodor Dan, commenting on the resolution adopted under Martov's leadership by the Menshevik party conference in Russia in December, 1918 (that is, under the elevating influence of the German revolution), writes these interesting words:

It [the Menshevik conference and its political resolution] nevertheless did put forth the conception that the revolutionary development in Europe also shows the Russian revolution a road out of the blind alley: the Russian revolution and the immense economic resources of Eastern Europe served as rear coverage for the European revolution; "on the other hand, however, [Dan is quoting now from the resolution], with the raising of the productive forces of Europe which would be achieved by a socialist reorganization, the Russian revolution would find a point of support for its own natural resources and the reconstruction of its economy, without having to pay for it by its economic enslavement and the impoverishment of the masses of the people."

There is much to be said against the Mensheviks and even against their 1918 resolution. But there is more wisdom and understanding in the words we have just quoted than in ninety-nine per cent of what is written nowadays to explain the phenomenon of Stalinism, especially by latecomers to the ranks of anti-Bolsheviks!

Wolfe takes note of the fact that

Even in 1917, he [Lenin] countenanced a "temporary" minority dictatorship in Russia only because he was convinced that the Russian example in the midst of the war would end the war on all fronts by world-wide revolution, thereby solving the problems of Russia's backwardness by a solution on a world scale. ✓

But the note is brief, made in passing, not significantly related to the further development of the Russian revolution. It is as though the words were written down in half-sleep, without forethought or afterthought. Yet they give us the real key to what happened. For if the European revolution *did not* solve the problems of the Russian revolution, and the Russian working class *could not* solve them with its own forces, the problem remained to be solved by another social force.

By the bourgeoisie? Impossible! The urban bourgeoisie of Russia, the authentic capitalist class, had been driven out of the country or wiped out at home by the revolution and the civil

war. Theoretically, such a bourgeoisie might have solved the problem—if only it had existed; but its disappearance was not an accident. The petty-bourgeoisie of the countryside, the peasantry? With all due respect to it, it could not solve its own economic problem, let alone the problem of the nation. And since the problem could not be solved on a capitalist basis or on a socialist basis (the socialist solution required international coöperation and still does), it had to be solved on another basis altogether.

What is instructive and really illuminating is to trace the way in which Stalinism actually rose. The Russian problem, so correctly described in the Menshevik resolution, boiled down to the problem of accumulation. Here we come to a paradox, not literary but profoundly social: the workers' power in Russia, even in the already attenuated form of a dictatorship of the Bolshevik party, stood as an obstacle in the path of accumulation precisely because, on one hand, genuine *socialist* accumulation was impossible under conditions of an isolated and backward country, and, on the other hand, workers' power was incompatible with any other kind of accumulation. This power, then, had to be shattered.

Running through the whole history of Stalinism, which is likewise the history of a tremendous economic accumulation (not progressive, but reactionary), is an increasingly successful drive to shatter the power of the Soviets, then the Soviets themselves; to shatter the power of the Bolshevik party, then the party itself; to shatter the power of the workers, then the workers themselves, so that the reconstruction of the economy had to be paid for by "economic enslavement, impoverishment" and political serfdom.

And what was the first big social force which the rising bureaucracy enlisted in its drive to smash the workers' power? The peasantry, particularly its upper strata! The first important period of the rise of Stalinism runs from 1923 to 1929. It is precisely the period of the mobilization of the peasantry against "Trotskyism," against the "permanent revolution," against the proletarian, internationalist, revolutionary and democratic wing of the Bolshevik party. If Trotsky's "conception" of the permanent revolution led to the victory of Stalinism, nobody noticed or noted it down at the time, least of all the Stalinists. They were too busily engaged in the reactionary campaign against the theory of the permanent revolution and its proponents.

How will Wolfe explain, in future volumes, that it was under the sign of the theory of the permanent revolution, to which he ascribes such a doleful outcome, that the Russian people made the socialist revolution and rose to the highest heights of democracy; and that it was under the banner of struggle against the theory

that the Stalinist reaction made its first public and sinister appearance in the country? It will be interesting to see if the explanation rises at least a little above the level of ingenious juxtaposition of ancient and irrelevant polemical quotations. Or, if there are to be quotations, let them be concretely related to the social reality, which is above all else the reality of social conflict.

The reality was this: In the fight "for the permanent revolution," the peasants played a progressive rôle in Russia. They followed the leadership of the revolutionists of the city, the proletariat, and thereby took a long step in their own economic and political advancement. But in the fight "against the permanent revolution," the peasants played a reactionary rôle; they followed the leadership of the counterrevolutionists of the city, the Stalinist bureaucracy; they helped it to crush the proletariat by first crushing the revolutionary vanguard; and they had to pay for it with their own subsequent enslavement on the land. The disfranchisement and yoking of the peasantry was not a product of the "Trotskyist" struggle for socialist power, but of the Stalinist struggle against Trotskyism. Thus, in the very defeat of the "permanent revolutionists" was the validity of Trotsky's analysis of the nature and rôle of the peasantry confirmed again, confirmed tragically but confirmed.

Lenin's "warning" in 1905, to which Wolfe attaches such exciting meaning, proved to be irrelevant to the real march of events from 1917 onwards. As an explanation of the rise of Stalinism, it is a patent absurdity.

WE HAVE ALREADY CONSIDERED THE FIRST of three elements in Wolfe's explanation of the rise of Stalinism: Lenin's prediction of what would happen to the Russian Revolution if Trotsky's conception of it were followed. There remain the other two "brilliant examples of foresight and forewarning": Plekhanov on Lenin's program for the nationalization of the land and Trotsky on Lenin's conceptions of party organization.

Plekhanov had the "truly brilliant premonition," writes Wolfe, "that nationalization of the land would bind the peasant to the state afresh, to any state that might hold in its hands the weapon of overlordship of the soil, thus continuing the age-old servile 'Asiatic' tradition which had always bound the rural masses to the ruling power. And if the peasant majority were bound, could the urban population be free?" This somewhat dramatic disclosure suffers from no less than three defects, any one of which is fatal to the significance that Wolfe attaches to it:

First, in so far as it is *Wolfe's* formulation, it is decidedly *not*

the one Plekhanov put forward, nor the thought that he could possibly have had in mind. Second, in so far as it is Plekhanov's formulation, it has nothing to do with the Bolshevik revolution itself. And third, in so far as it is called upon to explain how Stalinism arose, it is, to say the best about it, worthless.

Plekhanov did indeed argue against Lenin's proposal in 1906 that the Russian Social Democracy adopt the program of nationalization of the land, and warn that its realization might bring about a new kind of subjugation of the peasantry to the state. But his argument was not related to "any state." The credit for this belated "premonition" belongs entirely to Wolfe. It should not be foisted upon Plekhanov, who did not and could not speak of "any" state at that time, or even think in such terms. Let us briefly reconstruct the discussion of 1906.

After the defeated revolution of 1905, the Bolsheviks felt confirmed in their view that in the coming democratic revolution, the proletariat would play the leading role; the peasantry, allied with it, would play a revolutionary role, but the Russian bourgeoisie would not and could not play a revolutionary role, even though the revolution was regarded by all as bourgeois-democratic in character.

The Mensheviks, on the other hand, while acknowledging the revolutionary role that the working class was called upon to play, insisted that the leadership of the democratic revolution would have to be in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This viewpoint, despite occasional lapses, was shared by Plekhanov. To him, therefore, the revolution to end Tsarism would establish and consolidate a *bourgeois state*. His warnings were therefore directed against a nationalization of the land carried out under the rule of the bourgeoisie, and nothing else.

It is only on the grounds of this perspective that Plekhanov made his argument. If it is the bourgeoisie that is to come to power, we must guarantee ourselves against its acquisition of too much centralized or centralizing power. Nationalization of the land would not only contribute to such centralization of power but, given the traditions of our country, it would facilitate (that is what Plekhanov's references to the history of France meant) the triumph of the anti-democratic, Bonapartist, tendencies in bourgeois society. It is therefore better to advocate the division of the land among the peasants as a lesser evil, or in any case to counterpose the idea of "municipalization" (that is, the transfer of the large estates to the "democratic organs of local self-government") to the idea of nationalization which would be, in the words of Martov, a suitable basis for fettering the peasant masses to every attempt at restora-

tion of the old order. That is how Plekhanov's argument ran. What does that have to do with the nationalization of the land that finally did take place—not under bourgeois but under proletarian rule—or with the danger of restoration of the old order which was not and, it is now plain enough, will not be restored?

Lenin argued that nationalization of the land would most thoroughly undermine if not destroy the old ruling classes and the last remnant of feudalism, even though it was not, in itself, incompatible with the development of capitalist economy. Nevertheless, he was fully aware of the validity, not of Plekhanov's conclusions, but of the question he raised. That is why he spoke of the nationalization of the land representing a huge step forward only in connection with the most thoroughgoing democratization of the coming régime. He connected his agrarian program with such basic demands as the establishment of a republic, popular election of all officials by universal suffrage, abolition of the standing army, and the like. He added that the program of municipalization would be harmful if such a consistently democratic state did not exist. It is interesting to note what Plekhanov replied in his concluding speech at the Congress.

Granted that the objection which he [Lenin] raised against Maslov [the advocate of municipalization] is warranted, then . . . Lenin's own draft is good only in case all the "ifs" presented to us are fulfilled. But should these "ifs" not be given, then the realization of his draft would be injurious.

From which it should be clear that Plekhanov, far from warning against the nationalization of the land under "any state," rejected it under a bourgeois state only if the conditions attached to it by Lenin were not realized. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the socialist Plekhanov figured on the preservation of private property in land under socialism; or better yet, that he believed the socialist revolution would be guaranteed against capitalist restoration by maintaining private land ownership.

Whatever else may be said against Plekhanov, such an accusation is simply too absurd to be entertained. Especially when he made it so perfectly clear, at that very Congress, that his opposition to Lenin's program was based precisely upon his rejection of the idea that the *Russian* proletariat could expect to take power.

Since the impending overturn can only be a petty-bourgeois one, we are obligated to refrain from the seizure of power. . . . But if we reject the seizure of power as impossible, the question arises of what must be our attitude toward a program-draft which is bound up with the seizure of power. If we reject the seizure of power, then we must also reject this program. Those of you who stand on the standpoint of Marxism must decisively reject the draft of Comrade Lenin. It falls together with the conspiratorial idea of the seizure of power.

Plekhanov's "prevision" is therefore worth discussing at this late date only in the terms to which he so rightly boiled down his point of view, namely, not whether the Bolsheviks should have nationalized the land, and not whether this nationalization produced Stalinism, but simply this: *should the Russian proletariat have taken power in 1917?* For, implicit in Plekhanov's position is the view that *if it were correct for the proletariat to take power in the coming revolution, then the nationalization of the land would unquestionably be high on its agenda.* It is to be feared that all of Wolfe's studies have brought him to the conclusion that the "tragic problem" of the Russian Revolution is to be traced to the fact that it took place. The conclusion does not gleam with originality. The Russian people were warned against the Bolshevik idea of taking power as early as 1917. However, in the most democratic way imaginable, they did not heed the warnings of Kerensky, the Mensheviks, right-wing SRs and Plekhanov.

There are two other reasons why Wolfe's discovery of land nationalization as a cause of Stalinism is, so to say, startling.

First, Wolfe is familiar with the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, whom he calls the "outstanding advocate of revolutionary policy and the outstanding defender of democracy within the labor movement." Her posthumous work of criticism of the Bolsheviks dwelled particularly on their land policy. As Wolfe knows, since he edited the American edition of this work, she was steadfastly for the nationalization of the land and reproached the Bolsheviks for not bearing in mind that "the direct seizure of the land by the peasants has in general nothing at all in common with socialist economy"; that "it piles up insurmountable obstacles to the socialist transformation of agrarian relations"; that having seized the land, the Russian peasant "has dug obstinately into his new possessions and abandoned the revolution to its enemies, the state to decay, the urban population to famine."

In his comments on Luxemburg's criticism, Wolfe, writing exactly ten years ago, not only found the nationalization of the land quite unworthy of mention as an error of the Bolsheviks—let alone an error that led to Stalinism—but went out of his way to defend Lenin's policy from Luxemburg:

On the land question, it was Lenin, who despite his previous doctrinaire misgivings, had recourse to the theory of stimulating the initiative of the oppressed peasant masses for the *democratic solution* of Russia's agrarian problem. Thereby he broke down at a single stroke the large-landownership system that oppressed Russia. Thereby he destroyed the power of gentry and czarism. Thereby he bound the peasants to the revolutionary government and even though other measures alienated them, yet in the moments of greatest peril they still defended the government that

had helped them take the land *against the danger of landowner restoration*. [And Plekhanov's warning?] She and Lenin were agreed in believing that ultimately large-scale mechanized agriculture was desirable and possible. But Lenin—despite occasional neglect of his principles under pressure of events—understood what she, in doctrinaire fashion, sought to ignore: that such large-scale socialist agriculture would be possible only after a material base had been created in the form of modern industry, tractor plants, chemical fertilizer plants, and plentiful consumer factory products, and then only by winning the peasants *in democratic fashion* and convincing them through their own observation and experience that the proposed methods were actually superior in technical and cultural advantages and offered a richer and more attractive life. In this field, neither Trotsky nor Stalin has been equal to the “discipleship” to which each of them has pretended. Rather they have departed here from the views of Lenin in the direction of those of Luxemburg. (My emphasis—M. S.)

It would seem that since he wrote these lines in 1940, Wolfe has modified his opinions of Lenin's agrarian policy and their kinship to Stalin's (even if he has not modified his old habit of bracketing as similars the Trotsky and Stalin who were so dissimilar). We will not say that Wolfe has no right to modify his opinions about the Russian Revolution, even to the point of changing them into their opposite. But he does not have the right to change the *facts* on which he bases his opinions. Or does he wish to suggest that Lenin's “*democratic solution of Russia's agrarian problem*” led to Stalin's despotism on the land because Stalin somehow moved toward Luxemburgism? *That* would be a novel viewpoint!

Second, writing about the disputes between the Marxists and the populists in Russia, Wolfe now makes the observation:

More than either of the two contendants realized, they were complementary to each other, rather than irreconcilable rivals, since the populists based themselves upon the rural masses, the Social Democrats on the urban. Never could there be a truly democratic transformation of Russia unless these two classes should join forces in mutual and equal partnership, and without either imposing itself upon the other.

As a formula, this is pretty loose-jointed and a little smug. But in so far as it contains a realistic idea for the achievement of a “truly democratic transformation of Russia,” a better than reasonable facsimile of it was produced precisely by the Bolshevik revolution and its agrarian program. No more legitimate heirs of the old populists existed in Russia in 1917 than the left-wing Social Revolutionists. Together with the Bolsheviks, they represented the decisive majority of the workers and peasants and, above all, the unquestionable aspirations of the overwhelming majority. It was with the support of this majority that the revolution was carried

out, and the Soviet régime established and consolidated. Lenin, in order to cement a fraternity between the revolutionary workers and the peasant masses, did not hesitate for a minute to take over, promulgate and carry out the program of the SRs.

As far back as 1906, at the founding congress of the SR Party, a program was adopted that *called for the socialization of the soil* (the "maximalist" wing even called for the socialization of all plants and factories). Plekhanov warned against such a program not only in 1906 but also in 1917, and he was not the only one. But that was one of the reasons why the workers *and* the peasants turned their backs upon all these "forewarners" and chose the road of the proletarian revolution. The Bolsheviks made it possible that "these two classes should join forces" by adopting the program of the left SRs, making a coalition with them in the Soviet government, and therewith carrying out the "truly democratic transformation of Russia" that Wolfe recommends. Therewith Lenin produced "the democratic solution of Russia's agrarian problem" (despite Plekhanov's "brilliant prevision"), assured the country "against the danger of landowner restoration" (despite Plekhanov's "brilliant warning"), and proceeded with the course of "winning the peasants in democratic fashion" (despite Plekhanov's "brilliant premonition").

What is there in this well-known record, so much of which is established by Wolfe himself, that was bound to lead to the present totalitarianism? Something must have supervened to lead to it, but it was not the nationalization of the land by the democratic Soviet régime.

That "something else" cannot be found in superficial literary juxtapositions, in quotations from Plekhanov about the danger from land nationalization by a bourgeoisie that never carried it out in a revolution that never took place. It can only be found in the actual course of the social development, of social conflict, and of the fate of political ideas in this conflict.

Reference has been made to the fact that Lenin was not unaware of the danger of restoration following the revolution. He knew that as early as 1906; and after 1917 he spoke and wrote about it dozens of times. In particular, he was aware of the role which the peasantry, in its various strata, might play in the restoration of capitalism. To Lenin, as to any Marxist, there could be an alliance, even a very close, mutually fruitful and lasting alliance, between different classes—the proletariat and peasantry represent two different classes—but not equality.

As is fairly well known, the peasants as a whole (even the richer ones), looked with favor on the "Bolsheviks," because they

had given them land and fought the civil war against the landlords to preserve that revolutionary achievement. The same peasants, however, looked upon the "Communists" with uneasiness, suspicion and even hostility, because that term represented the long-range program of the abolition of all private property, including private exploitation of the land. And in this social attitude, historically conditioned and economically sustained by the everyday life of the peasant, Lenin saw one of the most powerful sources for the restoration of the capitalist regime.

Lenin's fears were "unjustified." The Napoleon who consolidated his power and almost conquered all of feudal Europe with the support of the "allotment farmer," the small landed peasant-proprietor of France, was not reproduced in Russia. He was not reproduced, and capitalism was not restored, because there was no urban bourgeois class capable of successfully stimulating the property instincts of the Russian peasantry, of organizing them into a political fighting force and leading them to the overturn of the Soviet power.

Two such classes were theoretically possible. One in the form of the *Russian* bourgeoisie; but it was wiped out or dispersed to the four corners of the earth during the civil war. The other in the form of the *international* bourgeoisie; but although it attempted to play its role, it failed in the face of the Russian resistance to the interventionist wars, of the disunity which rivalry introduced into its own ranks, and of the opposition of the working class of the capitalist countries.

In his concluding speech on the agrarian question at the 1906 congress, Lenin discussed Plekhanov's arguments about the danger of restoration in connection with the program of land nationalization in the following terms:

If it is a question of a real and genuine economic guarantee against restoration, i.e., of a guarantee that would create economic conditions under which restoration would become impossible, then one must say that the only guarantee against restoration is a socialist revolution in the West; there can be no other guarantee in the real and full meaning of the term.

A writer who is looking for "brilliant foresight and forewarning" about the Russian Revolution can find an excellent example right there—an example which gives us the whole key to Lenin's outlook! The socialist revolution in the West was not victorious, but neither was the capitalist restorationist struggle in Russia. Yet reaction did triumph. Because it was neither foreseen nor forewarned against does not mean that inappropriate, ana-

chronistic quotations relieve us of the task of examining in the concrete its singular character.

*Abstractly*, the main social reservoir for capitalist restoration in Russia was the peasantry, or rather what may be called the most property-minded strata of the peasantry. However, for this abstraction to become a social reality, this peasantry would have to find an urban counterpart capable of organizing and leading it. By itself, it could not go much further than a series of localized and ineffectual Vendées, such as were, indeed, as much a phenomenon of Russian Revolution as of the French. But this urban counterpart, the Russian bourgeoisie, was completely wiped out in the course of the civil war; and among those who helped to wipe it out were the peasants themselves. This was due to the fact that the Russian bourgeoisie appeared before the peasants as the not-at-all accidental allies of the landlords who aimed to recover their lands; and that the Bolsheviks appeared before them as the champions and defenders of the land distribution.

The Bolsheviks had quite deliberately and wisely coupled the actual distribution of the land to the peasants with the "juridical" nationalization of the land. The former not only corresponded to the vehemently avowed demands of the peasantry but won them to the struggle against the restoration of the old landlords and the old bourgeoisie. The latter was aimed not only at preventing the rise of a new large-property-owning class among the peasantry itself, but as the point of departure for the gradual socialization of agriculture which alone can eliminate the "idiocy of rural life."

But this process of socialization could unfold only upon the basis of the development of a modern *socialist* industry, at once capable of assuring ample supplies of cheap goods to the peasantry and of providing agriculture with modern machinery which would release the land population from its sunup-to-sundown slavery to the wooden plow and the ox. A modern socialist industry is precisely what Soviet Russia could not establish by its own forces, but for which it required the coöperation that could be provided only by the working class brought to power by successful revolution in the advanced West. For the benefit of cynics, it might be added that these ABCs were not invented after the fact, so to speak, but were loudly, even anxiously and, in any case, repeatedly proclaimed by the Bolsheviks before, during and after the October revolution.

The principles of Soviet democracy, which were set forth by Lenin in 1917 and 1918, especially in what will long remain the classic work on the subject, *State and Revolution*, remain an unassailable contribution to the socialist struggle for freedom. If the Bolsheviks departed from them, as they undoubtedly did, they were

driven to it by conditions imposed upon them by the delay in the world revolution. The Western proletariat could raise the siege of the isolated fortress that the Bolsheviks manned, but meanwhile the latter had to defend it with the best means available to them, also against those on the inside who threatened its defense. Simultaneously with the war to prevent the incursion of a world of enemies from without, the revolution was forced to defend itself from the beginning in one of the fiercest civil wars in history. It is hard to recall another revolution that faced so super-human a task, and yet managed to acquit itself so well.

But unarmed forces are sometimes harder to cope with than armed forces. The peasants were an unarmed force. Actually, they had gained more from the "Bolshevik" revolution, in material terms, than the workers, and they acted upon an acknowledgment of this fact in the civil war. But their appetite very naturally grew and asserted itself when the civil war ended and the threat of a landlord restoration was pretty conclusively laid. How could this appetite be satisfied, especially when it increased with every improvement in the harvest?

The wretched state of Russian industry in general, and of its development as an efficient *socialist* industry, made it, if not impossible then at least exceedingly difficult, to satisfy the peasantry in a way that would assure a harmonious evolution to socialism. Again, that required the revolution in the West. In its absence, the Bolsheviks were obliged to make great concessions to the peasantry in the form of that controlled "state-capitalism" which was the NEP. It was only a stopgap and that is all it could be. But under it, the peasants, at least relative to the workers, made still more material gains; at any rate, that was true of the better-situated peasants. The appetite of the unarmed force continued to grow, and the development of the socialist sector of industry did not keep pace with it. In Trotsky's expressive image, the blades of the scissors, representing the prices of industrial and agricultural products, were drawing apart. That only foreshadowed—even accompanied—the political drawing apart of the two classes upon whose alliance the Soviet power reposed.

Tracing the rise of Stalinism, Wolfe asks:

And a police apparatus huge enough to police the planting and harvesting all over vast, rural Russia, would it not tend to spill over into the very organizations of the advanced city workers who had sanctioned it: into their state, their unions and their party?

The implication is clear, but the facts are not. In a certain sense, that process did indeed unfold and it left its mark on other

processes. But to say that, is to say something so general as to draw our attention away from the process which was decisive in the rise of Stalinism. The fact is that the end of the civil war and the institution of the NEP, brought to a halt the system of military rule and military requisitioning of peasant grain which was imperative for the defense of the country during the grim days of War Communism. The fact is that there began an enormous relaxation of state ("police apparatus") controls over the peasantry. And the fact is, further, that as the controls were more and more relaxed over the landed population, they were, in almost the same degree, tightened over the working class and over the Bolshevik party itself. The process that proved to be decisive was almost exactly the opposite from the one Wolfe describes!

That Wolfe did not understand the significance of the struggle when it broke out in the Bolshevik party in 1923, is understandable. How many did? That he should be so far from understanding it a quarter of a century later is inexcusable. Unless we are to descend to the level of the cretinism that is so popular in our day, and repeat that Trotsky and Stalin were fighting each other for personal power, we must assume that the contest involved great social forces and principles. Trotsky based himself upon and fought, well or not so well, for one; Stalin, well or not so well, for another.

Trotsky appealed against the bureaucracy to the workers. Let us allow all the criticisms made of him by those severe ones who are so obsessed with small things that they cannot grasp the big ones. Even with the most generous of such allowances, the big things remain. Trotsky directed himself to the workers, to their democratic traditions, feelings, aspirations; to their socialist convictions, ideals, hopes; to their spirit of internationalism; against the growth of bureaucratism and its arbitrariness, its cynicism, its falsifications, its privileges, its conservatism. In other words, he appealed to those things that make up the socialist consciousness, the self-reliance, the independence of the working class—its emancipating power.

In every respect, the bureaucracy, rallied by Stalin, made the opposite appeal. And this opposite appeal—to which class was it mainly directed, in which class did it find its most favorable response? The one it was calculated to arouse against "Trotskyism," the peasantry, or to be precise, those of its strata who could easily be mobilized behind the most property-minded element, the kulaks.

Trotskyism? asked the bureaucracy. That means, it answered, underestimation of the peasantry; it means "permanent revolution" which will throw us into futile foreign adventures that threaten

a repetition of the sufferings endured by the peasants during the intervention days; it means an end to NEP, to free trading on the market by the peasant with his surplus, and the reintroduction of War Communism.

The Stalinists openly charged that the Opposition wants to "rob the peasantry"; that it wants to exploit the peasants for socialist accumulation as the bourgeoisie exploited the colonial peoples for capitalist accumulation; that it wants to squeeze the peasants dry for its adventuristic "super-industrialization" plans. It was from the Stalinists that came the watchword to the peasants, "Enrich yourselves!" It was Stalin himself who made the first tentative public suggestions, in 1926, for breaching the law on the nationalization of land, and his Georgian commissar of agriculture actually drew up a draft of a law to breach it.

In the Stalinist bureaucracy, the peasants (not they alone, but they above all others in Russia) saw the "continuation of Bolshevism" of 1917-1918, that is, not only the defenders of the land they had acquired by the revolution but as the promoters of their property-rights, of their economic rights and their right to expand their economic power. In the Trotskyist Opposition, the same peasants saw "the Communists," the international revolutionists, the "selfish city-men," to say nothing of the "intellectuals" (and in not a few cases, the "Jews"), the "socializers of property," the people who had been in the saddle too long and who had to be pulled up short, so that an honest, hard-working kulak could add to his holdings, could increase the number of his workers, and could sell his growing surplus to the city at an honest, that is, at a stiff price.

It was on the basis of these social reactions that the bureaucracy was able to win the fight against the Opposition. It was by shrewdly arousing these reactions that it was able to win. It won with the aid of the unarmed force that the huge peasant mass constituted in Russia. And what Wolfe misses completely, it seems, is that only by *first* mobilizing this unarmed force was the bureaucracy able to establish firmly its rule, the rule of the "police apparatus," over the party, the trade unions, and the working class as a whole. That is how it happened; almost exactly the opposite way, as we noted, from the one Wolfe describes. Its significance altogether escapes him.

The original hopes of the Bolsheviks to reduce the disproportionate social weight of the peasantry in order to assure the rule of the working class, by giving the worker five times as high a vote as the peasant, ultimately proved to be vain. In the struggle, it was no longer a question of votes; it was not even any longer a question

of the Soviet institutions, which the civil war had deeply undermined. The social weight of the peasantry asserted itself against the revolutionary proletariat in the period of the reaction, and there was not enough strength left to withstand it.

That is how the reaction gained its first and, at bottom, its decisive victory in Russia. There was not in existence a bourgeoisie to serve as the urban counterpart and political leader of the increasingly conservative and property-conscious peasants. Consequently, there was no restoration of capitalism. *But the urban leader was found in the form of the Stalinist bureaucracy.* The "alliance" was strong enough, in the general atmosphere of reaction and declining self-confidence of the proletariat, to smash the revolutionary régime, to overturn the workers' power, to crush the Bolshevik party. But it did not follow that a "peasant" régime was established.

Once again it was proved—as if it needed another proof—that the social nature of the peasantry is such that it cannot establish a durable, independent régime of its own, but can only help establish the rule of an urban class. When it supported to power the progressive class in Russian society, it gained materially *even as a peasantry.* The Stalinist bureaucracy was not progressive, but reactionary. When the peasantry helped it to power, the inevitable happened. Once in command of the state, and no longer fearing the socialist proletariat it had crushed and subjected to a police dictatorship, the Stalinist bureaucracy proceeded to extend the police dictatorship over the peasantry. It consolidated its power by reducing the peasant mass to the level of state serfs. ✓

It was not, then, as we read the history of the events, the nationalization of land—aimed at curbing the concentration of land in the hands of agrarian property-holders—that facilitated the rise of Stalinism. If anything, the bureaucracy "emancipated" itself from the revolution with the aid of those who strove for such a concentration. If Wolfe had merely wished to say that the centralization of land ownership in the hands of the state gave Stalinist reaction a tremendous, even unparalleled, economic and therefore political power over the people, *after the reaction succeeded in taking over the state*, he would be saying very little.

In the first place, it would apply at least as much to the decisions of the revolution which nationalized all the principal means of production and exchange—factories, plants, mines, banks, mills, railroads, etc. But in that case, it is not Plekhanov's "brilliant prevision" that would be worth mentioning, not even in a footnote. Wolfe would then be more consistent in referring to the "brilliant premonitions" of every enemy of socialism from Herbert Spencer

to Fredrick von Hayek. In the second place, it would be such a commonplace that it would be worth mentioning only in a footnote. Marxist or non-Marxist, no moderately intelligent person has ever had the slightest doubt that the centralization of all economic power in the hands of a *reactionary state* can have anything but *reactionary consequences* so long as it remains in the hands of that state.

The only interesting point is the one that Wolfe seeks to suggest, namely, that the very act of nationalizing the land brought Russia (and the Bolsheviks) from democracy to totalitarianism. It is of interest because it is at the heart and core of the whole reactionary struggle against the socialist movement and the socialist ideal today. Only, where that struggle is conducted directly and not by indirection, it does not confine its criticism, if we may so call it, to nationalization of land, but extends it, as is only proper, to the whole field of nationalization of the means of production and exchange. It does not stop with Lenin but, as is still proper, goes back to Marx and Engels and the whole idea of socialist freedom. Whether or not the badly mismatched "prevision" of Plekhanov was dug out of historical obscurity, where it was not unjustly lodged, so that it might be used in this struggle, is a question that merits treatment in a political biography of Wolfe, who is himself contributing some not-unexpected chapters to it in the current press, rather than in a political biography of the "three" who made a revolution. If it is used, then the patrons of this struggle have very little to congratulate themselves on in Wolfe's unsensational disclosure. If it throws some light on the author's method of historical analysis, and on how superficial and unilluminating it is, it throws none on the Russian revolution itself.

IT IS HARD TO SAY WHO HAS WRITTEN more absurdities about Lenin's "organizational principles": the Stalinists who seek to prove that their totalitarian party régime conforms identically with the views set forth by Lenin or the modern anti-Bolsheviks who argue that if the two are not quite identical it is nevertheless Lenin's views and practices that led directly to the present Stalinist régime. They represent complementary and mutually parasitic parts of a division of labor which has successfully devastated the thinking of millions of people, with one saying that the totalitarian tyranny leads to (or is!) socialism and the other that socialism can lead to nothing but this totalitarian tyranny. ✓

Either as perpetrators or victims of falsification, both are so thoroughly and extensively wrong that it would require volumes

just to exhume and properly correlate the facts. It is not merely a matter of setting the historical record right—that is of secondary importance. It is above all a matter of resuming the lagging fight for socialism, which a Stalin abandoned so completely to pursue one reactionary course and a Wolfe has abandoned just as completely to pursue a different reactionary course.

In Lenin's conception of the "party machine," of its role in relationship to the working class, Wolfe finds (as what popular writer nowadays does not?) "the germ of a party dictatorship over the proletariat itself, exercised in its name," that is, the germ of Stalinism. It is out of this feature of Bolshevism that Wolfe erects the third pillar of his analysis. He reminds us that at the beginning Trotsky warned against the inevitable outcome of Lenin's conception:

The organization of the party will take the place of the party; the Central Committee will take the place of the organization; and finally the dictator will take the place of the Central Committee.

"Was ever prophecy more fatefully fulfilled by history?" exclaims Wolfe. The truth is that if prophets had no better example than this of how they are confirmed by history, the profession would be in sorry shape. With due respect to Trotsky, it can be said that to find in Stalinism a fulfillment of Trotsky's "Cassandra-like prevision" (Wolfe's phrase) of Lenin's conception requires a well-trained capacity for superficiality assisted by an elaborate ignoring—we will not say manipulation—of the historical facts. The "prevision" was not fulfilled *at all*, and Trotsky himself was not the last to understand this.

But before this is established, let us see what it is that makes Lenin's views so reprehensible in Wolfe's eyes. Rather, let us try to see, for on this score Wolfe is either ambiguous or obscure, or just plain silent. He makes the task of the reviewer almost baffling. Attentive reading of page after page of Wolfe fails to disclose exactly what it was in Lenin's ideas about the "party machine" that led to Stalinism.

Was it Lenin's conception of who is entitled to party membership? Wolfe describes the dispute at the party congress in 1903 on the famous Article I of the party constitution. Lenin's draft defined a party member as one "who recognizes the party's program and supports it by material means *and by personal participation in one of the party organizations.*" Martov, leader of the Mensheviks-to-be, proposed that the phrase in italics be replaced entirely by the following: "and by regular personal assistance under the direction

of one of the party organizations." Martov's formula was supported by the majority of the delegates.

Wolfe describes Lenin's view unsympathetically, which is his God-given right. But what was wrong with it? Wolfe's answer is a significant wink and a knowing nod of the head, as if to say, "Now you can see where Lenin was heading from the very start, can't you? Now you know what Bolshevism was at its very origin. If you really want to trace Stalinism to its historical roots, there indeed is one of the sturdiest and most malignant of them."

But wink and nod notwithstanding, all that Lenin proposed was a provision that had been and was then and has ever since been a commonplace in *every* socialist party we ever heard of, namely, that to be considered a party member, with the right of determining the policy and leadership that the membership as a whole is to follow, you have to belong to one of the units of the party. That would seem to be, would it not, an eminently democratic procedure, to say nothing of other merits. ✓

By Martov's formulation, the policy and leadership of the party to one of whose branches you belong are determined for you by persons who are given the title of party members in exchange for "assisting" it *without* the obligation of belonging to any of its established branches. It is the thoroughly bureaucratized bourgeois political machines that are characterized by the kind of party "membership" that Martov's draft proposed. It is one of the ways in which leadership and party policy are divorced from control by the ranks. But what socialist party, regardless of political tendency, does Wolfe know that has ever adopted a party statute such as Martov defended? The Social Democratic Federation of August Claessens and Algernon Lee is not entirely corroded by Bolshevism, it is said. But suppose someone were to advocate that membership in the SDF be extended to persons who assist the Federation under the direction of one of its branches without actually joining a branch. These nonagenarians would immediately summon every remnant of their remaining muscularity to crush the hardy advocate as a madman who threatens the integrity of the SDF and the "Leninist organizational principle" which they take even more for granted than they do the atrocity-stories about the history of Bolshevism. ✓

Or suppose the roles had been reversed, and it was Lenin who had advocated the Martov formulation in 1903. Just imagine the speed with which heads would bob knowingly and eyes blink significantly, and how profound would be the conclusions drawn about the sinister character of Bolshevism as far back as the date of its birth! And the whole joke is that there *was* a reversal, at least on

the part of Martov Wolfe is oblivious to it. But in his history of the Russian Social Democracy Martov reminds us that under the influence of the 1905 revolution, the Mensheviks, at their Petersburg conference in December of that year, "abandoned Paragraph I of the old party statutes [that is, the Martov formula of 1903] which weakened the strict party-character of the organization in so far as it did not obligate all the members of the party to join definite party organizations." So, about two years after the London debate, the Mensheviks themselves adopted Lenin's definition of party membership and there is no evidence that they ever altered it subsequently. From then on, at least, Lenin's view was never *really* in dispute. It is only in our time that it is splattered across the pages of anti-Bolshevik literature, with all sorts of dark but always undefined references to its ominous overtones, undertones and implications.

Was it Lenin's intolerance toward difference of opinion within the party, his conception of a party monolithism that allowed only for obedience to a highly-centralized, self-appointed and self-perpetuating leadership, his autocratic determination to have his own way regardless of the consequences, with a penchant for splitting the movement when he did not get his way? These are familiar charges against Bolshevism, and against Lenin in particular. Wolfe might have made an original contribution to these charges by providing some facts to sustain them. Instead he preferred to repeat them, and more than once.

We feel neither the desire nor the need to canonize Lenin as a saint, or to regard his works as sacred texts. He was the greatest revolutionary leader in history, and that is more than enough to assure his place against both detractors and iconographers. If we knew nothing at all about him, it would be safe to assume that he had his faults, personal and political. Learning about him only confirms this innocent and not very instructive assumption. He was devoted to the cause of socialist freedom and his devotion was durable and passionate. As an adversary, Paul Axelrod, said, "there is not another man who for twenty-four hours of the day is taken up with the revolution, who has no other thoughts but thoughts of the revolution, and who, even in his sleep, dreams of nothing but revolution." This made him, in the eyes of dilettantes and philistines, let alone defenders of the old order, a fanatic. It was his strength. He was, in consequence, a passionate partisan of the instrument he regarded as indispensable for the revolution, the party, of the sharpness and clarity of its thought.

This necessarily brought him into conflict with others, and not only with dabblers but with revolutionists no less devoted to so-

cialism than he. In polemic and in factional struggle generally (neither of which was really invented by Lenin, and which can be avoided only by eschewing politics altogether), he was resolute, self-confident and uncompromising. It is easy to think of worse qualities. But they were qualities that made him incomprehensible or insufferable in the eyes of tergiversaters and cobwebheads. If, as was often the case, he exaggerated or overreached himself, it was generally because nobody helped him by inventing a method of carrying on polemical and factional struggle without risk of exaggeration. (Reading Wolfe, for example, shows that such a method has still to be invented.) But all this about Lenin, and a good deal more, does not begin to prove the "standard" charges against him.

Take splits. Wolfe says that "in the matter of splitting, Lenin was invariably the aggressor." It is a categorical statement—one of the few made by Wolfe who generally prefers indirection. To illustrate how much dehydrated bunk there is in the statement, we can take the famous 1903 party congress which split the Russian Social Democratic Party. There was a furious fight over the above-mentioned Paragraph I of the party statutes. Lenin was defeated after a two-day debate. But he did not bolt the congress or the party. Earlier in the sessions, however, the delegates led by Lenin and Martov, Axelrod, Trotsky and Plekhanov, overwhelmingly defeated the position of the Jewish Bund on the question of autonomy. The Bund, refusing to bow to the majority, split from the congress. No sermon from Wolfe on the virtue of unity and the vice of splitting.

Then the congress, Lenin and Martov included, voted against the separate organization around the "Economist" journal, *Rabocheye Dyelo*. Whereupon, two Economist delegates split from the congress. Still no sermon from Wolfe. Then the congress, by a slender majority but nonetheless a majority, adopted Lenin's motion for an *Iskra* editorial board of Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov, as against the outgoing board which had included old-timers like Axelrod and Zasulich. Whereupon Martov announced his refusal to abide by the decision—to serve on the board—and the split between the now-named Mensheviks (Minority) and Bolsheviks (Majority) became a fact. Conclusion? "In the matter of splitting, Lenin was invariably the aggressor."

Of course Lenin was responsible for a split here and a split there! To deny it would be absurd; to feel apologetic about it, likewise. But it is interesting to see how Wolfe applies different standards in different cases—so sternly moralistic toward the Bolsheviks and so maternally tender toward their opponents. He quotes Lenin as writing that he could not understand why the

Bund split from the congress since "it showed itself master of the situation and could have put through many things"; and then observes with haughty severity:

Since, all his life, Lenin attached a feeling of moral baseness to "opportunism," he found it hard to understand that these men of the Bund and *Rabocheye Dyelo* could have firm convictions, principles of their own, and, defeated on them, would not content themselves with "putting through" what he regarded as opportunistic measures.

Happy Bundists to have so sympathetic an advocate! Lenin found it hard to understand, but he, Wolfe, he understands. After all, if people have firm convictions and principles, they will not, if defeated in their own organization, consent to forego them just for the sake of unity. They will not and they should not. Better a split than that! All this applies to Bundists, Economists, Mensheviks and other opponents of the Bolsheviks. But not to the Bolsheviks themselves. Even though their principles and convictions were no less firm, they deserve no such affectionate consideration. Why not? Because . . . because . . . well, because in the matter of splitting Lenin was invariably the aggressor.

The tale of Lenin's "intolerance" toward opponents inside the party has been told in a dozen languages. In the best of cases (they are rare enough), the record is seen through the completely distorting glasses of the present-day Stalinist régime; in the worst of cases (that is, as a rule), the record is falsified in whole or in part. At least nine times out of ten, Lenin's "intolerance" consisted, for the opponents, in the fact that he refused to adopt their point of view on a question.

The phenomenon is familiar to anyone who has been active for any length of time in politics, especially in those working-class movements where politics is not an intellectual pastime but is taken most seriously. A man who puts forward a point of view on some question, but adds that his opponent's view is probably just as good if not better—there is a tolerant man for you. If he says that it really doesn't matter much whether the organization adopts his view or not—there's a tolerant man. If he is not so impolite as to try vigorously to win supporters for his view and to plan, with his initial supporters, on how to win a majority for it—he is tolerant too. Or if his point of view miraculously wins the support of, let us say, the organization's convention, and he then announces that he is ready to concede the leadership to his opponents who are against his position and who, with the best will in the world, could not carry out the adopted policy with enthusi-

asm or understanding—there is a most tolerant man. He is not at all like Lenin, granted. He differs from him in that he does not take his views or his organization—or himself—very seriously. He is in politics for a week-end, warmed by the sunny thought that after he has returned to his normal pursuits he will have left behind a memory unmarred by the tiniest Leninist stain.

The references generally made to Lenin's "intolerance" are actually calculated to convey the impression that he imposed upon the Bolsheviks a uniquely dictatorial regime in which his word, or at best, the word of his Central Committee was law that could be questioned only under penalty of the severest punishment. The unforearmed reader tends to think of Lenin's organization in terms of Stalin's—not quite the same, to be sure, but as an only slightly modified version.

The comparison is utterly monstrous. Up to 1917, the Russian revolutionary movement was an illegal, underground movement, working under the onerous conditions of Tsarist autocracy. In spite of that, the Bolshevik movement had, on the whole, more genuine democracy in its organization, more freedom of opinion and expression, a freer and healthier internal life, than at least nine-tenths of the other socialist or trade-union organizations of Europe, most of which enjoyed legality and other facilities beyond the dreams of the Russians. This was true not only of the relations between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks when they represented only contending factions within a more-or-less united party, but likewise true among the Bolsheviks themselves, first as a faction and, after 1912, as an independent party. The hideous monolithism of Stalin's régime was entirely unknown—it was not even dreamed of—among the Bolsheviks. Political tendencies were formed without let or hindrance, and if they dissolved it was not under compulsion of any kind. The official leading committee always had its central organ—the spokesman of the faction or the party—but time and again periodicals would be issued on their own responsibility by political groupings and even (or rather particularly!) inside the Bolshevik faction (later, inside the Bolshevik Party) itself. ✓

Even after the Bolsheviks took power, this tradition was so strong and normal and deeply-rooted that, in the most perilous period for the new Soviet régime, it was possible for groups of dissident Bolsheviks not only to publish newspapers and reviews of their own independently of the Central Committee but to attack that committee (and of course Lenin!) with the utmost freedom and . . . impunity.

These separate organs of tendencies or groups or factions discussed all questions of party theory, party policy, party organiza-

tion, and party leadership with a fullness, a freedom and an openness that was known to no other working-class organization of the time and has certainly had no equal since the rise of Stalinism. The idea of "secret" or "internal" discussion of political or theoretical questions of the movement, introduced by Zinoviev and Stalin in the period of the revolution's decline and now considered perfectly good "Bolshevik" practice, alas, even by self-styled Marxist organizations, was simply not known among the Bolsheviks—mind you, among the Bolsheviks even while they were an illegal, police-hounded and police-infiltrated movement! Lenin's collected works, which are composed largely of open "inner-party" polemics and the files of a dozen different factional papers and pamphlets provide inundating evidence of this rich, free and open party life. In this respect, no other socialist organization of those days could even equal the Bolsheviks.

Even in its best days, the German Social Democracy did not have anything like so free and democratic an organizational-political life, while it was an outlawed party or afterward in the period of legality. Why, even Marx and Engels sometimes had to fight to get their views published in the German party press and their fight was not uniformly successful. Among the Bolsheviks, such a thing was unheard of, and not just with respect to a Marx or Engels or Lenin, but also to the spokesman of some unpopular grouping in the party or faction.

Read, or reread, all the anti-Bolshevik histories or commentaries with the closest care, and see what *facts* are related about how Lenin's "organizational principles" worked out in party practice. You will find all sorts of hints, suggestions, innuendo, clouded allusions, grunts, grimaces, pursed lips, winks and nods; you will find gossip, chit-chat about factional excesses which are "normal" in heated factional fights, titillating tales about the "dubious" sources of Bolshevik funds calculated to shock the sensibilities of our pious business and trade-union circles and of course a lot of plain kiln-dried falsification without filler, shellac or varnish. But it would be astounding if you found even one fact about the régime in the Bolshevik party or faction that contradicts the record cited here about what the régime actually was. And it is this régime, as it really existed, that is supposed to have led to Stalinism! This is the tradition that is said to have helped Stalinism appear and triumph! Stalinism rests upon it exactly the same way a stiletto rests on the heart it has stabbed.

Or just suppose that, in the search for facts about Lenin and the old Bolshevik movement, Wolfe or any other anti-Bolshevik

writer had discovered about them the things that are known about other leaders and other political groupings. For example, in the early *Iskra* days, Plekhanov, in order to assure his domination of the editorial board that was evenly divided between the "old" and the "young," was given *two votes* as against one for all the other members! If that had happened to Lenin—then or at any other time in his life—can you imagine the pages—no, the chapters—filled with outrage in every line, that would be written to argue that this was the very essence of Bolshevism, the core itself of Leninism, the proof positive and irrefutable of how it was pregnant with Stalinism from the day it was born?

Or take the party of Rosa Luxemburg, who was, writes Wolfe, generously and rightly, "the outstanding advocate of revolutionary policy and the outstanding defender of democracy within the labor movement." Yet, she shared the theory of the permanent revolution which, says Wolfe, led to Stalinism; her party was opposed, and not on very democratic grounds, to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in the revolution of 1905; she and her party were opposed to the democratic slogan of the right of self-determination and on grounds that were, objectively, reactionary; her party (we refer to the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania) was opposed to the idea of mass, formally non-party trade unions and insisted that the unions must declare their allegiance to the revolutionary party; and in spite of her criticisms of Lenin's "organizational principles," the régime in her own party in Poland was exceptionally factional, narrow, super-centralistically disciplined and far more "bureaucratic" than anything the Bolsheviks were guilty of.

The anti-Bolsheviks, who have exactly nothing in common with Luxemburg, ghoulishly drag her into court against Lenin, but if that record were to be found in the history of the Bolsheviks, can you imagine the uproar in twelve languages?

Or take the Narodniks (Populists) for whom Wolfe has such an extravagant reverence. In their early days, these spiritual (and political) ancestors of the Social Revolutionists, convinced but primitive revolutionists, exploited—with the best intentions in the world—the anti-Semitic pogrom feelings of the Russian peasants and even issued leaflets spurring them on. Can you imagine what the anti-Bolsheviks professionals would make of such a thing if it could be found in the record of the Bolsheviks or their forebears? Or what they would say if some Bolshevik argued that Kerensky's role in 1917 "flowed from" the anti-Semitic aberrations of the Narodniks four decades earlier?

Such examples could be cited almost indefinitely—but not with reference to Lenin and the Bolsheviks. If they and they alone are

the targets today, it is not as a result of objective historical re-examination but because of the frenetic campaign against socialism by a desperate and dying bourgeoisie and by disoriented and disillusioned ex-revolutionists. And by the same token, if we defend the Bolsheviks today it is in the interest of historical objectivity but also because we remain loyal to the emancipating fight for socialism.

Wolfe does deal with two aspects of Lenin's "conception of the party machine" that are indeed of decisive importance. He separates them when they should be connected. Properly connected and focussed, they would throw a most revealing light on Bolshevism, the Russian Revolution, its decline and on the rise and meaning of Stalinism. Right here, perhaps, is Wolfe's most glaring failure.

First, Wolfe finds in Lenin's views on the interrelations between the revolutionary movement, socialist consciousness and the spontaneous struggles of the workers, as he expressed them early in the century, the

. . . dogma, obscure as yet in its implications, [that] was at the very core of "Leninism." From it flowed an attitude toward the working class, toward its ability to think for itself, to learn from experience, toward its capacities and potentialities for self-rule, toward its "spontaneous" movements such as might take place without orders and control from the party of socialist theoreticians and professional revolutionaries. From it would spring a special attitude toward trade unions, toward the impromptu strikers' councils or Soviets, even toward two revolutions—in 1905 and the spring of 1917—that would come not on order but by surprise.

Elsewhere, Wolfe finds something else that makes up "the real core of 'Leninism,' separating them by an abyss from the Mensheviks, and blurring to the vanishing point the dogmatic line which divided him from Trotsky." The "core" is this:

In short, Lenin's real answer to the question: what happens after we get power? is *Let's take power and then we'll see.*

This "core" separated Lenin not only from the Mensheviks but from Marx as well, and Wolfe argues the point with a brevity, if not erudition, which merits full quotation:

To Marx it might have seemed that "the forms of the state are rooted in the material conditions of life," that "the economic structure of society . . . independent of men's will . . . determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes," and that "no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there are room in it have been developed." But to Lenin's political-power-centered mind, for all his Marxist orthodoxy, such formulae were intolerable fetters unless subject to the proper exegesis. And the exegesis literally turned Marx on his head until the Marxist view that "in the last analysis economics

determines politics" became the Leninist view that, with enough determination, power itself, naked political power, might succeed wholly in determining economics.

Wolfe has more to say about these two points, but very little more.

Lenin's ideas about socialist consciousness and the struggle of the working class were not invented by him nor were they uniquely his own. They are nothing less than the intellectual underpinnings of any genuinely socialist party, and it is inconceivable without them. In an even deeper sense they underlie the very conception of a rationally-ordered socialist society. No one developed these ideas more sharply and profoundly, even if with polemical vehemence, than Lenin, and that was his special contribution. But the ideas themselves go back to the beginnings of the scientific socialist movement, back to Marx and Engels. A serious examination of Lenin could not have failed to establish this fact and draw conclusions that it indicates. Wolfe cannot help but know that Lenin's views were an almost literal copy of those expressed earlier, just as the century turned, by Karl Kautsky. And his present-day venerated would be horrified to hear that, by virtue of what he wrote at that time, he was the fountainhead of what was inevitably to become Stalinism! Kautsky, before Lenin, wrote:

Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for socialist production, but also, and directly, the *consciousness* of its necessity. . . . In this connection socialist consciousness is presented as a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a theory, has its roots in a modern economic relationship in the same way as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and in the same way as the latter emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises out of different premises. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicles of science are not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia*: It was out of the heads of members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectual-developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without, and not something that arose within it spontaneously. Accordingly, the old [Austrian] Hainfeld program quite rightly stated that the task of Social Democracy is to imbue the proletariat with the *consciousness* of its position and the consciousness of its tasks. There would be no need for this if consciousness emerged from the class struggle. (Kautsky's emphasis.)

To this should be added: neither would there then be any need for a distinct, separate political movement of socialism—a socialist party—except, perhaps, to fulfill the not very useful function of passive reflector of the welter of ideological and political confusion that, to one extent or another, will always exist in the working class, at least so long as it is a class deprived of social power and therewith of the means of wiping out its own inferior position in society. It is kept in this inferior position under capitalism by force—but only in the last analysis, only at times of crisis. As a rule, be it under democratic or even under fascist capitalism, the ruling class maintains or seeks to maintain itself by ideological means.

The whole of capitalism's "head-fixing industry," as one Marxist wittily called it, is directed toward keeping the working class in ignorance or confusion about its social position, or rather about the purely capitalist reasons for its position, toward concealing from the working class the emancipating historical mission it has and the road it must travel to perform it. So long as the workers do not acquire an understanding of their social position and their social task, their battles against the ruling class, be they ever so militant or massive, can only *modify* the conditions of their economic subjugation but not *abolish* them. Indispensable to their abolition is the *socialist consciousness* (an exact mathematical formulation of which is neither possible nor necessary) of the working class, which means nothing more and nothing less than *its* realization of *its* position in society today, of *its* power, and of *its* obligation and *its* ability to reconstruct society socialistically.

Now, the dispute over the ideas of Kautsky-Lenin on the subject boils down to this: either the working class, organized in its elementary trade-union organizations or not, acquires this consciousness by spontaneous generation in the course of repeated struggles for the improvement of its conditions—or in its decisive section, it acquires it, in the course of these struggles, to be sure, with the aid of those who already possess this socialist consciousness and who are banded together (in a group, a league, a movement, a party—call it what you will) in order more effectively to transmit it, by word of mouth and by the printed page, to those whose minds are still cluttered up with bourgeois rubbish, that is, the products of the "head-fixing industry."

Between these two, there is not a single person today who calls himself a socialist of any kind and who would venture to defend, flatly and frontally, the former conception. All you get from the anti-Bolsheviks is, as in Wolfe's case, murky reference to the "special attitude" that flowed from Lenin's formulation of the position, in which the only thing definite is a sneer at the very

conception of a socialist party—the “socialist theoreticians and professional revolutionists.” The reformists who distinguish themselves from Lenin by saying that while they too are for a socialist party, they look upon it as a “servant” of the working class and not as its “master” or “dictator”; as a means of the “socialist education” of the working class in whose “ability to think for itself” they devoutly believe and not for the purpose of “ordering and controlling” it from above—are either hypocritical or inane. Their daily practice, inside the labor movement and in politics generally, would indicate that it is less the latter than the former.

The question of socialist consciousness which Lenin developed has wider implications. Wolfe sees in it only the source for establishing a new slavery for the working class, the Stalinist tyranny in the name of the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” The truth is not merely different, but in this case it is the exact opposite!

Workers’ democracy and, indeed, that complete realization of democracy which inaugurates the socialist society, are not only inseparable from Lenin’s ideas on socialist consciousness but, without them, become empty words, unattainable hopes, illusions at worst.

What was the obvious meaning of Lenin’s insistence that the specific rôle of the socialist movement was to “introduce” a socialist consciousness into the working class? What, for example, was the clear implication of Lenin’s “Aside from the influence of the Social Democracy, there is no *conscious* activity of the workers,” which Wolfe quotes as a sample of that “dogma [which] was at the very core of ‘Leninism’ ” and from which “flowed an attitude toward the working class”? It *should* be obvious. The “party of socialist theoreticians and professional revolutionaries” was not assigned thereby to trick the incurably blind and incurably stupid workers into lifting it to power so that it might establish a new kind of dictatorship over them. That makes no sense whatsoever. It was assigned the job of making the workers aware of the fundamental reasons for their exploited and subjected position under capitalism; of making the workers aware of their own class strength and having them rely only upon their class strength and independence; of assembling them in a revolutionary party of their own; of making them aware of their ability to free themselves from all class rule by setting up their own government as the bridge to socialist freedom. Without a socialist consciousness, there would be working-class activity but the workers would continue to remain the ruled and never become the free. For the workers to rule themselves required conscious activity toward socialism.

What is Wolfe trying to convey with his suggestive prose? That

Lenin dwelled so emphatically upon the need for the party to instill socialist consciousness or stimulate it in the working class because he did not believe in "its ability to think for itself, to learn from experience"? Or because he was skeptical about "its capacities and potentialities for self-rule"? Did Lenin expect to imbue the unable-to-think-and-lead proletariat with socialist conceptions by intravenous hypodermic injections? Or is Wolfe just a little . . . careless with his innuendoes?

Let us go further. Lenin knew—he referred to it often enough and nowadays it is especially necessary to emphasize and elaborate it—one of the most basic and decisive differences between the bourgeois revolution and the socialist revolution. One of the outstanding characteristics of the former was that it could be carried through without a clear ideology, without an unequivocally-formulated consciousness on the part of the bourgeoisie whose social system it was to establish. In fact, not only could it be carried out in this way, but generally speaking that is how it was carried out.

The greatest bourgeois revolution, the French, was carried out by plebians, without the bourgeoisie and in part against it; and it was consolidated by Napoleon, in part without the bourgeoisie and in part against it. In Germany it was carried out, that is, the supremacy of capitalism over feudalism was assured, in the Bismarckian or Junker way—again, in part without the bourgeoisie and in very large part against it. The passage from feudalism to capitalism in Japan is only another example of the same phenomenon. Yet, in all these and other cases, including those where the bourgeoisie was not raised to political power, the bourgeois revolution was nevertheless effected, consolidated, guaranteed. Why? As Lenin once wrote, in 1918:

One of the main differences between the bourgeois and the socialist revolution consists in this, that for the bourgeois revolution which grows up out of feudalism the new economic organizations, which continually transform feudal society on all sides, gradually take form within the womb of the old society. The bourgeois revolution faced only *one* task: to throw off and destroy all the fetters of the former society. Every bourgeois revolution that fulfills this task, fulfills everything that is demanded of it: it strengthens the growth of capitalism.

But if the bourgeois fetters upon production are thrown off and destroyed, that alone does not and cannot assure the growth of socialist production. Under capitalism, production is assured by the irrepressible tendency toward accumulation of capital which is dictated primarily, not by the will of the capitalist, but by the blindly-operating market as the automatic regulator of capitalist production. Socialist production is incompatible with market re-

lations. It is production for use and therefore planned production, not automatically regulated by a blind force. Given a certain level of development of the productive force available, *everything* then depends upon planning, that is, upon the *conscious* organization of production and distribution by human beings.

Now, under capitalism, what and how much is produced is determined by the market, and the distribution of what is produced is determined basically by the relations between the class that owns the means of production and exchange and the class that is divorced from them. Overturn capitalism, and it is found that there is no market to determine what is produced and in what quantities, and there is no class that owns private property.

Until the distant day when all classes are completely abolished and socialism fully established, the conditions of production and distribution must necessarily be determined by politically-associated human beings—no longer by the blind market but by the state.

In other words, where the state becomes the repository of all the means of production and is in complete control of them, economy is for the first time subject to planned and conscious control by those who have the state in their hands. In this sense, *politics determines economics!* This may sound startling to Wolfe, as well as to all sorts of half-baked half-Marxists. But if this simple and irrefutable fact is not understood, then the whole idea of the working class taking power in order to organize a socialist society becomes absurd and even meaningless. In revolution, but above all and most decisively in the socialist revolution, the relationship between economics and politics is not only reversed, turned upside-<sup>v</sup> down, but it *must* be reversed!

But if politics now determines economics (again, within the limits of the given productive forces), or to put it differently, if the conditions of production and distribution are now determined by politically conscious individuals or groups, the question of the nature of the determining politics is immediately thrown open. What assurance is there that the politics will be socialist in nature, so that production relations are socialist or socialistic (by which is meant socialist in tendency or direction) and that distribution corresponds to them, so that what is produced is for the use of the people and not of a small privileged group?

To rely for that on the good will, the honorable intentions or the socialist past or professions of faith of a group of planners who hold the state power to the exclusion of the rest of the people, is naive, where it is not reactionary. In any case, it is not a socialist idea and certainly not Lenin's. A *socialist* development of the

economy can be assured only by those who are to be its principal beneficiaries, the working class, and only if it has the power to make the decisions on production and distribution and to carry them out, hence only if it holds the power of the state. For politics now determines economics! And it cannot acquire this power or wield it unless it is permeated by a *socialist consciousness*, which means, among other things, an understanding of *the decisive* role it has to play in the new state, and *therefore and only by that means*, the role it has to play in assuring a socialist direction to the operation of the economy.

That is why Lenin, in distinguishing between bourgeois and socialist revolutions, underlined the fact that the Bolshevik revolution "found at hand" not *socialist economic relations* that had developed under capitalism as capitalist economic relations had developed under feudalism, but rather a *democratic political factor*: "victory depended solely upon whether already finished organizational forms of the movement were at hand that embraced millions. This finished form was the Soviets." The same thought was in his mind when he urged that every cook should become an administrator, so that with everyone exercising the power of "bureaucrat" no one would be a bureaucrat. And the thought was even more pregnantly expressed in his famous saying that "Soviets plus electrification equal socialism." (It is impossible even to imagine Lenin saying that a totalitarian prison for the workers plus nationalized property equals a degenerated workers' state!)

The Soviets, before the Bolsheviks took power, were acclaimed by every Menshevik and Social Revolutionist as the "revolutionary democracy." That was right. What is more, the Soviets were a magnificent example of a spontaneous movement of the workers and peasants themselves, not set up by order of any party or according to its plan. Wolfe finds that from Lenin's "dogma" about socialist consciousness "flowed" an attitude toward the working class which was uncommendable because, it would seem, it was most undemocratic and even contemptuous toward the working class, including "its 'spontaneous' movements such as might take place without orders and control from the party. . . ." Like the Soviets of 1917, for example? Then how explain that *every* party in Russia, except the Bolsheviks, fought to keep the Soviets (the "revolutionary democracy") from taking over all power, and worked to keep them as a more or less decorative appendage to the never-elected but self-constituted Kerensky regime?

True to Lenin's "dogma," the Bolsheviks alone strove to imbue the Soviets with a genuinely socialist consciousness, which meant concretely that the workers (and even the peasants), more dem-

ocratically and representatively organized in the Soviets than ever before or ever since in any other movement in any country of the world, should take command of the nation and therewith of their own destiny.

This example of what really was the "attitude" of Lenin and his party toward the "spontaneous" movements of the workers, their ability to think and learn for themselves, and their capacities and potentialities for self-rule—not in some thesis or polemical article or speech, but in one of the most crucial periods of history—is so outstanding, so overshadowing, so illuminating about Lenin's "conceptions" that Wolfe passes it by. We will not ask what this historian would have said about Lenin's "dogma" if the Bolshevik attitude toward the "revolutionary democracy" in 1917 had been the same as, let us say, that of Kerensky. But we wonder what he will say in succeeding volumes about the Menshevik and SR "attitude" toward the Soviets and the "dogma" from which it "flowed."

The revolution of 1917 was the decisive test for all political parties and groups. In spite of conservative trends in the ranks (all parties tend toward conservatism about some of their "dogmas"), Lenin showed that he had been able to build and hold together a party which proved, in this most critical hour, to be the only consistent champions of revolutionary democracy and revolutionary socialism, and the only "political machine" ready and able to lead both to victory. This is what brought Trotsky to the side of the Bolsheviks and caused him to "forget" his "Cassandralike prevision" about how "the dictator will take the place of the Central Committee" and the party itself.

If Wolfe finds that Trotsky's prediction was "fatefully fulfilled by history," it is primarily because of his method of separating the history of the conflict of social forces from specific political events, or worse, of simply ignoring the former. The fact is that whatever grounds there may have been or seemed to have been in 1903-04 for Trotsky to utter his warning the main tendency of the development of Lenin's group or party, particularly from 1905 onward, was in an entirely opposite one from that feared by Trotsky. The apparatus did not replace the party, nor the Central Committee the apparatus, nor the dictator (Lenin) the Central Committee. The inner party democracy and freedom of opinion and discussion of the Bolsheviks *as an illegal movement*, it is worth repeating, can be matched, without apology, against the régime of virtually every other working-class organization, legal or illegal, that ever existed.

Here, too, the decisive test was 1917 itself. At least, you would think so, on the basis of almost universal experience in such mat-

ters. A working-class movement which is suffering from a fatal disease—opportunism, let us say, or bureaucratism—does not usually reveal it, not clearly, at any rate, in normal periods, in periods of social calm or political decay. It shows it, and most disastrously for itself and its followers, in the most critical and troubled periods of society, above all in the crisis of war and the crisis of revolution. But precisely in the critical period of 1917, the Bolshevik party passed the test, and so well that Trotsky found it possible to abandon his early apprehensions about it.

*Now why didn't Lenin's conception of organization, which was one of the "roots of Stalinism," manifest itself in 1917 in a way that would cause the Bolshevik party to play a conservative or reactionary role in the revolution, to be a brake upon the workers and peasants?* The question is of first-rate interest. Therefore, Wolfe passes it by.

Did the Bolshevik party measure up to its task early in 1917? Of course not! But that was not because Trotsky's prophecy about Lenin's conception of organization had been fulfilled, fatefully or otherwise. It was an entirely different prophecy of Trotsky's that was fulfilled—or almost. Years earlier, Trotsky had written that the Bolshevik formula of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" had its revolutionary side, as opposed to the Menshevik conception of a revolution in which it would be the role of the proletariat to bring the bourgeoisie to power. But, he added, if the Bolsheviks persisted in this formula, the coming revolution would reveal its reactionary side, that is, that which inhibited the proletariat from carrying the democratic revolution through the proletarian power and the inauguration of socialist measures. Steeped in Lenin's old formula, most of the party leaders in 1917 adopted a position which paralyzed the revolutionary possibilities of the party. It took a furious fight by Lenin, after his arrival in Russia in April, to effect that "rearmament" of the party which finally assured the victory in October. But, *this* "prophecy" of Trotsky's—or rather, Lenin's rearming of the party in the direction of Trotsky's theory—is regarded by Wolfe as one of the three sources of . . . Stalinism!

Important is the fact that Lenin did not replace the Central Committee as dictator in any sense indicated by Trotsky. He enjoyed, justly, immense authority among the Bolsheviks, but he had won it and kept it to the end of his life by his intellectual ability and character as a leader and not by any dirty manipulation or usurpation.

In 1917, most of the party leadership opposed his famous "April Theses." He was not only unable to dictate to the others,

but did not dream of it. He won them over, one by one, partly by the pressure of the party ranks whom he convinced and partly by convincing the leaders as well. In 1917, or before, when his point of view won, it was not because the dictator had replaced the Central Committee; and when his point of view lost, as was more than once the case, it was not because the apparatus had replaced the party.

Yet, the Bolshevik party did degenerate; Soviet democracy was replaced by a unique Bonapartist dictatorship. But the process did not conform with Trotsky's prediction, which Wolfe transforms into an abstraction raised to the  $n$ th power. Reading Wolfe, you would think that the Bolshevik party was a sort of supra-mundane substance evolving out of some purely internal mechanism, unaffected by the strains and influences exerted by terrestrial forces.

It is only necessary to read what the Bolsheviks said and wrote in the period of the revolutionary upsurge to see what their real attitude was toward Soviet and socialist democracy, what ideas of working-class self-rule they sought with all their strength to instill into the Russian people. The bureaucracy rose not because of these ideas, but in spite of them. The revolution was soon plunged into a fierce civil war, and if it had not been for the Bolsheviks, including their "machine," the Soviet power would not have lasted 48 hours, to be replaced, in all likelihood, not by bourgeois-democrats but by the czarist reaction which Anglo-French imperialism was sponsoring.

Civil war, unfortunately, is not the ideal culture for the growth of the democratic bacillus. The days of War Communism were harsh and stringent. At the front and at home, command inevitably took the place of free discussion and voting. The tendency to bureaucratic command gripped and held not only Bolshevik leaders, but rank-and-file militants, Bolshevik and non-party as well.

Even so, Soviet democracy could have been restored after the civil war if the accursed backwardness of Russia had been overcome rapidly by the aid which a successful revolution in the advanced West could have contributed on a grand scale. It could have been maintained if, to start with, more of the Mensheviks and SRs had allied themselves with the "revolutionary democracy" in the civil war and not with the monarchist reaction. A Russian Populist of the old days once exclaimed: "Never will history forgive the autocracy for making terrorists out of us." With far more justice the Bolsheviks might have declared: "Never will history forgive the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists for joining the war against the Soviets and forcing us to substitute our party for the Soviets."

Soviet democracy might have been restored by another road, the redemocratization of the Bolshevik party itself. And here it is interesting to note that the big fight for party democracy was launched by an outstanding section of the Old Bolsheviks who rallied to Trotsky's position; in fact, by the time Zinoviev broke with Stalin and joined the Trotskyists, it can be said that the bulk of the militants who had been most thoroughly trained in the old school of Bolshevism and in Lenin's "conception of organization," lined up against the Stalinist bureaucracy, which was represented primarily by comparatively recent members or by obscure personages who had never played an important part in the life of the party. Well or badly, consistently or not, the old Bolshevik cadres *resisted* the rise of the new Stalinist bureaucracy. If they failed, it was not due to the overpowering force the Lenin's organizational principal, but to an overpowering force of a radically different kind.

In passing, Wolfe writes:

Nineteen five and nineteen seventeen, the heroic years when the machine was unable to contain the flood of overflowing life, would bring Trotsky to the fore as the flaming tribune of the people, would show Lenin's ability to rise above the confining structure of his dogmas, and would relegate Stalin, the machine-man by antonomasy, to the background. But no people can live forever at fever heat and when that day was over and Lenin was dead, the devoted machine-man's day would come.\*

Just in passing! But these two sentences contain more insight than can be found in any two chapters of Wolfe's book. Revolutions are periods of turbulence precisely because the people are so free to choose their course and their leaders for themselves and so hard to control by *any* machine. Wolfe merely sets down these two deeply significant sentences and then goes on as though they were no more than a chance collection of words. He seems to shy away from matters and statements of *social importance* spontaneously, without special effort, as if by instinct. But the sentences are important regardless of Wolfe. When the masses were free to choose democratically in the revolution of 1917, Trotsky and Lenin were lifted to power. (Their names can be used here as representative of Bolshevism as it really was.) And it is only when the masses were exhausted or apathetic or prostrate, that is, when revolution was

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\*Then why the title "Three Who Made a Revolution"? Up to now, only Stalinist forgers have presented Stalin as one of those who outstandingly led the revolution. The *facts* presented by Wolfe show this to be a falsification and the above quotation confirms it. The title he gives his book is therefore utterly misleading. It would of course be very awkward to load a book with a title like "Two Who Made a Revolution and One Who Made a Counter-Revolution," but one merit it would have: it would be accurate.

succeeded by reaction, that the Stalinist counter-revolution could triumph over the masses *and over the Bolshevik party.*

There is the "core of Stalinism," indeed! The Stalinist bureaucracy did not grow out of an organic evolution of the Bolshevik party, as was implied by Trotsky's "prophecy." Its growth paralleled and required the destruction of that party—and its destruction, root and trunk and leaves and branch, until absolutely nothing is left of it today except the plagiarized name. This fact, too, is of such capital importance that the anti-Bolshevik writers pass it by. Destroyed: the principles of Bolshevism, its program, its tradition, its history, its personnel down almost to the last man, including (how significant this is!) even those Bolsheviks who tried to capitulate to Stalinism, and yes, including even the big bulk of the *original* Stalinist faction of the old party! Preserved: the name of the party and a few renegades from the second and tenth ranks of the old Bolshevik party—that and nothing more.

The destruction of the Bolshevik party meant the destruction of *socialist consciousness*. The measure of the growth of the Bolshevik party was the growth of this consciousness among the workers it influenced; and in turn it grew among the workers to the extent that the party remained attached to the ideas which Lenin most conspicuously advocated. It is of tremendous interest that for the Stalinist faction to extend its initial victory inside the party apparatus (that's where its first victory occurred) to a victory inside the party generally, it had to *flood* the party.

The first big public step, so to speak, taken by the Stalinist bureaucracy was the notorious Lenin Levy organized right after Lenin's death. Hundreds of thousands of workers were almost literally poured into the party. Who were they? Generally speaking, the more conservative workers and employees, people who had not shown any interest in joining the party in the tough days of the revolution and civil war but who could, in 1924-25, be persuaded to join it now that its power seemed consolidated, now that membership seemed to guarantee employment, privileges, a career. Almost to a man they could be counted on by the bureaucracy in the fight against the Opposition, against the Bolsheviks, their principles, their revolutionary and socialist and democratic traditions. It was Stalin's first and not least important step in literally *dissolving* Lenin's "machine" in order to substitute a despotic police régime that was utterly alien to it. This first step was typical of those that followed.

There is as much justification, then, for the theory that Stalinism was rooted in the Bolshevism which it extirpated, as there is,

for example, in the kindred theory that the socialist movement, its methods and its theories in general form the roots of the fascist movement and its methods and theories. The anti-Bolshevik democrat would feel outraged at seeing the latter argument put forward. He would declare indignantly that to explode such nonsense, nothing more is needed than the fact that Hitlerism crushed the socialist organizations, imprisoned or killed their leaders, outlawed their ideas, and so on and so forth.

Yet the argument that Hitlerism had its authentic roots in the German Social-Democratic Party is advanced in all coolness by so eminent an anti-socialist as Frederick von Hayek, and with the same reasoning, with the same analogies, with the same cavalier attitude toward decisive facts as is displayed by those who argue that Stalinism is rooted in Bolshevism. Hayek is a defender of the capitalist status-quo-ante-state intervention and a sworn foe of socialism, and he has his means of discrediting its good name. The aim of the democratic or reformist anti-Bolsheviks is somewhat loftier, as it were, but the means they employ to discredit Bolshevism are *in no essential* different from Hayek's.

The reader is due an apology for the extraordinary and unforeseen length to which this review of portraits of Stalinism has stretched out. He must be asked to indulge his patience a little longer, for there remains the tragic work of Isaac Deutcher to deal with. In extenuation, only the crucial importance of the subject matter can be pleaded. We consider ourselves defenders of a cause who have an elementary duty to perform. On the flyleaf of his book, Wolfe quotes, for his motto, the noble words of Albert Mathiez:

The historian has a duty both to himself and to his readers. He has to a certain extent the cure of souls. He is accountable for the reputation of the mighty dead whom he conjures up and portrays. If he makes a mistake, if he repeats slanders on those who are blameless or holds up profligates or schemers to admiration, he not only commits an evil action; he poisons and misleads the public mind.

Mathiez devoted much of his great work to defending the great French Revolution and its Jacobins from detractors. The socialist today has the duty to defend the great Russian Revolution and its Jacobins in much the same spirit. As to how faithfully Wolfe has heeded the injunction of Mathiez, the reader of his book will judge for himself.

*July, 1950*



### *Isaac Deutscher's "Stalin"*

WE COME FINALLY TO ISAAC DEUTSCHER'S biography of Stalin. The author's credentials entitle him to a serious hearing for a serious work. He was a militant in the old Polish Communist movement, then in the Polish Trotskyist movement which he seems to have left either just before or after the outbreak of the second world war. He is obviously at home in the history of the Russian revolution and of the revolutionary movement in general. His book is free of those bald errors, grotesque misunderstandings and falsehoods which swarm over the pages of most of the current literature about the Bolshevik revolution. His appraisal of Stalinism does not aim, as do most others written nowadays, to discredit that revolution and with it the fight for socialism.

He refuses to regard the Bolshevik revolution as the Original Sin from which all the evils of our time flow, and endeavors to present an objective sociological, even Marxian, analysis of Stalinism, free of the primitive diabolism which is generally substituted for analyses. Deutscher's analysis really comes to grips with what has become *the key* question of our time.

What is Stalinism? Deutscher finds the basis for understanding it in what he sets forth as the fundamental development that "has been common to all revolutions so far." This, essentially, is the development:

Each great revolution begins with a phenomenal outburst of popular energy, impatience, anger, and hope. Each ends in the weariness, exhaustion, and disillusionment of the revolutionary people. In the first phase the party that gives the fullest expression to the popular mood outdoes its rivals, gains the confidence of the masses, and rises to power. . . . Then comes the inevitable trial of civil war. The revolutionary party is still marching in step with the majority of the nation. It is acutely conscious of its unity with the people and of a profound harmony between its own objectives and the people's wishes and desires. It can call upon the mass of the nation for ever-growing efforts and sacrifices; and it is sure of the response. In this, the heroic phase, the revolutionary party is in a very

real sense democratic, even though it treats its foes with dictatorial relentlessness and observes no strict constitutional precept. The leaders implicitly trust their vast plebian following; and their policy rests on that trust. They are willing and even eager to submit their policies to open debate and to accept the popular verdict.

But this relationship hardly survives the civil war. The party emerges weary and the people wearier. "The anti-climax of the revolution is there." The fruits of the now secured revolution ripen too slowly to permit immediate fulfillment of the promises made to the people by the party.

This is the real tragedy which overtakes the party of the revolution. If its action is to be dictated by the mood of the people, it will presently have to efface itself, or at least to relinquish power. But no revolutionary government can abdicate after a victorious civil war, because the only real pretenders to power are the still considerable remnants of the defeated counterrevolution. . . . The party of the revolution knows no retreat. It has been driven to its present pass largely through obeying the will of that same people by which it is now deserted. It will go on doing what it considers to be its duty, without paying much heed to the voice of the people. In the end it will muzzle and stifle that voice.

The chasm between the rulers and the people widens, without the former having a full understanding of what is happening as they "acquire the habits of arbitrary government and themselves come to be governed by their own habits." The party divides in two.

Some of its leaders point in alarm to the divorce between the revolution and the people. Others justify the conduct of the party on the ground that the divorce is irremediable. Still others, the actual rulers, deny the fact of the divorce itself: for to admit it would be to widen further the gap between the rulers and the ruled. Some cry in alarm that the revolution has been betrayed, for in their eyes government by the people is the very essence of revolution—without it there can be no government for the people. The rulers find justification for themselves in the conviction that whatever they do will ultimately serve the interests of the broad mass of the nation; and indeed they do, on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution. Amid charges and counter-charges, the heads of the revolutionary leaders begin to roll and the power of the post-revolutionary state towers hugely over the society it governs. . . .

It is in this broad perspective that the metamorphosis of triumphant Bolshevism, and Stalin's own fortunes, can best be understood.

That, according to Deutscher, is the law of revolutions, it is the "general trend of events; and this has been common to all great revolutions so far." To make his analysis more specific and to round it out, we must go further with Deutscher. Although Stalinism represents a "metamorphosis of Bolshevism," it is not its negation.

In Stalin, there is still the Bolshevik, but no longer in the more or less pure state, as it were. His puzzled opponents ask: "What is Stalin, after all? The architect of an imperial restoration, who sometimes exploits revolutionary pretexts for his ends, or the promoter of Communist revolution, camouflaging his purpose with the paraphernalia of the Russian imperial tradition?" Deutscher answers: *Both!* Stalinism is revolutionism *and* traditionalism, stranded in strange interplay; or as he puts it elsewhere, in Stalin there is the "conflict between his nationalism and his revolutionism." As a result of this duality (in Stalin or Stalinism), he carried out, five years after Lenin's death, Soviet Russia's "second revolution." It is true that

The ideas of the second revolution were not his. He neither foresaw it nor prepared for it. Yet he, and in a sense, he alone, accomplished it.

It is likewise true that the cost was "the complete loss, by a whole generation, of spiritual and political freedom," but the "rewards of that revolution were astounding"—namely, the rapid industrialization, the modernization of agriculture, the reduction of illiteracy, the bringing of Asiatic Russia nearer to Europe even while European Russia was detached from Europe. Yet the Stalinist revolution differs from the Bolshevik revolution, and the most important difference

. . . lies in the method of the revolution. Broadly speaking, the old Bolshevism staked its hope on the revolutionary momentum of the international labor movement. It believed that the Socialist order would result from the original experience and struggle of the working classes abroad, that it would be the most authentic act of their social and political self-determination. The old Bolshevism, in other words, believed in *revolution from below*, such as the upheaval of 1917 had been. The revolution which Stalin now carried into eastern and central Europe was primarily a *revolution from above*. It was decreed, inspired, and managed by the great power predominant in that area.

The movement connected with his name, "at once progressive and retrograde," shows Stalin to be of the "breed of the great revolutionary despots, to which Cromwell, Robespierre, and Napoleon belonged" (elsewhere Deutscher adds: Bismarck and Czar Alexander).

Like Cromwell as Lord Protector or Napoleon as Emperor, Stalin now remained the guardian and trustee of the revolution. He consolidated its national gains and extended them. He "built socialism"; and even his opponents, while denouncing his autocracy, admitted that most of his economic reforms were indeed essential for socialism.

But the fact that Stalin can take his place by the side of

Napoleon and Bismarck is not accidental. Here Deutscher finally rounds out his analysis so that the conclusions are clearly implicit in it. Stalin's role

. . . results from one peculiar parallelism between the bourgeois and the Socialist revolution in Europe, a parallelism that has come to light only since the Second World War. Europe, in the nineteenth century, saw how the feudal order, outside France, crumbled and was replaced by the bourgeois one. But east of the Rhine feudalism was not overthrown by a series of upheavals on the pattern of the French revolution, by explosions of popular despair and anger, by revolutions from below, for the spread of which some of the Jacobins had hoped in 1794. Instead, European feudalism was either destroyed or undermined by a series of revolutions from above. Napoleon, the tamer of Jacobinism at home, carried the revolution into foreign lands, to Italy, to the Rhineland, and to Poland, where he abolished serfdom, completely or in part, and where his Code destroyed many of the feudal privileges. *Malgré lui-même*, he executed parts of the political testament of Jacobinism. . . . The feudal order had been too moribund to survive; but outside France the popular forces arrayed against it were too weak to overthrow it "from below"; and so it was swept away "from above." It is mainly in Napoleon's impact upon the lands neighboring France that the analogy is found for the impact of Stalinism upon eastern and central Europe. The chief elements of both historic situations are similar: the social order of eastern Europe was as little capable of survival as was the feudal order in the Rhineland in Napoleon's days; the revolutionary forces arrayed against the anachronism were too weak to remove it; then conquest and revolution merged in a movement, at once progressive and retrograde, which at last transformed the structure of society.

Now the reader has all he needs to know about Deutscher's analysis of Stalinism. It is not identical with Trotsky's analysis, but only because it is an extreme and one-sided presentation of it. Yet the similarity between the two leaps to the eye. To the extent that Trotsky incorporated it into his own analysis, he drove himself, toward the end of his work, into a theoretical and political blind alley, in which his sightless followers have since milled around with such calamitous consequences. Deutscher himself does not follow the practice that his theory entails, for reasons that are not clear but which cannot possibly be objective. His book ends with a tentative sort of advocacy of what Trotsky called the "supplementary revolution" against Stalinism. But this half-hopeful note does not even modify the fact that Deutscher has worked out *the theoretical basis for a socialist capitulation to Stalinism*. To the extent that the working-class and socialist movement shares this theory, any progressive struggle against Stalinism is doomed and with it the struggle for socialism itself. The socialist movement can rise again to a full consciousness of its problem and how to resolve it *only*—we stress it again: *only*—if it understands the root-falsity

of the theory to which Deutscher has given such utterly tragic and disorienting expression.

The crux of Deutscher's disaster lies in his "peculiar parallelism" between bourgeois and socialist revolutions. Historical analogies are by their very nature seductive. There is especially good reason for comparing the socialist revolution with the great bourgeois revolutions of the past two centuries. Indeed, unless they are compared, and their similarities established, the socialist revolution becomes incomprehensible or, at best, is cast back to the utopias of pre-scientific socialism. But this is no less important: unless they are contrasted, and the fundamental differences between them clarified, the socialist revolution becomes impossible! Deutscher's treatment of the two revolutions suffers from two defects, but those two suffice: he does not deal with their differences at all, and he presents them as similar precisely in those respects where they are and must be different, decisively different, so different that they cannot be compared but only contrasted to one another.

The aim of every bourgeois revolution was simple: to establish the economic supremacy of the market, of the capitalist mode of production. These already existed to one degree or another under feudalism. But feudalism impeded their full unfoldment, it "fettered" them. Its outlived laws, customs, traditions, regulations, estate-ish and geographical divisions, privileges—all blocked off the "primitive accumulation of capital" required for the full expansion of the new mode of production; all were constricting clamps upon the winding and unwinding of that mainspring which is the stimulator and regulator of capitalist production, namely, the free market. The removal of these fetters, blocks and clamps was all that was *essentially* required for the triumph of the bourgeois revolution, and not necessarily the complete destruction of feudalism in all its forms or even of the feudal lords themselves. Indeed, in many (if not most) countries where the fetters of feudalism were finally broken, the new mode of production could and did co-exist, either at home or within their world empires or both, with the old feudalists and their economic forms, intact or more or less capitalistically transformed.

But because social progress required the victory of the bourgeois revolution, it did not follow that the bourgeoisie was everywhere the organizer and leader of the revolution. In our Marxist literature, the bourgeoisie of the period in which feudalism was generally replaced by capitalism is often referred to as having been "a revolutionary class" or "the revolutionary class." This is true, but only in a very specific, distinctly limited sense. The capitalist

mode of production, even in its incipiency under feudalism, to say nothing of its post-feudal days, was inherently of a kind that constantly required expansion, and was therefore an intolerant rebel against the feudal fetters upon it. The bourgeoisie was revolutionary primarily and basically only in the sense that it was at once the agent, the organizer and the beneficiary of capital; in the sense that it was the bearer of the new mode of production which was irreconcilable with the supremacy of feudal backwardness and stagnancy. But never—more accurately, perhaps, only in the rarest of cases—was the bourgeoisie revolutionary in the sense of organizing and leading the political onslaught on feudal or aristocratic society. That would have required either a radical break with the feudalists for which it was not prepared, or the unleashing of “plebian mobs and passions” which it feared—or both.

The Great French Revolution was great—the greatest of all the bourgeois revolutions, the classic among bourgeois revolutions—precisely because it was not organized and led by the French bourgeoisie! It was the work of the Jacobins, of the lowly artisans and peasants and tradesfolk, the plebian masses. The Cromwellian revolution was far more the work of the small independent landlord, the artisan, the urban tradesman than the work of the then English bourgeoisie—in fact, Cromwell’s Puritans had to fight bitterly against the Presbyterian bourgeoisie. Napoleon, who extended the bourgeois revolution to so many lands of feudal Europe, based himself not so much upon the bourgeoisie of France as upon the new class of allotment farmers. In Germany, it was not the bourgeoisie that unified the nation and leveled the feudal barriers to the expansion of capitalism, but the iron representative of the Prussian Junkers, Bismarck. He carried out the bourgeois revolution in the interests of the feudal Junkers, and made his united Germany a powerful capitalist country, but without the bourgeoisie and against it. Much the same process developed in distant Japan. As for that late-comer, czarist Russia, the bourgeoisie remained a prop of the semi-feudal autocracy to the last, and the bourgeois revolution was carried out in passing by the proletariat and only as an episode in the socialist revolution.

Yet in all the countries (except of course in Russia) where the bourgeois revolution *was* carried out—always without the bourgeoisie, often against the bourgeoisie—it did not fail to achieve its main and primary aim: to assure the social rule of the bourgeoisie, to establish the economic supremacy of its mode of production. This was all that was needed to satisfy the fundamental requirement of bourgeois class domination.

It cannot be underlined too heavily: Once the fetters of

feudalism were removed from the capitalist mode of production, the basic victory and the expansion of the bourgeoisie and its social system were absolutely guaranteed. Once the work of destruction was accomplished, the work of constructing bourgeois society could proceed automatically by the spontaneous expansion of capital as regulated automatically by the market. To the bourgeoisie, therefore, it could not make a *fundamental* difference whether the work of destruction was begun or carried out by the plebian Jacobin terror against the aristocracy, as in France, or by the aristocracy itself in promotion of its own interests, as in Germany.

Neither the revolutionary French plebians nor the Napoleonic empire builders could replace feudalism with a special economic system of their own, or create any social system other than bourgeois society. In Germany, no matter how exclusively Bismarck was preoccupied with maintaining the power of the Prussian king and the Junkers, with modernizing the nation so that it could defeat its foreign enemies, the only way the nation could be united and modernized was by stimulating, protecting and expanding the capitalist order. A prerequisite for this was of course the removal of all (or most) feudal and particularist obstacles in its path.

If Bonapartism and Bismarckism prevented the bourgeoisie from exercising the direct political influence that, ideally, it prefers, this was more than compensated by the fact that they suppressed or curbed an infinitely greater threat to the rule of the bourgeoisie—the plebeian and later the proletarian masses. And if the bourgeoisie gives up or allows the curbing or even destruction of its own representative parliamentary institutions, under a Bonapartist or Bismarckian régime, or under its most decadent manifestation, fascism, it only admits, to quote the famous passage from Marx, “that in order to preserve its social power unhurt, its political power must be broken; that the private bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes and rejoice in ‘property,’ ‘family,’ ‘religion’ and ‘order’ only under the condition that his own class be condemned to the same political nullity of the other classes.” But its social power is preserved “unhurt” just the same, and the evidence of that is the prosperity that the bourgeoisie enjoyed under Napoleon, Bismarck and Hitler.

When, therefore, Deutscher stresses the fact that east of the Rhineland the “popular forces arrayed against it [moribund feudalism] were too weak to overthrow it ‘from below’; and so it was swept away ‘from above,’” he is as wide of the mark as he can possibly be *if this fact is adduced to show the similarity between “the chief elements of both historical situations,”* namely, the spread of Bonapartism and of Stalinism.

The absurdity of the comparison is clear if we bear in mind the equally incontestable fact that whether feudalism was swept away "from above" or "from below," the difference in the result was, at the very most, secondary. In both cases the victory of capitalist society was secured and its growth guaranteed. Once the feudal fetters on capitalism were broken—whether by Cromwell's Ironsides or Napoleon's Grand Army, by Robespierre's Jacobins or Bismarck's Junkers—capitalism *and only capitalism* could be solidly established.

According to Deutscher, feudalism could be swept away and the rule of capitalism installed by a revolution carried out, from above or below, by the plebian masses, the petty bourgeois masses, the bourgeoisie itself, even by feudal lords themselves (and even by the modern imperialist big bourgeoisie, as we know from their work against feudalism in some of the colonies they penetrated). For the comparison to be less than ludicrous, it would have to be demonstrated that today "moribund capitalism" can also be swept away and the rule of socialism also installed by a revolution carried out by the petty bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, and any other class, as well as by the proletariat or as an adequate substitute for it. It would also have to be demonstrated that, just as it made no essential difference to the bourgeoisie how its revolution was effected, so today it makes no decisive difference to the proletariat whether it makes its own socialist revolution or the revolution is made by a GPU which enslaves and terrorizes it. To demonstrate that would be difficult.

The socialist revolution does not even lend itself to the kind of comparison with the bourgeois revolution that Deutscher makes.

The emancipation of the working class, said Marx, is the task of the working class itself. To which we add explicitly what is there implicitly: "of the conscious working class." Is this mere rhetoric, or a phrase for ceremonial occasions? It has been put to such uses. But it remains the basic scientific concept of the socialist revolution, entirely free from sentimentality and spurious idealism.

The revolution which destroys the fetters of feudalism, we wrote above, assures, by that mere act, the automatic operation and expansion of the new system of capitalist production. (We stress the word "new" to distinguish capitalism in the period of its rise and bloom from capitalism in its decline and decay, when the automatic regulators of production break down more and more frequently and disastrously. But that period is another matter.) Conscious direction of the capitalist economy plays its part, as does the nature of the state power; but at most these are secondary or,

better yet, auxiliary to what Marx calls the "self-expansion of capital."

It is *altogether* different with the socialist revolution. In this case we cannot say that regardless of what class or social group destroys the fetters of capitalism, the act itself assures the automatic operation and expansion of socialist production. Socialist production and distribution will take place automatically, so to speak (each will give what he can and take what he needs), only decades (how many we do not know or need to know) after the revolution itself has taken place, only after civilized socialist thinking and behavior have become the normal habit of all the members of the community.

But immediately after the socialist revolution takes place, production and distribution must be organized and regulated. The bourgeoisie can no longer organize production, since it has just been or is about to be expropriated, and thereby deprived of the ownership and control of the means of production. The market can no longer regulate production automatically, for it has been or is being abolished along with the other conditions of capitalist production; in any case, it disappears to exactly the extent that socialist production advances.

Unlike capitalist production, socialist production (that is, production for use) demands *conscious* organization of the economy so that it will function harmoniously. It is this consideration and this alone that requires of the new revolutionary régime the nationalization, sooner or later, of all the principal means of production and exchange. And it is this centralization of the means of production that makes possible, to an ever-increasing degree, the harmonious planning of production and distribution.

Planning, in turn, implies the ability to determine what is produced, how much of each product is produced, and how it is distributed to the members of the community (limited only by the level of the available productive forces)—to determine these things consciously, in contrast to capitalism which produces according to the dictates of the blindly-operating market and distributes according to glaring class inequalities.

Now, what assurance is there that the masses, who have made the revolution in order to establish a socialist economy, will be the main beneficiaries of the planned decisions that are taken and executed? (We say, cautiously, "main" and not sole beneficiaries, for obviously, in the first stage of the new society the economy will necessarily be encumbered by "parasitic" specialists, military households and bureaucrats.) Only one assurance: that the decisions on what and how much is produced and how it is distributed are taken

by the masses themselves, concretely, through their freely and easily elected—and just as freely and easily recallable—representatives. Otherwise, there is no assurance whatever that those who make the decisions on how the economy shall be organized will make them in conformity with the economic principles of socialism, or principles that are socialist in type, socialist in direction.

In other words, the economic structure that replaces capitalism can be socialist (socialistic) *only* if the new revolutionary régime (the state) is in the hands of the workers, only if the working class takes and retains political power. For, once capitalist ownership is destroyed, all economic decisions are necessarily political decisions—that is, decisions made by the state which now has *all* the economy and all the economic power in its hands. And if the working class then does not have political power, it has no power at all.

Here we come to another basic difference between the two social systems, and not their similarity, as Deutscher says. It relates to the question of *how* social power is exercised in each case.

The bourgeoisie's power over society rests fundamentally upon its ownership of property (the means of production and exchange). That ownership determines, in Marx's excellent phrase, its mastery over the conditions of production, and therefore over society as a whole. Any state, any political power, which preserves capitalist power, is a bourgeois state, is indeed the "guardian and trustee" of the social power of the bourgeoisie. This holds for the state of Napoleon, Bismarck, Roosevelt, Ramsay Macdonald or Hitler. Deutscher understands that well enough, for he writes that "when the Nazi façade was blown away, the structure that revealed itself to the eyes of the world was the same as it had been before Hitler, with its big industrialists, its Krupps and Thyssens, its Junkers, its middle classes, its *Grossbauers*, its farm laborers and its industrial workers." The social power of the bourgeoisie was and remains its property ownership, its economic power.

It is exactly the other way around with the proletariat! It is not a property-owning class and it cannot be—not under capitalism, not under the revolutionary régime that separates capitalism from socialism, and certainly not under socialism itself, which knows neither property nor proletariat. The revolution which expropriates the bourgeoisie does not turn its property over to the workers (this worker or group of workers now owns a steel mill; that one a railroad; the other a bank, etc.). That would indeed be a revolution-for-nothing, for it would merely create a new type of capitalist, property-owning class. No, the revolution nationalizes, immediately or gradually, all social property, turns it over to the

new régime, the revolutionary state power. That is what happened in Russia in 1917, when the revolution was carried out "from below" (the "old Bolshevik" method). Every politically-educated person knows that it was a socialist revolution, that it raised the proletariat to the position of ruling class, that it abolished capitalist property and established socialist (socialistic) property in its place.

In that case, wherein lies the *fundamental* difference between that revolution and those carried out "from above" by Stalin throughout the Balkans and the Baltic? The bourgeoisie was expropriated, politically as well as economically, its property was nationalized and turned over to the new state power.

According to Deutscher, there is no basic difference, no class difference, so to say. Just as Napoleon carried the bourgeois revolution to Poland, so Stalin carried the socialist revolution all the way to Germany. The "orthodox" (Oof!) Trotskyists are reluctantly but irresistibly drawing closer to the same monstrous conclusion. Their embarrassment over Deutscher is due entirely to the fact that he has anticipated them.

Yet there is a difference and it is fundamental. The *Communist Manifesto* stresses (and how much more emphatically should we stress it in our time?) "that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." It is not just some new political power in general that will socialistically expropriate the bourgeoisie, but the new proletarian power. As if in anticipation of present controversies, Marx underscores the point, at the beginning and at the end: "The proletariat will use *its political supremacy*, to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state"—what state? to make sure he is understood, Marx adds: "i.e., *of the proletariat organized as the ruling class.*" The test of this "formula" for the socialist revolution (to say nothing of a dozen other tests) was passed precisely by the Bolshevik revolution.

Nothing of the sort happens in the case of the Stalinist "socialist revolution," the revolution "from above." The proletariat is never allowed to come within miles of "political supremacy." What the new state "wrests" first of all, and not very gradually, either, are all the political and economic rights *of the proletariat*, reducing it to economic and political slavery. The difference between the revolution "from below" and the revolution "from above" is not at all a mere matter of difference in "method" but one of social, class nature. It might be compared to the difference between cropping a dog "from the front" and "from behind." By one "method," the tail is cut off, and the dog, according to some

fanciers, is healthier and handsomer; but if the other "method" were employed and his head were cut off, we would not have a "bureaucratically-degenerated dog" but a dead one. Like all comparisons, this one too has its limitations: Stalinism does not cut off the head of the socialist revolution only because it does not allow that revolution to grow a head.

Yet Stalin, while depriving the proletariat of all political power, did maintain state property in Russia, did extend it vastly, and did convert capitalist property into state property in Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. Because the Bolshevik revolution established state property, and Napoleon's extension of bourgeois property seems to lend itself to analogy, Stalin becomes, to Deutscher, the representative of those rulers who, "on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution," and even to extend these revolutionary conquests at home and abroad. The formula, alas, is originally that of Trotsky, who wrote that the Russian workers "see in it [the Stalinist bureaucracy] the watchman for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests." If that is true, so much the worse for the Russian workers. In any case it does not reduce the magnitude of the error.

By what it says and implies, this formula tells us that the state is socialistic (a proletarian state) because the economy is nationalized, statified. The nature of the state is determined by the property form. That is indubitably true in all societies where private property exists. But it is radically false when applied to a society where the state owns the property. The exact opposite is then true, that is, the nature of the economy is determined by the nature of the state! That it is necessary to *argue* this ABC of Marxism and of evident social reality today, is one of the indications of the sorry state of the radical movement.

The theory that the economy is socialistic simply because the state owns it was originated by Stalinism. It was needed by Stalinism to help achieve its counter-revolution. It constitutes to this day the quintessential theoretical basis for its worldwide mystification. As early as 1925, almost coincidental, significantly enough, with the launching of the theory of "socialism in one country," the Stalinists began to put forth, cautiously but unmistakably, the theory that Deutscher has so uncritically taken for granted. As cautiously as the one but not so uncritically as the other, the then Leningrad Opposition (Zinoviev and Kamenev) took issue with the theory and warned against it. Kamenev's speech on the question of the nature of the economy in Russia, delivered at the 14th party congress toward the end of 1925, is therefore of prime interest:

Do we perhaps doubt that our factories are enterprises of a "consistently-socialist type"? No! But we ask: Why did Lenin say that our enterprises are "enterprises of a consistently-socialist type"? Why didn't he say directly that they are *genuinely socialist* enterprises?

What does this mean: enterprises of a consistently-socialist type? It means that these enterprises are *essentially socialistic* enterprises. They are socialist in what are called *property-relations*. The factories belong to the proletarian state, that is, to the organized working class. . . .

The correct conception of our state industry consists in this, that our state enterprises are really enterprises of a consistently socialist type, inasmuch as they represent the property of the worker's state, but that they are far from being complete socialist enterprises because the mutual relations of the people engaged in them, the organization of labor, the form of the labor wage, the work for the market, represent no elements of an unfolded socialist economy.

At this point, it is worth noting, the congress minutes report an interruption from one of the hostile Stalinist delegates: "*You have discovered America!*" In those early days, the Stalinists did not dare challenge, directly and openly, the simple ABC ideas Kamenev was expounding. His ideas are clear. The property, the economy, can be considered socialist-in-type (not even socialist, but as yet only socialist-in-type) only because "they represent the property of the workers' state," only because "the factories belong to the proletarian state, that is, to the organized working class." The character of the economy is determined by the character of the political power, the state!

The Stalinists needed the very opposite theory in order to cover up and justify their destruction of the political power of the working class and *therewith* the workers' state. Where Kamenev, and all other Marxists, declared that the property is socialist only because it is owned by a workers' state, "that is, the organized working class" in power—the Stalinists declared the state is socialist simply because it owns the property. This theory is now canonized as constitutional law in all Stalinists lands and all arguments against it are promptly and thoroughly refuted by the GPU.

The theory is a Stalinist invention from start to finish. The finest-toothed comb drawn through all the writings of every Bolshevik leader—Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev—will not find so much as a phrase to sustain it. Until Stalin turned the Marxian view upside-down, every one of the Marxists, without exception, repeated literally thousands of times that because the state is in the hands of the proletariat, *therefore* the economy is proletarian (socialist-in-type). They never argued that because the economy is in the hands of the state, *therefore* the state is proletarian—never!

How could they? The proletariat, not similar to the bourgeoisie

but in contrast to it, establishes, asserts and maintains its social power only when it gets and holds political power. As the bourgeoisie is nothing without its economic power, its ownership of property, so the proletariat is nothing without its political power. Only political power can give it economic power, the power to determine the "conditions of production."

Deutscher's theory, or rather his adoption and adaptation of Stalin's, leads him to downright apologetics for the new tyranny—all very objectively put, to be sure, for there seems no doubt about his personal antipathy toward the abominations of the régime.

There is, first of all, the law of revolutions which Deutscher sets forth, as we have quoted it above. It is superficial; it is false and misleading. Certainly all the old revolutions and their leaders made promises to the masses that they did not fulfill. But that is a "law" of all *bourgeois* revolutions and is absolutely characteristic of them. Bourgeois revolutions are made under the sign of *ideologies*, using that term strictly in the sense in which the early Marx used it, namely as a synonym for *false consciousness* or as we would say after Freud, for *rationalization*. They *think* and say they are fighting for Freedom. "They" includes, as Marx wrote, not only men like Danton, Robespierre, St. Just and Napoleon, "the heroes as well as the parties," but even "the masses of the old French Revolution." But no matter what they think or what they say or what they do, the revolution does not and *cannot* go beyond the "task of their time: the emancipation and the establishment of modern bourgeois society." At bottom, all that Freedom can mean in the bourgeois revolution is . . . freedom of trade.

*That's* why the bourgeois revolutions could not keep their promises to the masses, why they often had to establish the most dictatorial governments over and against the masses in the post-revolutionary period. But since Deutscher has tried the impossible task of formulating a law of all revolutions, when he might have known that every different social revolution develops according to different laws, the most important fact has escaped his attention: *the bourgeois revolutions did fulfill their promises to the bourgeoisie*. The plebian masses were crushed after such revolutions, but that was only in the nature of the revolution: while it may have been made *by* them, it was not and could not have been made *for* them. It was made for the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie prospered under it. Which is why it deserves the not-at-all-dishonorable name, bourgeois revolution!

Deutscher, however, gives Stalin's overturns the distinctly honorable name, *socialist revolution*, and adds with a refined shrug,

if the masses suffered all sorts of horrors, cruelties and oppressions after this revolution, if the promises made to them were not kept, why, "this has been common to all great revolutions so far."

*Preposterous conclusion:* while the bourgeois revolution does keep its promises to the bourgeoisie for whom it is made, the socialist revolution does not keep its promises to the masses for whom it is made.

*Correct conclusion:* the Stalinist revolution is not a socialist revolution in any sense and therefore is not intended to make good its promises to the masses; it is a revolution of the totalitarian bureaucracy and it most decidedly does keep its promises to this bureaucracy!

There is, in the second place, Deutscher's weird justification of the "follies and the cruelties" of Stalin's "second revolution," the industrialization of Russia. We have listened with sheer amazement, in recent times, to the same justification on the lips of British socialists who are not abashed at abusing the name of Trotsky by assuming it. Now we see it in print under Deutscher's signature. Stalin's "follies and cruelties" we read, "inevitably recall those of England's industrial revolution, as Karl Marx described them in *Das Kapital*." He continues:

The analogies are as numerous as they are striking. In the closing chapters of the first volume of his work, Marx depicts the "primitive accumulation" of capital (or the "previous accumulation," as Adam Smith called it), the first violent processes by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production, while other classes were being deprived of their land and means of livelihood and reduced to the status of wage-earners. The process which, in the Thirties, took place in Russia might be called the "primitive accumulation" of socialism in one country. . . .

In spite of its "blood and dirt," the English industrial revolution—Marx did not dispute this—marked a tremendous progress in the history of mankind. It opened a new and not unhopeful epoch of civilization. Stalin's industrial revolution can claim the same merit.

The comparison is so microscopically close to being an outrage as to be indistinguishable from one, and it shows how Deutscher has literally lost his bearings.

The period of the old Industrial Revolution was a brutal one, but a harsh social task faced society and it had to be performed. By whom? The feudal aristocracy could not perform it; the foetus of a proletariat was not yet able to perform it. There was left only the young, lusty, callous bourgeoisie. It proceeded to concentrate property and capital in its hands in sufficient quantity to develop the forces of production on a vast scale and at a breath-taking pace.

Who suffered the hideous cruelties and horrors of this accumu-

lation? The little people—small peasants, the yeomanry, tradesfolk, the artisans and their social kith and kin. Who were the beneficiaries of these horrors? The bourgeoisie. Moral indignation apart, the process unfolded as it had to unfold, given the times, given the class relationships. It was a question of the primitive *capitalist* accumulation.

Accumulation is a need of all societies, the socialist included. Indeed, fundamentally the problem of a socialist accumulation was the economic rock on which the ship of state of the Russian Revolution foundered (a subject that requires the special study that it merits). The problem was not unknown to the leaders of the revolution. They debated it often and warmly. In the early Twenties, Preobrazhensky devoted a special work to the subject, which soon evoked a violent controversy. He pointed out that in the past, every social order achieved its particular accumulation at the expense of ("by exploiting") earlier and inferior economic forms. Therefore, continued Preobrazhensky:

The more economically backward, the more petty-bourgeois, the more agricultural is the country that is passing over to a socialist organization of production, the slighter the heritage that the proletariat receives for the fund of its socialist accumulation at the time of the social revolution—the more the socialist accumulation will have to base itself upon the exploitation of the presocialist economic forms and the lighter will be the specific gravity of the accumulation derived from its own basis of production, that is, the less will this accumulation be based upon the surplus product of the worker in socialist industry. (*The Basic Law of Socialist Accumulation*, in the *Herald of the Communist Academy*, 1924.)

Although the Trotskyist Opposition, of which Preobrazhensky was a prominent leader, did not endorse his views, the Stalinists let loose a hue and cry against Preobrazhensky that echoed for years. In his restrained way, Stalin denounced these views because they would "undermine the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry" and shatter the dictatorship of the proletariat—not less—for Preobrazhensky's views so easily lent themselves to the interpretation that the peasantry as a whole had to be exploited to build up the fund for socialist accumulation.

But what if someone had merely hinted, in the most delicate way, that the *socialist* accumulation fund would have to be built up not only by exploiting the peasantry, which is not, properly speaking, a socialist class, but also by exploiting the proletariat, which is *the* socialist class; and that the *socialist* accumulation would have to proceed along the same barbarous lines as the primitive capitalist accumulation in England? If he were not hooted out of sight as a crude defamer of socialism, it would only be because everybody else would be stricken with dumbfounded silence.

That Stalin's "second revolution" did start a process "by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production," and along the lines of the primitive capitalist accumulation, is absolutely true. But his accumulation, like the English, was directed against and paid for by the popular masses. It had nothing in common with socialism or socialist accumulation. It was not the "second revolution"; it was the counter-revolution.

"Marx did not dispute this," Deutscher reminds us. He did not dispute that the industrial revolution "marked tremendous progress in the history of mankind," but only for the reason given above: there was no other class but the bourgeoisie to carry it out and it carried it out in the class way characteristic of it. To have looked for the proletariat to carry out the old industrial revolution was *utopian*, because whatever proletariat existed then in England or Europe was utterly incapable of performing the mission which therefore fell to the bourgeoisie.

It only remains to ask: is it likewise utopian to expect the present proletariat to carry out the modern revolution for the socialist reconstruction of society? Or, since capitalism today is moribund and cannot be reinvigorated by man or god, must the work of dispatching it be left to a social force that puts in its place the most obscene mockery of socialism and social progress ever devised by man?

Deutscher gives no direct answer, to be sure. But implicit in his theory, in his whole analysis, is an answer in the affirmative, even if it is accompanied by shuddering resignation.

He writes movingly about those tragic figures, the great captains of the revolution, who were paraded through the prisoner's dock of the Moscow Trials by a new ruling class installed in the "second revolution." He explains—rightly, on the whole, we think—what brought these once indomitable revolutionists from recantation to capitulation and capitulation to recantation until they finally allowed themselves to be used for the nightmarish indignities of the Trials. Deutscher's appraisal of the revolutionary capitulators is noteworthy:

Throughout they had been oppressed by the insoluble conflict between their horror of Stalin's methods of government and their basic solidarity with the social régime which had become identified with Stalin's rule.

Insoluble conflict? Right. But especially right if we understand that all of them had abandoned any belief in the possibility of a proletarian revolutionary movement independent of Stalinism.

That only removed the last barrier to an already indicated capitulation. They believed that the Stalinist régime represented at bottom a socialist or proletarian state, and horror over its methods could not eliminate the feeling that it was the régime of their class and by that sign also their own. So long as they thought, as Trotsky also did for a long time, that Stalinism represented a return to capitalism, they fought it openly and vigorously. They were wrong in that analysis and Stalin was not long in proving them wrong. When it became perfectly clear that Stalinism mercilessly crushed capitalism wherever he had the power to do so, that he preserved and extended the realm of statified property, they simply equated his anti-capitalism with the defense of socialism. Their "basic solidarity with the social régime which had become identified with Stalin's rule" decided, if it did not guarantee, their capitulation to Stalinism.

And really, from the standpoint of Deutscher's analysis, why not? The German bourgeoisie may not have been enthusiastic over all the methods of Bismarck, of Wilhelm II, and later of Hitler. But they were "in basic solidarity with the social régime which had become identified," successively, with those three names. They never fought these régimes; they never rebelled against them, except, perhaps, for an inconsequential handful of bourgeois and military plotters against Hitler. In their way, they were certainly right: "It is our régime, the régime of our class."

"In his exile," writes Deutscher, after the words we quoted above, "Trotsky, too, wrestled with the dilemma, without bending his knees." True. We do not believe that Trotsky would ever have capitulated to Stalinism, and that not only because of his unsurpassable personal qualities as a revolutionist. To the extent that he shared the fatal theory that Stalinist Russia is a workers' state and that the Stalinist bureaucracy is still a sort of watchman over some of the conquests of the revolution, the same must be said of him as that said of Deutscher; the course of most of his followers since his death bears witness to this.

But everything within limits. In the first place, Trotsky introduced a radically modifying "amendment" to his theory, in a small but increasingly invaluable section of his ten-years-ago polemic against us which has proved so much more durable than those remaining sections which should be mercifully consigned to the archives. The amendment did neither less nor more than allow that events might prove that the Stalinist "workers' state" was only a new class system of totalitarian collectivist exploitation, the state of neo-barbarism. In the second place, he replied unhesitatingly and confidently in the affirmative to the key question he posed

there: "Will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class?"

These views, despite his internally-contradictory theory about Stalinist Russia, enabled Trotsky to remain the active and dreaded mortal enemy of Stalinism. Because he could write that the one and only decisive standpoint for the revolutionist was the enhancement of "the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones," he remained the greatest contemporary champion of the proletarian socialist revolution, that "revolution from below" which alone is socialist. It is these views that mark the chasm between their upholders, on the one side, and those who, out of despair or panic or premature fatigue, have retired from the struggle for socialism or gone over to an enemy camp.

Let them go. But those still resolved to carry on the fight must rid themselves and all others of the last trace of the view that, in some way, in some degree, the Stalinist neo-barbarism represents a socialist society. The view is disseminated, for different reasons but with similar results, by both the bourgeois and the Stalinist enemies of socialism. It has become the curse of our time. Of that, Deutscher's book is only another and saddening proof. Its value in the fight against Stalinism can only be to startle some people into thinking and re-thinking the problem of Stalinism and seeing it for what it is. For it is a problem about which we can say with Jean Paul: "*Wenn Ihr Eure Augen nicht braucht, um zu sehen, so werdet Ihr sie brauchen, um zu weinen*"—If you do not use your eyes to see with, you will need them to weep with.

*December, 1949*



## THE END OF SOCIALISM

A BIOGRAPHY OF LEON TROTSKY, written by an author who understands that his life was nothing more than his political ideas and political activities, is of necessity a political document. The fact that this biography\* is written by Isaac Deutscher gives it more than ordinary importance. He brings to his work the extensive knowledge of his subject acquired through active participation in the revolutionary movements with which Trotsky was so prominently associated and through earnest research into materials not easily available to others. He knows he is writing about a man of heroic gifts and attainments, of such stature that it seems society must rest up for generations before being able to produce his like again.

Deutscher has performed a precious service, in general to all those who are interested in historical truth and accuracy and in particular to those who are interested in the revolutionary movement. Although this book is actually only the first part of the biography he planned to write—it covers the period from Trotsky's birth in 1879 to about the mid-period of his life, in 1921, leaving the remainder of his life to be dealt with in a second volume called *The Prophet Unarmed*—it already supersedes, in respect to documentation on the life of Trotsky, everything else that has been published, not so much in particular as on the whole.

A political writer does not have to speak in the first person to reveal his views; they appear even when he speaks in the second and third. Deutscher does not announce his conceptions in his own name, as it were, but they are announced nevertheless. It would appear from his writings, then, that he still regards himself as an opponent of capitalism, a supporter of socialism and not of the

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\*The Prophet Armed—Trotsky: 1879-1921. By Isaac Deutscher. 522 pp. Oxford University Press. New York, London. \$6.00

more conservative school but of the more radical, and, on the whole, a Marxist. But it is precisely in this last respect that the results are nothing less than a disaster. After you rub your eyes with your knuckles to make sure you have read what you have read, you ask the question: what was this man doing all those years in the communist and Trotskyist movements (above all in the Polish movement which always had so high and serious a regard for Marxism), that allows him to end up with theories that are at once superficial, preposterous and downright reactionary, even though they are put forward in the name of socialism? To try to answer would lead us too close to aspects of life which are not our field. It will have to do if we say that by the side of exceptional talent in the exhaustive work of bringing together the facts and documents, of honorable contempt for the small-minded carper and the forger, the picayune adversary and the "tomb-robber," of writing skill which is most unusual in a second language, Deutscher discloses a paucity and shallowness in the theoretical domain which is startling by comparison. And it has invariably been a grave weakness in this domain that has proved to be the obstacle to reaching an understanding of Stalinism—and worse than an obstacle.

Take, as one example, the disagreement between Lenin and Trotsky during the First World War on the question of "revolutionary defeatism." Deutscher disposes of the matter in a paragraph. It is not a matter of terseness that is involved, although the writer devotes far more space to matters of far smaller importance and greater transparency. It is, however, a matter of the very great theoretical importance of Lenin's position during the war and of its political implications and consequences, at the very least from the standpoint of the historian, not to say the enlightener of readers. To Deutscher, "actually, the difference [between Lenin and Trotsky] was one of propagandist emphasis, not of policy. . . . Each attitude had, from the viewpoint of those who held it, its advantages and disadvantages." This is pious enough, especially from one who proclaims himself "free from loyalties to any cult," but it does not even mar the surface below which lie rich ores for the theoretical or historical assayer.

What makes matters worse, is that he does not anywhere pursue the subject to its obvious conclusion, namely: what relation did Lenin's conception or slogan of "revolutionary defeatism" and Trotsky's conception that "the revolution is not interested in any further accumulation of defeats," have to the actual defeats at the end of the war, if not in general then at least in Russia? What relation did they have to the actual revolutions at the end of the war, at least to the Russian revolutions in March and November?

Worthwhile if limited generalizations can be drawn from such an examination. To conclude the subject, as Deutscher does, by saying that "In 1917 these two shades of opposition to war merged without controversy or friction in the policy of the Bolshevik party," is simply to state a truth that has no great relevance to the controversy in question. After all, Deutscher might have used the same phrase with regard to the pre-1917 dispute over the "permanent revolution," but nobody has yet argued that the dispute on this question between Lenin and Trotsky represented "two shades" of opinion.

The other example is precisely the dispute over Trotsky's theory of the "permanent revolution" and Lenin's formula of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." The theory which is Trotsky's distinctive contribution to Marxism and to the course of the Bolshevik revolution itself, which is, so to speak, the head and heart of his entire political life, is given surprisingly cursory treatment here. The reader gets a fifth-carbon copy of Trotsky himself, uninspiringly presented, which is a matter of taste, but also uncritically presented, which is something else again.

Why did Lenin combat Trotsky's theory so persistently, not to say violently? Why did he cling so long and so doggedly to his own formula? Were the differences serious, or primarily the product of a misunderstanding on Lenin's part, or of his failure to read Trotsky's elaborated version of the theory—a possibility suggested by Trotsky at one time and repeated by Deutscher? Deutscher gives his view of Lenin's position and summarizes the dispute in these words: "Lenin's formula of a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' seemed broader and more cautious than Trotsky's 'proletarian dictatorship,' and better suited for an association of socialists and agrarian revolutionists. In 1917 events in Russia were to confirm Trotsky's prognostication."

To reduce the dispute to these terms is an all but incredible feat. We are here altogether uninterested in the monstrous inventions and falsifications concocted by the Stalinists. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the dispute hinged on two radically and irreconcilably different views about the character of the Russian revolution and the nature and prospects of socialism in Russia—least of all on whether Trotsky would "prejudge [the] potentialities" of the peasantry and Lenin "would not," and not at all on whether one view was "broader and more cautious" and the other narrower and more reckless. It is hard to believe that an ex-socialist like Bertram Wolfe (in his *Three Men Who Made a Revolution*) presents a far more comprehensive and well-documented picture

the conflict as seen by the two protagonists (regardless of Wolfe's own arbitrary conclusions from the conflict) and even grasps it better than Deutscher does.

As for the second statement—about the confirmation of Trotsky's views in 1917—that is good enough for an article or a popular pamphlet, or it is good enough "on the whole." As an unqualified assertion in a critical biography of Trotsky it is inadequate. A critical evaluation or re-evaluation of Trotsky's conception of the permanent revolution, without detracting an inch from its remarkable theoretical power and insight into the actuality of future developments, would nevertheless add some observations as to exactly where the "1917 events in Russia" did *not* confirm Trotsky's prognostications. It would become clear exactly how important, indeed, vitally important from the standpoint of the concrete political struggle during a decisive period in the development of the revolution, this error in the theory would have turned out to be, if Trotsky had not been so free from dogmatism. Trotsky himself has provided the clue to the error and it would not require too great an effort to make it plain, specific and instructive for the political problems of today.

Here again, Deutscher is either indifferent to theoretical questions or incapable of finding his way among them, even when the political consequences that clearly follow from them are of immense and active importance. It may as well be added that, on the basis of the theories he propounds about Stalinism, the latter is more likely the case. It is a pity. Where he should have his greatest strength, there lies his most glaring weakness. The weakness, we shall see, is not less than fatal. At the least, it is fatal to the entire conception of socialism as a revolutionary movement and as a social objective that was set down in the name of science by Marx and Engels, and supported for a hundred years thereafter by all those who professed their views to any substantial degree.

Deutscher does not set forth his own conception about the development of the Russian revolution and its relationship to the socialist goal in any forthright way or as any sort of systematic theory. One might say that he is under no obligation to the reader to do so, that he is satisfied to let the reader draw his own conclusions from objectively presented facts of history. Whatever may be said about such an assertion—and we regard it as absurd—the fact nevertheless remains that in one way or another, Deutscher does draw conclusions of his own along the lines of his own theoretical and political views. If one is to express an opinion about these conclusions and views, it is necessary first of all to do what Deutscher fails to do, that is, to bring them together from the

various parts of his work in which they are loosely scattered and give them the maximum cohesiveness that they allow for, to make them succinct and explicit to the greatest extent that this is made possible by the diffuse, ambiguous innuendoism and the even irresponsible way in which they are often stated.

To Deutscher, the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky, the Russia of the Bolshevik revolution, is organically continued in the Russia of Stalin (and his recent successors). Although generally sympathetic to Trotsky's point of view and full of praise for his theory of the permanent revolution in particular, he points out that there was indeed one aspect of the theory that was a "miscalculation."

Not for a moment did Trotsky imagine, however, that the Russian Revolution could survive in isolation for decades. It may therefore be said as Stalin was to say twenty years later, that he "underrated" the internal resources and vitality of revolutionary Russia. This miscalculation, obvious in retrospect, is less surprising when one considers that the view expressed by Trotsky in 1906 was to become the common property of all Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin, in the years between 1917 and 1924. Hindsight, naturally, dwells on this particular error so much that the error overshadows the forecast as a whole. True enough, Trotsky did not foresee that Soviet Russia would survive in isolation for decades. But who, apart from him, foresaw, in 1906, the existence of Soviet Russia? (P. 160.)

The important thing in this passage is not that the author is more severe toward the critics of Trotsky's "miscalculation" than toward Trotsky himself, but that he holds that "Soviet" Russia is still in existence despite its long isolation and the triumph of the Stalinist régime in the country. What there is about the régime that warrants calling it a "Soviet" régime today, when there is not a microscopic trace left of Soviet power or even of a Soviet institution, is nowhere discussed or even so much as mentioned by Deutscher. That is evidently the least of his preoccupations.\* That Stalinism represents the organic continuation and maintenance of the Bolshevik revolution as it inherited it, or took it over, from the régime of Lenin and Trotsky, is indicated by Deutscher in a dozen different ways as a fact which he considers established. That is not because he is oblivious to the differences or denies them.

The Bolshevik Revolution was the great revolution of democracy and socialism in Russia, and so also was the régime it established in 1917. Since that time, great changes have taken place. The

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\*One of the outstanding curiosa of political terminology today is the persisting but anachronistic reference to "Soviet Russia" in journals of every political hue. Where the press speaks of "socialist Russia" that too is wrong, but it is understandable. But there is plainly less Sovietism in Stalinist Russia than in Germany, France, England or the United States.

world revolution did not come, yet "Soviet" Russia survived in isolation for decades. A man like Trotsky could not imagine that "the revolution would seek to escape from its isolation and weakness into totalitarianism." It is this totalitarianism that Stalinism represents. The masses of the people are held in cruel and ruthless subjection by tyrannical rule. That is true, and Deutscher will not blink at the fact. But it is nevertheless also true, in his eyes, that this rule represents the continuation and even the extension of the same revolution.

The whole theme of his book, as was the whole theme of his earlier biography of Stalin, is, first, that the change from the Lenin-Trotsky régime to the Stalin régime was an inescapable necessity for this revolution in particular. Second, that the change was inevitable not only for this revolution but so it always has been and presumably always will be for every popular revolution in general. And third, that the outstanding and apparently distinctive characteristics of the régime established by the change are not only to be found in the régime that preceded it, and are not only the products of an organic outgrowth from it, but were originally directly but inconsistently prompted by Lenin and Trotsky. Their program is being simply if brutally carried out by their successors.

This theme is more blatantly asserted in the present friendly biography of Trotsky than in the previous unfriendly biography of Stalin. It is not a new one. Up to now, it has been almost exclusively the property of all the opponents of Stalinism who are opponents of the Bolshevik revolution as well, on the one hand; and on the other hand of all the upholders of Stalinism who profess their support of the Bolshevik revolution. It is worthy of special attention again because it is now presented by a supporter of the Bolshevik revolution, in fact by a not entirely reformed former Trotskyist, who is not a Stalinist, and worthier yet because of the arguments Deutscher musters.

Why was the evolution of Stalinist totalitarianism necessary for the revolution?

Because, in the first place, the working class itself could not be relied upon to maintain and develop the socialist revolution. Proletarian democracy may be established in the early days of a socialist revolution, when the fumes of naive illusions befuddle the thoughts of the idealistic utopians who lead it. But if the revolution is to survive, proletarian democracy must be dispensed with along with the Utopians who believe in it, and their place taken by the realistic despot who will rule against the will of the proletarians but for their own good. Deutscher refuses to entertain any

vulgar socialist illusions about the working class, the Russian working class in particular, and most particularly in the period of 1917 onward. He calls attention extensively and with a special sort of relish to the fact that the "grotesque sequel to the October insurrection, a sequel to which historians rarely give attention, was a prodigious, truly elemental orgy of mass drunkenness with which the freed underdog celebrated his victory." The reader is left to "draw his own conclusions," as it were, from the highly detailed picture of the saturnalia drawn by Deutscher.

The reader who, out of obtuseness or out of a knowledge of what the "freed underdog" of the Russian revolution was in his all-sided reality, does not draw the right conclusions, is given them directly by Deutscher in his picture of the same underdog three years later. The country, in 1920, was in a severe crisis; and so was the Bolshevik party that led it. In describing its inner debates on the crisis, Deutscher describes the then Workers' Opposition, whose views on workers' democracy he says, and rightly, were later taken up substantially by the Trotskyist Opposition, as follows:

They were the first Bolshevik dissenters to protest against the method of government designed "to make the people believe by force" [the quoted words are from a passage in Machiavelli which is the motto of Deutscher's book—S.] They implored the party to "trust its fate" to the working class which had raised it to power. They spoke the language which the whole party had spoken in 1917. They were the real Levellers of this revolution, its high-minded, Utopian dreamers. The party could not listen to them if it was not prepared to commit noble yet unpardonable suicide. It could not trust its own and the republic's fate to a working class whittled down, exhausted, and demoralized by civil war, famine, and the black market.

In the second place, there was only one working-class party that could be relied upon to maintain the revolution, and only one, the Bolsheviks. The working class had to be deprived of its right to political existence because it could not be trusted to defend socialism. All other parties, past or future, therefore also had to be deprived of their right to political existence because they could not be trusted to take power in the interests of socialism.

If the Bolsheviks had now [in 1920] permitted free elections to the Soviets, they would almost certainly have been swept from power. The Bolsheviks were firmly resolved not to let things come to that pass. It would be wrong to maintain that they clung to power for its sake. The party as a whole was still animated by that revolutionary idealism of which it had given such abundant proof in its underground struggle and in the civil war. It clung to power because it identified the fate of the republic with its own fate and saw in itself the only force capable of safeguarding the revolution. It was lucky for the revolution—and it was also its misfortune—that in this belief the Bolsheviks were profoundly justified. The revolution would hardly have survived without a party as fanatically devoted to it as the Bolsheviks were.

Rather than grant the right to legal existence only to parties that promise solemnly not to try to win a majority—or if despite their best efforts they win such a majority, promise even more solemnly not to exercise it—it was better to make it a principle of the socialist revolution in Russia that only the Bolshevik party had the right to exist. As a matter of fact, it is in the nature of revolutions to wipe out all parties but one—the one that wipes out all the others in the name and interests of the revolution.

The revolution cannot deal a blow at the party most hostile and dangerous to it without forcing not only that party but its immediate neighbor to answer with a counterblow. The revolution therefore treats its enemy's immediate neighbor as its enemy. When it hits this secondary enemy, the latter's neighbor, too, is aroused and drawn into the struggle. The process goes on like a chain reaction until the party of the revolution arouses against itself and suppresses all the parties which until recently crowded the political scene.

Which is why the advance to socialism required the suppression not only of the working class but also of all parties, including all past and future working-class parties, except one. And even this one had to be, in the nature of things, also suppressed in the end.

And because, in the third place, inside of that one and only party that could be relied upon to save socialism, there was only one point of view that could *really* be relied upon. For once you have two views, you have a contest; and once you have a contest, you may have a split and there are your two or more parties again. And Deutscher knows where that would lead:

Almost at once it became necessary to suppress opposition in Bolshevik ranks as well [as outside these ranks]. The Workers' Opposition (and up to a point the Democratic Centralists too) expressed much of the frustration and discontent which had led to the Kronstadt rising. The cleavages tended to become fixed; and the contending groups were inclined to behave like so many parties within the party. It would have been preposterous to establish the rule of a single party and then to allow that party to split into fragments. If Bolshevism were to break up into two or more hostile movements, as the old Social Democratic party had done, would not one of them—it was asked—become the vehicle of counter-revolution? . . .

Barely two years were to elapse before Trotsky was to take up and give a powerful resonance to many of the criticisms and demands made by the less articulate leaders of the Workers Opposition and of the Democratic Centralists, whom he now helped to defeat, and before he, too, was to cry out for a return to proletarian democracy.

The one that could *really* be relied upon was, then, certainly not the point of view or the group represented by Trotsky. For, with all his high-minded idealism and selflessness, what else could he represent when he took up the struggle against the bureaucracy

in 1923 except the criticisms and demands of the old Workers' Opposition and the D.C.ists to which he gave a powerful resonance? And what else could they represent except "the Levellers of this revolution," its "Utopian dreamers"? What else could the party do, speaking through Stalin this time, but refuse to "listen to them if it was not prepared to commit noble yet unpardonable suicide"? Being Utopians, the Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists, like the Trotskyists after them, wanted the party to "trust its own and the republic's fate to a working class whittled down, exhausted and demoralized by civil war, famine, and the black market."

Under the circumstances, then, it follows with brass-stitched logic that the attempt of these inner-party oppositions to restore proletarian democracy in the country, accompanied inevitably by the risk of creating another party, could only promote the ends of counterrevolution and kill (by suicide if not homicide) the prospects of socialism in Russia. Correspondingly, the work of the Stalinists to establish and consolidate a régime which ruled "regardless of the will of the working class," of the will of all other political parties and the will of all other factions of their own party—in fact by crushing and suppressing all of them—was necessary to prevent the counter-revolution and to produce socialism in Russia and elsewhere.

That is how it happened that the revolution which began with the naively Utopian idea of Bolshevism that the road to socialism lies through the fullest achievement of democracy, found it necessary to learn the hard lesson that the road to practical and successful socialism lies through the fullest achievement of totalitarian tyranny.

Thus Deutscher. And he is not at the finish line, he has only just started.

Anyone who imagines that Deutscher is concerned here only with explaining the transformation necessary for a revolution that occurred in a backward country under exceptional circumstances from which a socialist revolution in more favored countries would be exempted, is luring himself to disappointment. To Deutscher, the evolution to Stalinist totalitarianism was the inevitable outcome of the Bolshevik revolution, in the same way that an equivalent tyranny has always been and must presumably always be the inevitable outcome of any popular revolution. The idea that the masses of the people can ever directly manage and control their destiny is as erroneous as the assumption that such control is essential for human progress in general or socialism especially. How does he reach this not entirely novel conclusion?

Readers of Deutscher's biography of Stalin will recall the theory—"the broad scheme"—by which he explains not only "the metamorphosis of triumphant Bolshevism" into Stalinism but, much more generally, the basic processes which have "been common to all great revolutions so far." In the first phase of all these revolutions, "the party that gives the fullest expression to the popular moods outdoes its rivals, gains the confidence of the masses, and rises to power." Civil war follows.

The revolutionary party is still marching in step with the majority of the nation. It is acutely conscious of its unity with the people and of a profound harmony between its own objectives and the people's wishes and desires. It can call upon the mass of the nation for ever-growing efforts and sacrifices; and it is sure of the response. In this, the heroic phase, the revolutionary party is in a very real sense democratic. . . .

This phase lasts little longer than the civil war. By then the revolutionary party, though victorious, faces a country and a people that are exhausted. A reaction sets in among the people.

The anti-climax of the revolution is there. The leaders are unable to keep their early promises. They have destroyed the old order; but they are unable to satisfy the daily needs of the people. To be sure, the revolution has created the basis for a higher organization of society and for progress in a not very remote future. This will justify it in the eyes of posterity. But the fruits of revolution ripen slowly; and of immediate moment are the miseries of the first post-revolutionary year. It is in their shadow that the new state takes on its shape, a shape that reveals the chasm between the revolutionary party and the people. This is the real tragedy which overtakes the party of the revolution.

If it obeys the mass of the petulant and unreasoning people, it must relinquish power. But, "abdication would be suicide." In order to safeguard the achievements of the revolution, it must disregard the voice of the people in whose interests the revolution was made.

The party of the revolution knows no retreat. It has been driven to its present pass largely through obeying the will of that same people by which it is now deserted. It will go on doing what it considers to be its duty, without paying much heed to the voice of the people. In the end it will muzzle and stifle that voice. (Deutscher, *Stalin*, pp. 174f.)

That was in his Stalin book, and that it was not a momentary aberration is shown in his Trotsky biography, where this theory is not only expanded upon and underscored, but becomes the heart and soul of his work. *The Prophet Armed*—the title of the book—comes from a famous passage in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, where he is discussing the difficulties facing "the innovators" who seek to

replace an old order with a new. Can they rely on themselves or trust to others, asks Machiavelli—

... that is to say, whether, to consummate their enterprise, have they to use prayers or can they use force? In the first instance they always succeed badly, and never compass anything; but when they can rely on themselves and use force, then they are rarely endangered. Hence it is that all armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed. Besides the reasons mentioned, the nature of the people is variable, and whilst it is easy to persuade them, it is difficult to fix them in that persuasion. And thus it is necessary to take such measures that, when they believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force.

By 1920, says Deutscher, the Bolsheviks were faced with the choice which every revolutionary party in power faces, in its essence, at one time or another: Let the masses speak, and they will remove you from power and destroy the revolution; stifle the masses, and "it would deprive itself of historic legitimacy, even in its own eyes."

The revolution had now reached that cross-roads, well known to Machiavelli, at which it found it difficult or impossible to fix the people in their revolutionary persuasion and was driven "to take such measures that, when they believed no longer, it might be possible to make them believe by force." (*The Prophet Armed*, p. 506.)

To vouchsafe democracy to the masses may have meant the removal of the Bolsheviks from power, and as we have seen above, Deutscher does not believe they had the right to give up power. That would have encouraged the White Guards to resort to arms again; and the Bolsheviks "could not accept it as a requirement of democracy that they should, by retreating, plunge the country into a new series of civil wars just after one series had been concluded" (p. 505).

But there is a deeper reason, in Deutscher's mind, why the crushing of the proletariat was inevitable—and by that, it should now be clear, Deutscher means *desirable* from the standpoint of preserving the revolution. That reason, too, lies in the very nature of the revolution—not the Russian alone, but all revolutions. Every "great revolution" has its Utopian extremists who do not understand that the revolution cannot really satisfy the unreasonable demands of the masses it inspired, of the masses who assured its triumph, of the very masses who were told that the revolution will satisfy their demands. With the best intentions in the world, these Utopians—Levellers in Cromwell's England, Hébertists in Robespierre's France, and in Bolshevik Russia the Workers' Opposition, the Democratic Centralists and then the Trotskyist Opposition—can only imperil the revolution, its conquests and its future. They are among those who

... cry in alarm that the revolution has been betrayed, for in their eyes government by the people is the very essence of the revolution—without it there can be no government for the people. The rulers find justification for themselves in the conviction that whatever they do will ultimately serve the interests of the broad mass of the nation; and indeed they do, on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution. Amid charges and countercharges, the heads of the revolutionary leaders begin to roll and the power of the post-revolutionary state towers over the society it governs. (*Stalin*, (P. 471.)

It is not necessary for us to emphasize that Deutscher applies this conception—the new tyranny against the people nevertheless does, “on the whole,” use its power to strengthen the conquests of the revolution—to the revolution that established capitalism and to the revolution that is to establish (and according to him, has already established in Russia) socialism. The analogies between the industrial revolutions that consolidated the social revolutions in both cases, he finds “are as numerous as they are striking.” He summarizes the “primitive accumulation of capital” that marked the bourgeois revolution in England as “the first violent process by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production, while other classes were being deprived of their land and means of livelihood and reduced to the status of wage earners.” A similar process took place under Stalin in the Thirties.

Marx sums up his picture of the English industrial revolution by saying that “capital comes [into the world] dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” Thus also comes into the world—socialism in one country.

In spite of its “blood and dirt,” the English industrial revolution—Marx did not dispute this—marked a tremendous progress in the history of mankind. It opened a new and not unhopeful epoch of civilization. Stalin’s industrial revolution can claim the same merit. (*Stalin*, pp. 342f.)

That a new despotism is the inevitable product of every revolution, after its first stage, should not generate unperforated gloom. For if the masses cannot be trusted to continue the revolution they began or, in any case, made possible, they may console themselves with the thought that the despots are tyrannizing over them for their own good. Even if against their will, and by cruelties which drip blood and dirt from every pore, the achievements of their revolution are being protected in the only way that is practical—by suppressing them. A new and not unhopeful epoch lies ahead. It is a relief to know it.

The final proof of this not wholly discouraging theory lies, in Deutscher’s revelation, in the concrete circumstances from which it is contemporaneously deduced. They show the organic link be-

tween Lenin and Trotsky and their régime, and Stalin and his régime. There is no rupture between the two but a relentless continuity. Deutscher claims to have

. . . traced the thread of unconscious historic continuity which led from Lenin's hesitant and shamefaced essays in revolution by conquest to the revolutions contrived by Stalin the conqueror. A similar subtle thread connects Trotsky's domestic policy of these years with the later practises of his antagonist. Both Trotsky and Lenin appear, each in a different field, as Stalin's unwitting inspirers and prompters. Both were driven by circumstances beyond their control and by their own illusions to assume certain attitudes in which circumstances and their own scruples did not allow them to persevere—attitudes which were ahead of their time, out of tune with the current Bolshevik mentality, and discordant with the main theme of their own lives. (*The Prophet Armed*, p. 515.)

The world revolution—the extension of the revolution westward which was to save Russia from the disintegration to which its isolated position, according to the Bolsheviks, surely doomed it—was it one of their illusions?

Precisely, says the now disintoxicated Trotskyist. If Lenin and Trotsky “had taken a soberer view of the international revolution” they might have “foreseen that in the course of decades their example would not be imitated in any other country. . . . History produced [sic] the great illusion and planted and cultivated it in the brains of the most soberly realistic leaders. . . .” (*Ibid.*, p. 293.) “What was wrong in their expectations was not merely the calendar of revolutionary events but the fundamental assumption that European capitalism was at the end of its tether. They grossly underrated its staying power, its adaptability, and the hold it had on the loyalty of the working class.” (P. 449.) As for the organization of the Communist International, which was to organize, stimulate and lead the world revolution, it was an illusion and a mistake—“fathered by wish, mothered by confusion, and assisted by accident.”

Yet, a veritable horror of isolation reigned among the Bolsheviks, Trotsky more than any of them. Since world revolution proved to be an illusion, year after year, the Bolsheviks were driven—“true . . . in the heat of war, under abundant provocation, without grasping all the implications of its own decision”—to break out of isolation by embarking for the first time, in violation of their hallowed principles, upon the course of revolution by conquest. The first time was in the 1920 war with Poland. “If the Red Army had seized Warsaw, it would have proceeded to act as the chief agent of social upheaval, as a substitute, as it were, for the Polish working class.” It is true that Trotsky and Stalin were against making the attempt to pursue the defeated forces of Pilsudski that

were retreating back to Poland. But Lenin was for it. The attempt failed.

Lenin [then] grew aware of the incongruity of his rôle. He admitted his error. He spoke out against carrying the revolution abroad on the point of bayonets. He joined hands with Trotsky in striving for peace. The great revolutionary prevailed in him over the revolutionary gambler. However, the "error" was neither fortuitous nor inconsequential.

Because it was not fortuitous, it reasserted itself. If Lenin did not persevere in the course of revolution by conquest (the "revolution from above" in contrast to the revolution of the masses which was an illusion), it was, among other reasons, because of his "scruples," that is, his revolutionary socialist principles, ideals and traditions. The difference in Stalin's case is simply that he was not burdened with such scruples and inhibitions. With the failure of this first attempt, Lenin's, at revolution by conquest,

The revolutionary cycle, which the First World War had set in motion, was coming to a close. At the beginning of that cycle Bolshevism had risen on the crest of a genuine revolution; toward its end Bolshevism began to spread revolution by conquest. A long interval, lasting nearly a quarter of a century, separates this cycle of revolution from the next, which the Second World War set in motion. During the interval Bolshevism did not expand. When the next cycle opened, it started where the first had ended, with revolution by conquest. . . . In 1945-6 and partly even in 1939-40 Stalin began where he, and in a sense he and Lenin had left off in 1920-1. (P. 376.)

The victory of socialism in Poland as the product of the proletarian revolution—"a genuine revolution"—was an illusion. The victory of socialism in Poland as the product of invasion, occupation and subjugation by the armed forces of a totalitarian despotism, that is not an illusion. It is simply Stalin's uninhibited continuation of Lenin's course. It is a comfort to hear this.

As in foreign policy, so in domestic policy. In 1920, with the revolution at that crossroads, so familiar to Machiavelli and now even better understood by Deutscher, "Trotsky . . . stumbled . . . he initiated courses of action which he and the Bolshevik party could carry through only against the resistance of the social classes which had made or supported the revolution." His proposals for loosening the bonds of War Communism, an anticipation of the New Economic Policy soon to be advocated by Lenin, having been rejected by the party leadership, Trotsky proposed in its stead to carry the policies of War Communism to the bitter end, as it were. He "advanced the idea of complete state control over the working class."

The reference is to Trotsky's proposals during the so-called trade-union dispute in 1920 for the "militarization of labor" and

the "incorporation" of the unions into the state machine. The divorce between dictatorship and proletarian democracy, which Stalin carried to its inevitable conclusion, was clearly obvious. But Lenin refused to proclaim the divorce. For although he, too, "was aware that government and party were in conflict with the people . . . he was afraid that Trotsky's policy would perpetuate the conflict." And even Trotsky was his own antidote to the program he proposed.

Accustomed to sway people by force of argument and appeal to reason he went on appealing to reason in a most unreasonable cause. He publicly advocated government by coercion. . . . He hoped to *persuade* people that they needed no government by persuasion. He told them that the workers' state had the right to use forced labor. . . . He submitted his policies to public control. He himself did everything in his power to provoke the resistance that frustrated him. To keep politically alive he needed broad daylight. (Pp. 516f.)

Trotsky did not direct the transformation of the revolution into a despotism not only because circumstances then prevented it but because it was not in his character to do it. But a different one was available, luckily for socialism. "It took Stalin's bat-like character to carry his [Trotsky's] ideas into execution." Neither Trotsky nor Stalin, each for his own reasons, would admit this. But it was true.

There was hardly a single plank in Trotsky's program of 1920-1 which Stalin did not use during the industrial revolution of the Thirties. He introduced conscription and direction of labor, he insisted that the trade unions should adopt a "productionist" policy instead of defending the consumer interests of the workers; he deprived the trade unions of their last vestige of autonomy and transformed them into tools of the state. He set himself up as the protector of the managerial groups, on whom he bestowed privileges of which Trotsky had not even dreamed. He ordered "socialist emulation" in the factories and mines; and he did so in words unceremoniously and literally taken from Trotsky. He put into effect his own ruthless version of that "Soviet Taylorism" which Trotsky had advocated. And finally, he passed from Trotsky's intellectual and historical arguments ambiguously justifying forced labor to its mass application. (P. 515.)

Therein lay and still lies Trotsky's victory in spite of all, the victory of which he himself was one of the outstanding victims. That is what Deutscher means by titling the last chapter in the present work "Defeat in Victory." "All armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed." Trotsky could not, in the crucial hour, arm himself against the people so as to "make them believe by force" after persuasion had failed to sustain their beliefs. Stalin could. He became the true prophet armed.

The revolution itself had made that necessary, for such is its

nature; it made it inevitable; it prepared for it willy-nilly. Fortunately, the new prophet armed proved, again, to be one of those rulers who, "on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution." The result has been the victory of socialism in Russia, and not only in Russia but wherever else—and that reaches far across two continents by now—the armed prophet has extended the revolution by conquest. In the crude environment in which the revolution was obliged to entrench itself for so long, it could only produce a "brand of socialism," as Deutscher puts it.

The brand of socialism which it then produced could not but show the mark of its historic heritage. That socialism, too, was to rise rough and crude, without the vaulting arches and spires and lacework of which socialists had dreamed. Hemmed in by superior hostile forces it soon delivered itself up to the new Leviathan state—rising as if from the ashes of the old. (P. 521.)

As every good American knows, you can't get something for nothing. For the blessings of Stalin's "brand of socialism," which lacks such gewgaws as arches, spires and lacework, hundreds of millions are paying with the Leviathan-state. If, to realize these blessings, the totalitarian regime was indispensable, it is not entirely to Stalin's discredit that he knew or felt which was the right way and took it absolutely. And Trotsky, the gifted revolutionary Utopian? "It was another of history's ironies that Trotsky, the hater of the Leviathan, should become the first harbinger of its resurrection."

This is as good as an epitaph, even if it is written before the second volume of the biography has appeared. But only in a manner of speaking. It is not merely a matter of Deutscher having written a libel of Trotsky, and not of Trotsky alone. In his biography of Stalin he already showed how far he has traveled from Marxism. His biography of Trotsky shows he has not retraced a step but gone farther away and to ever stranger fields. Deutscher has put a cross over himself. It is his own epitaph as a revolutionist and a socialist that he has written.

If justice were half as prevalent as prejudice, Deutscher's book would be acclaimed far more widely than it is likely to be. Even those who did not find cheer in its main theories would find quiet solace in it, from one standpoint or the other. The revolutionary socialists—the Utopians!—are presently in such a small minority that they do not count; besides he abandoned them to their own devices years ago. But the others, those who make up the big majorities and the big minorities, for them the book should be a box of bonbons.

The Stalinists—if not the official Stalinists then the sophisticated Stalinist, the openly cynical Stalinist, the Stalinoïd by design and the Stalinoïd by gullibility—might ask for better, but not expect it. What else has he been saying in justification of his whole régime, his whole course, his whole political philosophy—not of course on the platform before the vulgar mob but in the less exposed intimacy of the enlightened? There it is safer to explain the simple truth that the donkey is a donkey, and should be grateful that the driver is determined to lash him toward the new and not unhopeful pasture where he may some day roam unsaddled, unleashed and with an abundance to nibble on.

The professional Mensheviks of both schools have equal delights in store for them, equal parts of confirmation for each bias. The one school, all the way down to and including Shub, who feed their detestation of the Bolshevik revolution on its Stalinist outcome, can feel vindicated by this avowal from a hostile camp that there could be no other outcome—they never said otherwise. The other school, represented by the late Th. Dan, who justified their late-in-life capitulation to Stalinism, can feel, at least secretly vindicated by the thought that the Bolshevik revolution which they opposed was indeed led by irresponsible utopians. Leftist Labourite demagogues and ignoramuses, to whom Marxian theory was always a redundant nuisance we can well do without in Britain, and social-democratic or radical “neutralists” in France, should feel easier about their conciliatory inclinations toward the slave state when it is brought home to them so clearly that, unlike the capitalist states where the workers are oppressed and exploited in the name of capitalism, they are oppressed and exploited in Russia in the name of a brand of socialism which has opened a not unhopeful epoch of civilization.

The classical bourgeois opponents of socialism, ranging all the way from the academicians of the von Mises and Hayek type to plain blatherskites like Kerensky, owe lavish thanks to Deutscher for such a rich replenishment of their thinning arsenal of arguments, dating back to Spencer, that all efforts at freedom based on collectivism cannot but lead to the Servile State, the new tyranny, and that the highminded socialist idealist is at best a Utopian—moreover one who, it turns out, is more dangerous to socialism than to capitalism itself.

The new snobocracy, the neo-pseudo-proto-Machiavellians, has a rich morsel here over which to quiver with delight ever so fastidiously, for ever since they had the theory of élites explained to them third hand by second rate dabblers in Machiavelli, and Mosca, Michels and Pareto, they have understood how preposterous is the

Marxian myth that the working class and it alone has the historic mission of emancipating itself and therewith all of humanity.

The tired and retired radical of yesterday, and his name is indeed legion, can find here some justification for the clod-of-earth existence to which he has degraded himself, as can his blood-kin, the ex-radical cynic and skeptic now turned pusher and climber up the ladder of bourgeois respectability—financial, social, literary, academic or all together. For what else have they been saying for some time now except that the struggle for socialism can lead only to totalitarianism and that the working class, as the socialist self-emancipator, has failed atrociously to live up to the confidence which they vested in it for so many months and in some cases for as long as a year?

Whether this motley public does justice to Deutscher's book or not, we have our own responsibility to discharge. It obliges us to say:

If Deutscher's theory is valid, it is not as an explanation for a "brand of socialism," as he calls it. It is the end of socialism. And so, in one sense, it is. It is the end of socialism for an entire generation. That generation is finished and done for so far as the fight for human dignity is concerned. It started well, even magnificently. It has ended, except for a handful of individuals, in a state of utter demoralization, helpless and hopeless victim of Stalinism and all other forms of reaction associated with it in one way or the other.

Deutscher is an example of that generation, and one of the sorrier ones. His conscious, rational life he devoted to the fight for proletarian socialism, the only socialism there is or ever will be. In the accursed years of worldwide reaction and despair we are living through, he has abandoned that fight to become the vehicle of a theory which is a mockery of Marxism, a grotesque libel against socialism, unscientific through and through and reactionary from top to bottom. It is an unabashed apology for Stalinism in the name of socialism. It could take shape only in a mind that has come apart under the steady blows of reaction instead of understanding and resisting it. If I did not know from my disheartening discussions with Deutscher, here and in England, that he has lost all belief in the socialist capacities of the working class, and that he refuses to follow the logic of his view by becoming an out-and-out Stalinist only because he considers himself a "civilized" person, his writings would anyhow make it plain enough. His writings are a capitulation to the Stalinist reaction; at best, if the best is insisted on, they represent his resignation to Stalinism, and in the round the difference is not worth quibbling over.

If the generation of yesterday is finished, we are as confident that a new generation is entering the scene to pick up the socialist banner again as one did after the dark and critical years opened up by the first world war. Its mind must be as clear as can be of all the accumulated rubbish in which the old generation has been choked and blinded and worn to death. Deutscher's theory is part of that rubbish. If for no other reason than that, we shall try to clear it away.

AT THE BASIS OF DEUTSCHER'S APOLOGY for Stalinism—an apology which we have stigmatized as the end of socialism—lies an utterly fantastic miscomprehension of the difference between the bourgeois revolution which assured the triumph of capitalism and the proletarian revolution which is to assure the triumph of socialism.

Deutscher only gives open and crass expression and besprinkles with Marxian jargon those ideas which have poisoned the thinking of tens and hundreds of thousands, and even more, and disposed them to passionate partisanship for Stalinist reaction, at the worst, or to cynical capitulation to it, or to terrified resignation to it, or at best, to piteous hopes for its self-reformation.

One of the most important keys to the understanding of capitalist society is this: *in order to rule socially, the bourgeoisie does not have to rule politically.* To this should be added: *in order to maintain its rule socially, the bourgeoisie is often unwilling and most often unable to rule politically.* And to go back, as it were, to the beginning, this should be added too: *the bourgeois revolution which has the aim of establishing the social power of the bourgeoisie does not at all have to aim at establishing the political power of the bourgeoisie; indeed, it establishes the bourgeoisie as the social power in the land even when it is carried out without the bourgeoisie or against the bourgeoisie or by depriving the bourgeoisie of political power in the land.* And covering all these conceptions is this: no matter who the leaders and spokesmen of the bourgeois revolutions were, or what they thought, or what they aimed for, the *only possible* result of their victory was the establishment of a new, if more advanced, form of class rule, class exploitation and class oppression by a minority over the majority.

These insights, thoroughly acquired, automatically give the Marxist an understanding of bourgeois society, from its inception to its close, that is far superior to anything that any bourgeois scholar or statesman, no matter how liberal, can possibly attain. While the bourgeois flutters and fumbles, the Marxist already has

the key to such apparently disparate phenomena, as for example, the New Deal and Fascism.

Deutscher nowhere shows that he possesses this key. If he ever had it, everything he has written on the subject of Stalinism shows that he has thrown it away. There is no doubt about it, for it is precisely in the five above quintessential respects in which the bourgeois revolution differs from the proletarian revolution, that Deutscher makes the two analogous. The disastrous result could have been anticipated and so it was, for the differences between the two are not only fundamental but irreconcilable.

At its inception, as it was emerging from the economic egg and developing the economy, the interests and the class character that distinguish it, the young bourgeoisie needed only one thing to guarantee its rule over society: to remove the fetters with which feudalism restricted the expansion of capital. Once these fetters or barriers were removed—*no matter how or by whom or for what immediate reason*—the dominance of self-expanding capital was assured and with it the class dominance of its owners. The political power, the state, under whose sway these barriers were eliminated, might be constituted out of anybody you please—bourgeois, non-bourgeois, anti-bourgeois. But, once the traditional barriers of feudalism were thrust aside, capital rapidly and spontaneously took command of the economy as a whole, incessantly revolutionizing and transforming it, inexorably sweeping aside or subordinating all other forms of economy—and doing all this *with or without* the conscious efforts or support of the state power.

To be sure, where the state power was exercised in close harmony with the new, developing economic power, there the capitalization of the economy proceeded more rapidly and smoothly. But what is important here is the fact that even where the state power sought in one way or another to impede the capitalization, that process continued nevertheless, more slowly, either by bending the state power to its needs or by replacing it by one better adapted to them.

The modern world went through an epoch of change from feudal to bourgeois society because under the conditions of the time there was no way of releasing the productive forces with which society was pregnant, of expanding them to an undreamed-of extent, than the capitalist way. For this reason, both feudalism and communism were doomed in that epoch, even where their representatives held or had the chance to hold political power. The one was doomed because it was obsolete and the other because it was premature; the one was doomed because the productive forces were

already so far developed that they could develop no further under feudalism and the other because the productive forces were not yet sufficiently developed to permit the establishment of communism.

There lies the basic reason why, no matter who held the political power during this long epoch, the capitalist economy, the capitalist mode of production and exchange, was strengthened, expanded and consolidated. This made the capitalist class the "economically dominant" class in society, that is, established its social rule regardless of the form assumed by the state. In turn, again regardless of the form assumed by the state, the fact that it maintained the dominance of capitalist property and therewith the capitalist mode of production, made it willy-nilly a capitalist state.

Or, to put it in other words: the social power, the class power, the state power of the capitalist class is determined and assured by its economic power, that is, its ownership of capital, of the capitalist means of production and exchange. Without this economic power, the bourgeoisie is nothing, no matter what else it has on its side, even if it is the direct aid of God's vicar on earth—it is nothing and less than nothing. With it, the bourgeoisie is the ruler of society, no matter what else is against it.

That is still a very general way of indicating the relationship between the political and economic power in the bourgeois state. As soon, however, as the relationship is examined as it developed concretely, a much more revealing light is thrown upon it and we can move much more surely to the heart of the present-day problem. The sum of the concrete experiences from which our generalizations are derived shows that the earlier the bourgeois revolution was carried through—the more thoroughgoing it was, the more revolutionary was the bourgeoisie, the more directly did it lead the revolution against the old order, the more freely did it arouse the revolutionary and democratic spirit of the people as a whole.

By the same token, the later the bourgeois revolution was carried through—the more stultified and distorted were its results, the more conservative and even reactionary was the bourgeoisie, the more prudently did it shun the role of leader of the revolution, the more eagerly did it seek guidance and protection from despotism and dynasties, and the more antagonistic was its attitude toward the mobilization and activity of the populace as a whole. This can be set down as a law of the development of the bourgeois revolution. It flows from the nature of bourgeois society, not as an abstraction, but as it naturally unfolds.

Call the bourgeois revolution progressive or not, necessary or not (Marxists of course regard it as progressive and necessary), its

objective aim is incontestable: the establishment of a new social order in which a new class is brought to power in order to rule over, exploit and oppress the majority of the people. The new social order, no matter what else is said about it, cannot be conceived of without the class rule, class exploitation and class oppression which are the very conditions of its existence.

At the beginning of the revolution and the constitution of the new order, its prophets, its idealists, its inspired supporters among the toilers, may well have been moved by other considerations. But even if no one sought to deceive them, they could only deceive themselves. If they looked for that revolution to bring equality and freedom for all, they were mistaken in advance and for certain. Freedom and equality in the bourgeois revolution mean, fundamentally, the free market and equal right of all commodities to exchange at their value; and at best, all political and human freedoms that do not destroy the freedom needed by the owners of capital to exploit the proletariat. More than that could not be granted by the leaders of the bourgeois revolution and the upholders of the new order regardless of who they were, what they thought, what they wanted, or what they did.

But this is a situation which only reflects one of the basic contradictions not only of the bourgeois revolution but of bourgeois society as a whole. It is a contradiction rooted not in the conflict between easily tired masses and untiring revolutionists, utopians and realists, but *in the conflict between irreconcilable classes*. The early bourgeois revolutions did indeed bring forth Utopian leaders and movements. Deutscher, with a faint trace of affectionate condescension, speaks of them as the "high-minded, Utopian dreamers" of the revolution. Among them he includes the Levellers of the English Revolution, the extreme communistic left in the time of the French Revolution, of the Democratic Centralists and Trotskyists in the Bolshevik Revolution. To some of them, not to quibble about words and decorum among "Marxists," the term Utopian does apply. But it applies solely and exclusively for reasons inseparably connected with the class character of the bourgeois revolution.

To the primitive proletariat (or pre-proletariat) of that revolution, there corresponded a primitive communist or pre-communist movement. Such movements appeared in Cromwell's day, in Robespierre's day, in the days of the German peasant wars, to mention only a few. The struggle against absolutism and feudalism was to be crowned, in their conception, by a more or less communistic equality for all. What was it that fatally doomed these movements and the struggles they conducted, noble and idealistic

in purpose though they were, as Utopian? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but the fact that while the development of the productive forces, *among the most important of which is the proletariat itself*, had reached the level which made possible and necessary the class rule of the bourgeoisie (and the subjugation of the proletariat implied by it), that level was not yet high enough to make possible the rule of the proletariat and the inauguration of a free and equalitarian society of abundance.

It is exceedingly interesting to note what Engels says about this social phenomenon, trebly interesting in connection with Deutscher because firstly, he quotes from Engels in a deplorably chopped-down version; secondly, it does not seem to occur to him that the application of Engels' thought to the subject he is treating would destroy his whole construction, root and branch; and, thirdly, because everything which Engels wrote to lead up to the section quoted might, so far as Deutscher is concerned, have been written in untranslated Aramaic. The whole of his *Peasant War in Germany* is devoted by Engels to this problem as it manifested itself in 16th-century Germany, and his forewords are as if written to illuminate the present debate. In writing about the plebeian revolutionary government over which the peasant leader, Thomas Muenzer, presided in Thuringia in 1525, Engels deals with a dilemma facing a revolutionary leader who comes before his time, as it were.

The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents and for the realization of the measures which that domination would imply . . . he necessarily finds himself in a dilemma. What he *can* do is in contrast to all his previous actions, to all his principles and to the present interests of his party; what he *ought* to do cannot be achieved. . . . Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost.

That is how far Deutscher quotes Engels. Toward what end? To emphasize the suggestion that even Lenin may have been thinking (in 1918) that the Bolshevik Revolution was premature, "a false spring," thus reminding Marxists ears that "Marx and Engels had repeatedly written about the tragic fate which overtakes revolutionaries who 'come before their time.'"—as exemplified by Engels' commentary on Muenzer. And toward what "broader" end? To support "Marxistically" his view that Stalin only carried on in a despotic way the proletarian revolution which Lenin (and Trotsky), because of their dilemma, could not carry out in that way *or* in a democratic way which would correspond to "all his principles and to the present interests of his party." But that is not at all the sense

of Engels' view, and as soon as we supply the words which Deutscher supplanted with three periods between the last two sentences he quotes, the reader will be able to judge what Engels was talking about:

In a word, he [the leader of the extreme party who takes power prematurely] is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination. In the interests of the movement itself, he is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost.

And further:

Muenzer's position at the head of the "eternal council" of Muehlhausen was indeed much more precarious than that of any modern revolutionary regent. Not only the movement of his time, but the whole century, was not ripe for the realization of the ideas for which he himself had only begun to grope. The class which he represented not only was not developed enough and incapable of subduing and transforming the whole of society, but it was just beginning to come into existence. The social transformation that he pictured in his fantasy was so little grounded in the then existing economic conditions that the latter were a preparation for a social system diametrically opposed to that of which he dreamt. (*The Peasant War in Germany*, pp. 135f. My emphasis—M. S.)

We cite Engels at some length not because a quotation from Engels automatically settles all problems, and not even because the best way to know what Engels said is to read what he said. We cite the quotation because it underscores the contrast and the gulf between the supra-historical mystique with which Deutscher invests all revolutions without exception, and the concrete manner in which a Marxist analyzed the class conflicts in every revolution and the specific economic conditions underlying them. From the way in which Engels deals with the problem, we get an entirely different conception of what exactly is the "tragic fate" of the Levellers, Babouvists and other Utopian revolutionary movements.

The Utopians of the early days were Utopians only because objective conditions were not ripe for the victory of their class or for the social order that they dreamed of, but only for the victory of a new exploiting class. They were Utopians only because even if they somehow gained political power for a while all they *could* do with it was "to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases and promises, with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests." They could only help establish the social rule of a new exploiting class.

Engels' commentary on Muenzer is no more isolated or accidental in the works of the two great Marxists, than is the use of

that commentary by Deutscher. The same thought voiced by Engels is supplemented and rounded out in the familiar comment made by Marx in 1848 about the social problem faced by the Jacobins in the Great French Revolution more than two centuries after Muenzer.

In both revolutions [the English revolution of 1648 and the French of 1789] the bourgeoisie was the class that really stood at the head of the movement. The proletariat and the fractions of the citizenry that did not belong to the bourgeoisie either had no interests separate from those of the bourgeoisie or else they did not yet constitute independently-developed classes or class segments. Hence, when they clashed with the bourgeoisie, as for example from 1793 to 1794 in France, they fought only for the carrying out of the interests of the bourgeoisie, even if not in the manner of the bourgeoisie. The whole of French terrorism was nothing but a plebeian way of finishing off the foes of the bourgeoisie, absolutism, feudalism and philistinism. (*Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von K. Marx and F. Engels*, Vol. III, p. 211.)

With the true significance of the Utopians, be they primitive communistic or Jacobinistic movements, now indicated by Marx and Engels, the true significance—historical, social, class significance—of the brilliant Florentine's "prophet armed" becomes evident. The fact that the Levellers of all kinds and the Jacobins of all kinds came "before their time," does not suffice to have them leave the political scene with an apologetic bow. The social reality that follows the revolution only strengthens their determination to carry through the revolution to the ends they dreamed of originally, and in the interests of the broadest masses of the toiling people. The trouble is that the social reality of the bourgeois revolution is and *cannot but be* the class rule of the bourgeoisie. The more apparent that becomes, the more pronounced is the tendency of the masses to "believe no longer."

What is this tendency, after all? Nothing but the first important manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which proves to be a permanent characteristic of bourgeois society till its last gasp, which is indeed the motive force determining the course of this society to the end. And inasmuch as the bourgeoisie must strive for the maximum degree of stability and order in which to carry out and maintain its social functions, this disorganizing tendency which appears with its ascension to power (and even before) must be kept in restraint.

It is then, and only for that reason, that the "prophet armed" must be at hand. He is absolutely indispensable to the class rule of the bourgeoisie because "it is necessary to take such measures that, when they [the exploited classes] believe no longer, it may

be possible to make them believe by force." No wonder Marx thought so highly of Machiavelli, that unmoralizing, realistic, arch-intelligent thinker of the new order and the modern state.

The "armed prophet" turned out to be the only thing he could be, what he had to be: the armed power, the police and prisons, required to preserve the oppression and exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. The "armed prophet" is nothing but the armed bourgeois state. Everything is as it should be, for the bourgeois order cannot exist without class exploitation, and that cannot be maintained without the armed prophet who makes them believe by force.

But is that how it should be, or how it has to be, or how it may be, in a socialist society, or in a social order which can be legitimately regarded as a "brand of socialism"? That has become the life-or-death question for the socialist movement. Deutscher's answer is equal to pronouncing the death sentence upon it.

Deutscher is overwhelmingly fascinated—you might also say obsessed—by indiscriminating, uncritical and unthought out analogies between the bourgeois revolutions (the French in particular; but never the American, it is interesting to note) and the Bolshevik revolution. He explains the outcome of the latter only in terms of the evolution of the former. But if his comparisons are to make any sense, they must be tied together into some sort of systematic thought (if this is not too outrageous a demand to make in our times, when the intellectual disorder and frivolity are the peevish but popular form of rebellion against any kind of disciplined and systematized thinking). In which case we will for sure get the following seven tightly-linked points:

1. The Trotskyist Opposition, in fighting for workers' democracy, that is, for the rule of the workers, disclosed its Utopian character.

2. What the Opposition wanted was not only the program of the Democratic Centralists before them, but basically the program for which and with which the Bolsheviks in general won the Revolution of 1917.

3. The Bolshevik revolution itself, then, was Utopian.

4. That was so not only and not even because the socialist proletariat and the socialist revolutionaries came to power "before their time," but precisely because for the necessarily short time that they are in power, they are, like Thomas Muenzer, "*compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whom conditions are ripe for domination . . . compelled to defend the interests of an alien class.*"

5. The Lenins and Trotskys, under relentless objective pressures, could only prepare the ground for the direct and despotic rule of the alien class represented by the "prophet armed" who is needed to make the people believe by force—Stalin.

6. Under the aegis of the new but this time energetic and forward-driving revolutionary despot, the alien class in power nevertheless establishes a "brand of socialism," without the working class and against the working class inasmuch as "the revolution" cannot be entrusted to a class that "had proved itself incapable of exercising its own dictatorship."

7. The totalitarian dictatorship against the working class is nevertheless "promising," as capitalism once was, presumably because while the present "brand of socialism" in Russia (and China? and Poland? and East Germany?) established by a class alien to the proletariat (that is, exploiting and oppressing it), will be (or may be?) succeeded by another (less totalitarian?) "brand of socialism" carried out by a class which is not alien (or not so alien?) to the working class, which exploits and oppresses the working class not at all (or not so much?), or which is (perhaps?) carried out by the working class itself which can at last (for what reason?) be "entrusted" with the task of a socialist reconstruction of society (superior to the present "brand"?).

There is one difficulty, among many others, with this chain of monstrous and downright reactionary ideas which rattle around in Deutscher's mind. It is the difficulty facing every capitulator to Stalinism who is himself not an authentic Stalinist but who has lost all belief in the self-emancipating capacity of the proletariat: *Not a single one of them dares to present these ideas directly, candidly and simply to the proletarians themselves!* How we should like to attend a working-class meeting at which any of the multitude of Deutschers of all varieties would say in plain language:

"The socialist revolution, which you will make in the name of democracy and freedom, cannot be allowed to submit to your fickle will ('the nature of the people is variable,' says Machiavelli). It is you who will first have to submit to the totalitarian rule of revolutionary despots. For theirs is the inescapable task of wiping out all the Utopians who were your idealistic but quixotic leaders and of making you believe by force that they are establishing a brand of socialism."

Yet—the question is put by people, especially those who have been influenced by analogies once drawn between bourgeois Bonapartism and what Trotsky so questionably called "Soviet Bonapartism" (and Deutscher is one of those who have been very badly influ-

enced by the very bad analogy)—yet, is it not an historical fact that one ruling class can be brought to power by another, in the manner in which Bismarck of the German Junkers consolidated the power of the German capitalist class? And is it not a fact that the bourgeoisie has more than once been deprived of its political power and yet maintained its economic, its social power? By analogy, is that not substantially the same thing that has happened to the Russian proletariat under Stalinism?

The alloy in Trotsky's argument was already a base one; in Deutscher it is far worse because he mixes into it what was so alien to Trotsky—a wholesale capitulation to Stalinism, that is, a capitulation to Stalinism historically, theoretically and politically.

We have already indicated how and why the early plebeian and even communistic enemies of feudalism, who did indeed come before their time, could not, with the best will or leadership in the world, do anything but establish and consolidate the class rule of the bourgeoisie, even when for a brief period they took political power without or against the bourgeois elements. The very primitiveness, the very prematurity, the very Utopianism of these plebeian movements made it possible for a long time for the bourgeoisie to arouse them against feudalism and to be allied with them in the common struggle. What risk there was, was tiny. But the bourgeois social order is a revolutionary one. It constantly revolutionizes the economy; it creates and expands the modern class; it expands immensely the productive forces, above all the modern proletariat. And before the struggle with the old order is completely behind it, the bourgeoisie finds itself representing a new "old order" which is already threatened by an infant-turning-giant before its very eyes, the modern socialist proletariat.

Now comes a "new" phenomenon, the one already implicit in the futile struggle of yesterday's Utopians against yesterday's bourgeoisie. What is new is that the bourgeoisie dares less and less—to the point finally where it dares not at all—stir up the masses against the old privileged classes of feudalism. What is new is that the bourgeoisie fears to take power at the head of a mass movement which may acquire such impetus as will at an early next stage bring to power the new revolutionary force, the proletariat, as successor to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie tends now to turn to the reactionaries of the old order as its ally against the young but menacing proletariat. Engels marks the dividing line between two epochs of the development of bourgeois society with the year 1848—the year of a number of revolutionary *proletarian* uprisings throughout Europe:

And this proletariat, which had fought for the victory of the bourgeoisie everywhere, was now already raising demands, especially in France, that were incompatible with the existence of the whole bourgeois order; in Paris the point was reached of the first fierce struggle between the two classes on June 23, 1848; after a fortnight's battle the proletariat lay beaten. From that moment on, the mass of the bourgeoisie throughout Europe stepped over to the side of reaction, and allied itself with the very same absolutist bureaucrats, feudalists and priests whom it had just overturned with the help of the workers, in opposition to the enemies of society, precisely these workers. (*Reichsgruendung und Kommune*, p. 93.)

It is out of this relationship between the classes that the phenomenon of Bismarckism (or Bonapartism) arose. The bourgeoisie, faced with a revolutionary opposition, needed a "prophet armed" to protect itself from this opposition and it found one:

There are only two decisive powers in politics [continues Engels]: the organized state power, the army, and the unorganized, elemental power of the popular masses. The bourgeoisie had learned not to appeal to the masses back in 1848; it feared them even more than absolutism. The army, however, was in no wise at its disposal. But it was at the disposal of Bismarck. (*Ibid.*, p. 101.)

In a letter to Marx (April 13, 1866), dealing with Bismarck's proposal for a "universal suffrage" law which was a part of his war preparations against Austria, Engels extends his analysis of Bismarckism beyond the field of German class relations and to the bourgeoisie in a more general way:

. . . after all Bonapartism is the true religion of the modern bourgeoisie. It is always becoming clearer to me that the bourgeoisie has not the stuff in it for ruling directly itself, and that therefore where there is no oligarchy, as there is here in England, to take over, in exchange for good pay, the management of state and society in the interests of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the normal form. It carries through the big material interests of the bourgeoisie, even if against the bourgeoisie, but it leaves it no share of the domination itself. On the other hand, this dictatorship is in turn compelled against its will to promote these material interests of the bourgeoisie. (*Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, III, 3, p. 326.)

And again, some ten years later, looking backward on the significance of the rise of Bismarck-Bonapartism, Engels pithily analyzes its essential characteristics:

Even the liberal German philistine of 1848 found himself in 1849 suddenly, unexpectedly and against his own will faced by the question: Return to the old reaction in a more acute form or advance of the revolution to a republic, perhaps even to the one and indivisible republic with a socialistic background. He did not stop long to think and helped to create the Manteuffel reaction as the fruit of German liberalism. In just the same way the French bourgeois of 1851 found himself faced by a dilemma

which he had certainly never expected—namely: caricature of Empire, Praetorian rule, and France exploited by a gang of blackguards—or a social-democratic republic. And he prostrated himself before the gang of blackguards so that he might continue his exploitation of the workers under their protection. (*Selected Correspondence*, pp. 54f.)

The whole of Bonapartism implies the existence of a revolutionary danger from below (“they believe no longer”) with which the ruling class of exploiters cannot cope in normal ways, against which they must summon the more-or-less open dictatorship of a reliable armed force (again the “prophet armed”!), to which they have to yield political power in order to preserve their social power. And whatever form it has taken, regardless of where and when, from the time of the first Bonaparte to the last Hitler, it was always a matter of the bourgeois being so terrified by the revolutionary spectre that he “prostrated himself before the gang of blackguards so that he might continue his exploitation of the workers *under their protection*.”

Whether consciously or only half-consciously, in cold blood or in panic, the bourgeois was right *from his class standpoint*, and he showed that he grasped the problem a thousand times more firmly and clearly than Deutscher has with all his superficial and helplessly muddled analogies. The bourgeois knows that his social power—the dominant power that his class exercises over society and the relative power that he as an individual exercises in his class and through it upon all other classes—rests fundamentally upon his ownership of capital, of the means of production and exchange, *and upon nothing else*. It is not titles or privileges conferred upon him by monarchs or priests, and not armed retainers within his castle walls, but ownership of capital that is the source of his social might. Deprive the bourgeoisie of this ownership, and it becomes a nothing, no matter who or what the political power may be. But if the political regime is republican or monarchistic, democratic or autocratic, fascist or social-democratic, clerical or anti-clerical, so long as it maintains and protects the ownership of capital by the bourgeoisie and therewith the capitalist mode of production, then, regardless of what restraints it may place on one or another derivative power of the capitalist class, it is the political régime of capitalism and the state is a capitalist state.

Basically, it is the private ownership of capital that enables the bourgeoisie, in Marx's oft-repeated words, “to determine the conditions of production.” From that point of view, Marxists have never had any difficulty in explaining the *political difference* between the monarcho-capitalist state and the republican-capitalist state, the autocratic or fascist-capitalist state and the democratic-

capitalist state, and at the same time the fundamental *class or social identity* of all of them.

Or, to put it otherwise: the "norm" of capitalist society is not democracy or even the direct political rule of the bourgeoisie. The norm of capitalism is the private ownership of capital. If *that* norm is abolished, you can call the resulting social order anything you want and you can call the ruling class anything you want—but not capitalist.

How is it with the working class, however? Its unique characteristic, which distinguishes it from all preceding classes, may be a "disadvantage" from the standpoint of the shopkeeper, but from the Marxian standpoint it is precisely what makes it the consistently revolutionary class and the historic bearer of the socialist future, is this: *it is not and it cannot be a property-owning class*. That is, its unalterable characteristic excludes it from any possibility of monopolizing the means of production, and thereby exploiting and "alienating" other classes.

In the period between the class rule of capital and the classless rule of socialism stands the class rule of the workers. And it is precisely in this period that the unique characteristic of the proletariat is either corroborated in a new way, or else we may be dead certain that its class rule has not yet been achieved or has already been destroyed. For once the power of the bourgeoisie has been overturned, and the private ownership of the means of production and exchange has been abolished (more or less), it is on the face of it impossible to determine who is now the ruling class by asking: "Who owns the means of production?"

The question itself is unanswerable. The revolution has just abolished ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie has been expropriated (i.e., deprived of its property). But the proletariat does not now own it; by its very nature it cannot and it never will. Until it is communistically owned, really socially owned (which means, not owned at all, inasmuch as there are no classes and no state machine), it can exist only as nationalized property. More exactly: as *state property*. What is more, there is no longer a capitalist market to serve as the regulator of production. Production is now (increasingly) planned production; distribution is planned distribution. Anarchy of production and the automatism of the market must give way more and more to consciously planned production (and of course distribution). This is the task of the state which now owns the means of production and distribution.

As yet, it should be obvious, we know and can know nothing about the class nature of the state in question or the social relations which it maintains. And we *cannot* know that from the mere fact

that property is now statified. The answer to our question can come *only* from a knowledge of *who is master of the state*, who has the political power.

There is the point, precisely there! The bourgeoisie is such a class that if it retains ownership of the *economy*, the political régime protecting that ownership maintains, willy-nilly, the rule of capital over society. The proletariat, on the contrary, is such a class that if it retains mastery of the state which is now the repository of the economy, then and only then, in that way and only in that way, is it assured of its rule over society, and of its ability to transform it socialistically.

The bourgeoisie can turn over the political power, or allow the political power to be taken over completely, by a *locum tenens*, to use Deutscher's favorite term for "deputy," so long as the dictatorial deputy preserves the ownership of capital which is the fundamental basis for the power of the bourgeoisie over society in general and over the threatening proletariat in particular. But once the proletariat is deprived—and what's more, deprived completely—of all political power, down to the last trace of what it once had or has in most capitalist countries, what power is left in its hands? Economic power, perhaps? But the *only* way of exercising economic power in Russia (or China, Poland and Albania) is through the political power from which it has been so utterly excluded by the totalitarian bureaucracy.

We know how the bourgeoisie, be it under a democracy or an autocracy, is able to "determine the conditions of production" which in turn enable us to determine who is the ruling class in society. But under Stalinism, the workers have no political power (or even political rights) of any kind, and *therefore* no economic power of any kind, and *therefore* they do not "determine the conditions of production," and *therefore* are no more the ruling class than were the slaves of Greek antiquity.

The "true religion" of the bourgeoisie is Bonapartism because, as Engels wrote about Bismarck, he carries out the will of the bourgeoisie against its will. That, in two respects; in that it protects private property from the revolutionary class that imperils it; and in that it maintains private property as the basis of society. To *maintain it* is all that is *essential* (not ideally desirable in the abstract, but absolutely essential) to carrying out the will of the bourgeoisie, for the "coercive power" of competition and the "blindly-operating" market keep everything else running more or less automatically for bourgeois economy—running into the ground and out of it again, into the ground and out of it again, and so on.

But what sense is there to this proletarian, or Soviet or socialist

Bonapartism? None and absolutely none. Against what revolutionary class that threatened its social power did the Russian proletariat have to yield political power to a Bonapartist gang? We know, not just from quotations out of Marx and Engels, but from rich and barbaric experiences in our own time, why and how the bourgeoisie has yielded political power in order to save its social power (which is, let us always bear in mind, its right to continue the exploitation of the proletariat). What "social power" was saved by (for) the Russian proletariat when it yielded political power to Stalinist "Bonapartism"?

"Social power" means the power of a class over society. Under Stalinism, the working class has no such power, not a jot or tittle of it, and in any case far less than it has in almost every capitalist country of the world. And it cannot have any social power until it has in its hands the political power.

Or is it perhaps the case that the Stalinist bureaucracy carries out the will of the proletariat against the will of the proletariat, that is, in the language of Deutscher, the Marxist-by-your-leave, tries "to establish socialism regardless of the will of the working class"? It turns you sad and sick to think that such a point, in the year 1954, has to be discussed with a "Marxist," and such an urbane and ever-so-bloodlessly-objective Marxist at that. But we know our times, and know therefore that what Deutscher has the shamelessness to say with such above-the-common-herd candor is what has so long poisoned the minds of we-don't-know-how-many cynics, parasites, exploiters, slaveholders and lawyers for slaveholders in and around the working-class movement. So it must after all be dealt with, but briefly.

Bourgeois Bonapartism (the only Bonapartism that ever existed or ever can exist) *can* carry out the will of the ruling bourgeoisie against its will, and do it without consultation of any kind. The political ambitions, even the personal ambitions, the imperialist ambitions of the Bonapartist régime coincide completely with the self-expansion of capital, as Marx liked to call it. Each sustains the other. In the course of it the will of the bourgeoisie, which is nothing more than the expansion of capital—the lifeblood of its existence and growth—is done.

Even where the Bonaparte represents, originally, another class, as Bismarck represented the Prussian Junkers, the *economic* interests of that class, as it is by that time developing in the conditions of expanding capitalist production, are increasingly reconciled with the capitalist mode of production and exchange. (The same fundamental process takes place as noted by Marx in the English revolution, when the bourgeoisie unites with the landowners who no

longer represented feudal land but bourgeois landed property.)

But where the state owns the property, the "socialist" Bonaparte who has established a political régime of totalitarian terror has completely deprived the so-called ruling class, the proletariat, of any means whereby its will can even be expressed, let alone asserted. Indeed, the totalitarian regime was established to suppress the will of the proletariat and to deprive it of *all* social power, political or economic.

If Deutscher is trying to say—as Trotsky so often and so wrongly said—that by "preserving state property" the Stalinist Bonapartes are, in their own way, preserving the class rule or defending the class interests of the proletariat, as the bourgeois Bonapartes did for the bourgeoisie in preserving private property, this comparison is not better but worse than the others. By defending private property, the Bonaparte-Bismarck-Hitlers made it possible for the bourgeoisie to exploit the working class more freely, a favor for which the bourgeoisie paid off the régime as richly as it deserved. But by defending and indeed vastly expanding state property in Russia, the Stalinist bureaucracy acquires a political *and* economic power to subject the working class to a far more intensive exploitation and oppression than it ever before suffered. If it protects the country from the "foreign bourgeoisie" (as every qualified exploiting class does), it is solely because it does not intend to yield all or even part of its exclusive right to the exploitation of the Russian people.

And finally, if Deutscher is trying to say that socialism has to be imposed upon the working class against its will, if need be, or even that socialism (a "brand of socialism") *can* be imposed upon the working class against its will, he is only emphasizing that he has drawn a cross over himself and over socialism too. You might as well try to make sense out of the statement that there are two brands of freedom, one in which you are free and the other in which you are imprisoned.

The proof of the pudding is before us. If a vast accumulation of factories were not merely a prerequisite for socialism (and that it is, certainly) but a "brand of socialism," then we had it under Hitler and we have it in the United States today. If the expansion of the productive forces were not merely a prerequisite for socialism (and that it is, without a doubt) but a "brand of socialism," then we have had socialism under Hirohito, Hitler, Roosevelt and Adenauer.

Under capitalism, the working class has been economically expropriated (it does not own the means with which it produces), but, generally, it is left some political rights and in some instances

some political power. Under feudalism, the landed working classes were deprived of all political power and all political rights, but some of them at least retained the economic power that comes with the ownership or semi-ownership of little bits of land. It is only under conditions of ancient slavery and in more recent times of plantation slavery, that the slaves—the laboring class—were deprived of all economic power and all political power. Those who most closely resemble that ancient class are the working class under Stalinism. They are the modern slaves, deprived of any political power whatever and therefore of all economic power.

If this is the product of a “brand of socialism,” necessitated because the working class did not will socialism (why should it?), then the whole of Marxism, which stands or falls with the conception of the revolutionary self-emancipation of the proletariat, has been an illusion, at best, and a criminal lie at worst. But even that would not be as great an illusion and a lie as the claim that Stalinism will yield its totalitarian power as the bureaucracy gradually comes to see that its benevolent despotism is no longer needed in the interests of social progress.

What Engels wrote to the German party leaders in September, 1879, in Marx’s name and in his own, is worth recalling:

For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is therefore impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois.

That remains our view, except that to “philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois,” we must now add: or by totalitarian despots who promise freedom as the indefinite culmination of the worst exploitation and human degradation known, with the possible exception of Hitler’s horrors, in modern times. That view Deutscher has discarded. On what ground he continues to proclaim himself a Marxist passes understanding.

There remains Deutscher’s justification of Stalinist “socialism” in the name of Russia’s backwardness, and the responsibilities for Stalinism which he has ascribed to Lenin and Trotsky. It is one of the favorite themes of the apologists, but it has the right to be dealt with.

**DRIVE THE APOLOGISTS FOR STALINISM OUT** of all their other trenches and they will take tenacious refuge in the last one. It is their deepest one and affords them the most obdurate hold on their defenses. It is buttressed with solid learning direct from Marx, has historical breadth, roots in economics, and the sociological sweep that lifts it above the transient trivia of journalistic polemics. It is the trench, one might almost say, of the Old Crap—"die ganze alte Scheisse," as it is written in the original Marx.

In brief: socialism (or the most eminently desirable brand of socialism) presupposes a most advanced stage of the development of the productive forces which alone can assure abundance for all and therewith freedom; but for forcibly-isolated and exceedingly poor Russia to be brought to such a stage required the crude, violent, at times unnecessarily expensive but basically unavoidable excesses (*alte Scheisse*) of the practical realists. The proof of the pudding lies in the statistics and who is so quixotic as to argue with statistics?

#### UNDER SOCIALISM

- a) Production .....enormous increase
- b) Capitalists .....enormous liquidation
- c) Bureaucratism .....enormous, but
  1. inevitable, or
  2. necessary, or
  3. exaggerated, or
  4. declining, or
  5. self-reforming.

Net, after all deductions.....an understandably inferior brand of socialism, but socialism just the same.

On this score, as on so many others, Deutscher feels, like scores of contemporaries, that his demoralization invests him with a special right or obligation to cruise freely, with accelerator lashed to the floor and steering gear disconnected, from imprecision to imprecision and muddle to muddle.

The conception was first elaborated by Trotsky, who while not himself an apologist for Stalinism but a most implacable critic, nevertheless provided the apologists with far more weapons than they deserved. In Trotsky, the idea was developed much more persuasively and roundedly than in Deutscher. Above all, the former was free of those unpleasant observations which the latter weaves into all his writings in deference to the low-grade anti-socialist prejudices of the intellectual philistine. In its thought-out form, it is to be found in the most probing and most instructive of Trotsky's studies on Stalinist Russia (and therefore the one which, re-read, most plainly shows the basic mistake in his analysis),

*The Revolution Betrayed* which he wrote in 1936. Early in the book he says:

Two years before the *Communist Manifesto*, young Marx wrote: "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism], because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive." . . . the citation, merely an abstract construction with Marx, an inference from the opposite, provides an indispensable theoretical key to the wholly concrete difficulties and sickness of the Soviet régime. (P. 56.)

Employing this key, he comes to the conclusion that the "old crap" is represented by the transformation of the Soviet state into "a 'bourgeois' state, even though without a bourgeoisie" in so far as the Stalinist totalitarian régime "is compelled to defend inequality—that is, the material privileges of a minority—by methods of compulsion." That the bureaucracy should have established such a régime, he continues later, has its basis in

. . . the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. (P. 112.)

But hasn't the totalitarian state become even harsher with the rise in production? Yes.

Soviet economy had to lift itself from its poverty to a somewhat higher level before fat deposits of privilege became possible. The present state of production is still far from guaranteeing all necessities to everybody. But it is already adequate to give significant privileges to a minority, and convert inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority." (P. 112f.)

In different terms, Deutscher draws, or seems to draw, similar conclusions:

. . . after its victory in the civil war, the revolution was beginning to escape from its weakness into totalitarianism. . . .

Rich in world-embracing ideas and aspirations, the new republic was "poor with the accumulated poverty of over a thousand years." It mortally hated that poverty. But that poverty was its own flesh and blood and breath. . . .

For decades Bolshevism had to entrench itself in its native environments in order to transform it. The brand of socialism which it then produced could not but show the marks of its historic heritage. That socialism, too, was to rise rough and crude, without the vaulting arches and spires and lacework of which Socialists had dreamed. (*The Prophet Armed*, pp. 519ff.)

Let us try to convert these loose literary flutterings into more precise thoughts related to more precise realities in order to

judge whether the "poverty of society in objects of consumption" (Trotsky) or the "accumulated poverty of over a thousand years" (Deutscher) produced Trotsky's "degenerated workers' state" or what is Deutscher's more extravagant synonym for the same thing, the "rough and crude . . . brand of socialism"—or it produced something as different from a workers' state and socialism as a prison is from a presentable home.

The part played by poverty in the transformation of the Bolshevik revolution is too well known to require elaboration here. Poverty which is induced by a low level of industrial development never has been and never will be the foundation on which to build the new social order. That was known in Russia in 1917, as well as before and after. Without exception or hesitation, every Bolshevik repeated the idea publicly a thousand times: "For the establishment of socialism, we ourselves are too backward, poor and weak, and we can achieve it only in class collaboration with the coming proletarian powers of the more advanced western countries. Our strategical objective, therefore, requires laying primary stress upon the advance of the world revolution and, until its victory, working for the maximum socialist accumulation which is possible in a backward, isolated workers' state." In these thoughts the science of Marxism was combined with the virtues of political honesty and forthrightness, sagacity and practicality.

The big difficulties manifested themselves, it is worth noting, in this: the more the victory of the world revolution was delayed (and contrary to Deutscher's hindsight, it was delayed primarily by the course and power of the newly-rising leadership of the revolutionary state), the more restricted became the possibilities of any socialist accumulation. It is not a matter of accumulation "in general," which is always possible, but socialist accumulation. That signifies a harmonious social expansion resulting from such co-operation in the productive process as requires less and less strain on the body, nerves and time of the laborer and less and less public coercion, on the one hand, and on the other, affords more abundance and the possibility for unhampered intellectual development to everybody, increasingly free from inherited class divisions and antagonisms of all kinds.

From 1918, when Lenin first outlined the masterful and brilliant conception that later got the name of N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), through the N.E.P. itself, through the struggle of the Trotskyist Opposition, through the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and down to the days of the "self-reforming" bureaucracy that has followed Stalin, all important questions, conflicts and developments that have appeared in Russia were related to or depended upon the problem of accumulation.

The fight of the Russian Opposition coincided with *the end of the possibilities* of a socialist accumulation in Russia *given the continued repression* (or undermining, or retardation) *of the revolution in the West*. It was therefore as significant as it was fitting that the Opposition intertwined its program for a socialist accumulation inside Russia with that stiffnecked fight against the theory of "socialism in one country" which was the obverse of its fight for the world revolution.

In this sense, the defeat of the Opposition put an end to the socialist accumulation in Russia as decisively as it put an end to the socialist power in the country. But it did not put an end to accumulation of any kind, any more than it eliminated political power of any kind. The defeat merely changed the *form and content* of both. It had to. No society with class divisions, and therefore class conflict, can hold together for a day without a political power, that is, a state power. And no society, least of all in modern times, can live without accumulation. There was accumulation in Russia under the Tsar, and accumulation of another kind under Lenin, and accumulation of still another kind under Stalin. The whole question revolves around the "kind." Trotsky noted that

... in its first period, the Soviet régime was undoubtedly far more equalitarian and less bureaucratic than now [that is, in 1936]. But that was an equality of general poverty. The resources of the country were so scant that there was no opportunity to separate out from the masses of the population any broad privileged strata. At the same time the "equalizing" character of wages, destroying personal interestedness, became a brake upon the development of the productive forces. Soviet economy had to lift itself from its poverty to a somewhat higher level before fat deposits of privilege became possible. (*Op. cit.*, p. 112.)

There isn't a line in all of Deutscher's analysis that even approaches this in the clarity with which it points to the answer of the "riddle" of Stalinism. Yet for all its compact clarity, it requires modification and some close study.

Let us start with the provocative statement that the "equalizing" character of wages "became a brake upon the development of the productive forces." The idea is absolutely correct, in our opinion. It remains correct if it is expressed in a broader and more general way, always remembering that we are speaking of an *isolated, backward Russia: The political power of the workers, represented and symbolized, among other things, by the equalizing character of wages, became a brake upon the development of the productive forces*. Does that mean that with a proletarian power the productive forces could no longer develop? The term "brake" must not be understood in so absolute a sense. It merely (and "merely" here is enough!) meant that such a political power did

not allow the productive forces to develop as fast and as strongly as was required by the concrete social needs of the time. This formulation brings us a bit closer to the reality.

The fact is that with the introduction and expansion of the N.E.P., which, with Lenin, presupposed the unwavering maintenance and strengthening of the state power of the proletariat, there was a steady development of the productive forces all over the land, a rise in the socialist accumulation in particular, and a gradual rise out of the depths of the "accumulated poverty." But (still remembering the fatal absence of the world revolution) the general development of the productive forces soon disclosed its dual nature: the rise of the socialist forces of production and the rise of the private-capitalist sector of production, not only in agriculture but also in industry and commerce.

The character of the economic development as a whole was called into question with challenging sharpness. The whole literature of the time (1923-1930), as well as the whole of the factional conflict, hinged on the question: Russia—toward capitalism or toward socialism? To overcome the trend toward capitalization of the economy, a trend with powerful roots in the retarded and petty-bourgeois character of Russian agriculture, required not only a vast but above all a rapid industrialization of the country. When Lenin used to say, "Germany plus Russia equals socialism," he meant nothing less than that advanced Germany, controlled by a socialist proletariat, would make it possible for backward Russia so to industrialize itself as to assure a socialist development for both countries. But what could Russia do if forced to rely upon her own resources?

The proletariat in power *could not* produce an industrialization of the country rapid enough to overcome the bourgeois tendencies surging up with such unexpected speed and strength from its primitive agriculture and it was not strong enough to assure a socialist development in both spheres of economic activity. To do that, it would have had to subject itself to such an intensity of exploitation as produced the surpluses that made the capitalist classes, in their heyday, the beneficiaries of all pelf and privilege and at the same time the superintendents of the miraculous economic achievements that have at last made it possible for man to rise from his knees.

The trouble, as it were, was this: others can exploit the working class, but it cannot exploit itself. So long as it has the political power, it will not exploit itself nor will it allow others to do so. That is why the workers' state, the workers' power, the workers' democracy established by the revolution turned out, in its

enforced isolation, to be a brake on the development of the productive forces at a pace required by the relation of class forces in Russia in the Twenties. And that is why, again in its enforced isolation, the workers' power had to be destroyed to allow free play to the development of productive forces in Russia.

By whom? What force would take over the power in order to carry out this exploitation that was demanded for Russia's industrialization under the extraordinary concrete conditions of the time?

Trotsky says that "the resources of the country were so scant that there was no opportunity to separate out from the masses of the population any broad privileged strata." But this is patently wrong. On the basis of the same or even less easily available or more poorly managed resources, Tsarist society had "separated out" and maintained such privileged strata in the form of the capitalist and feudal classes. It is not to the scant resources—or to them alone—that we need look for the answer. *There simply was no bourgeoisie on hand* to take over the organization and management of Russian society and the exploitation of its resources (the proletariat included) implied by its rule: there was none on hand and, as it turned out, none in sight capable of such a task.

The native bourgeoisie? In agriculture, it did not exist at all, except in the form of an incohesive rural petty bourgeoisie which needed an urban bourgeoisie to organize, lead and dominate it. In industry, it was confined to the periphery of production and the field of trade. If the comparatively potent bourgeoisie of pre-Bolshevik Russia never really raised itself to the position of ruling class, either before or after the Tsar was overturned, the ludicrous remnants of it, even if supplemented by the neo-bourgeois elements of the N.E.P. period, could hardly hope to achieve the same position *except as tools or vassals of the world bourgeoisie*.

The foreign bourgeoisie? Abstractly, yes. Concretely, no. Such was the unusual and unforeseen concatenation of social and political forces, that the world bourgeoisie completely failed to unite in a resolute assault upon the Bolshevik régime of 1917-1920, thus making its survival possible. It could only dream of another attack in the following years. And when it seemed on the brink of finding a practical, effective rallying center for a renewed assault with the rise to power of Hitler (the "super-Wrangel" that never materialized), the conflicts and contradictions in its own midst were so acute, or else so easily exploited by the now Stalinized Russia, that more than half the world's bourgeoisie found itself in the deadly combat with Hitler that assured the survival, not the crushing, of the Stalinist state.

Society, like nature, abhors a vacuum. The more complex and modern the society the greater is its abhorrence—and more ingenious and variegated are its improvizations. Scant though Russia's resources were, they had enough magnetic power to attract from the nethermost regions of society a new coagulation that was to perform—one way or another—the social task awaiting it. In so doing it was to consolidate itself as a new, reactionary ruling class, which established and continues to maintain its domination over society by means of the most ruthless, most unashamed, most intensely organized, centralized, and consciously directed terror against the people it exploited that has ever been known in history—without exception!

It is true that it performed its task. It industrialized the country to a tremendous extent, unforeseen by itself, its friends or its foes. It accomplished, in its own unique way, the absolutely inevitable revolution in agriculture, subordinating it to industry, integrating it into industry, in a word, industrializing it (the work is not complete, but the trend is utterly irrepressible). But to achieve this goal in the *only* way that this social force can achieve it, it destroyed (as it was destined to do) the power of the working class, destroyed every achievement of the Bolshevik revolution, established the power of the most absolutist ruling class in the world, and reduced the entire population to the grade of slaves—modern slaves, not plantation slaves, but slaves, who are deprived of any and all public recourse against the most exploitive and oppressive régime known to our time, with the *possible*—and we stress the word—exception of Hitlerism.

That is how the “old crap” revived and that is what its revival has meant! To Trotsky, the “old crap,” meant as an indictment of the bureaucracy and a rebuff to its apologists (it is no accident that his *Revolution Betrayed* has as its last chapter an attack on such “friends of the Soviet Union” as the Webbs and Durantys, of whom Deutscher is only a present version), nevertheless left the proletariat the ruling class of Russia. To Deutscher, the “old crap,” meant as an apology for the bureaucracy, is a brand of socialism which lacks only vaulting arches, spires and lacework which were the dreamstuff of socialism. Not, however, to Marx, let us note, if we go back to the original text in which Trotsky found his now familiar quotation.\*

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\*It is from the chapter on Feuerbach in the Marx-Engels *Deutsche Ideologie*. The quotation as given in *The Revolution Betrayed* is inexact, and evidently suffers from double translation (from German into Russian and then from Russian into English). For all of its roughness, the translation in Trotsky does no violence to the thought of the original. Cf. the original German in the first version,

Marx, in his violent attack upon the German "critical critics," is presenting his ideas on communism in systematic polemical form even though they are still taking shape for their climactic presentation two years later in the *Manifesto*. He is seeking to free communism from all trace of utopianism, of wishful-thinking, you might say, of abstract idealism. He wants to show the scientific foundation under its inevitable unfoldment as the last historic achievement of the self-emancipating proletariat, which "must first conquer political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest." But if this political power is to lead to effective communism, he points out again and again to "the premise-less Germans," it must be preceded or based upon material conditions prepared by the past, that is, by capital. Without such things as the development of machinery, extensive utilization of natural power, gas lighting, steam heating, water supply, and the like, "the communal society would not in turn be a new force of production—devoid of a material basis, reposing upon a merely theoretical foundation, it would be a freak and end up only as a monastic economy."

He goes further to emphasize his point. The "alienation" which is as characteristic of capitalism as of all class societies, can be abolished only if two practical premises obtain:

It must become a power so intolerable that the mass makes a revolution against it inasmuch as it faces them with the contradiction between their own propertylessness and the "existing world of wealth and culture, both of which presuppose a great increase in productive power—a high degree of its development." Such a development "is an absolutely necessary practical premise also because without it only *want* is generalized, and with *want* the fight over necessities would likewise have to begin again and all the old crap would revive."

It is a thought scattered and repeated through hundreds of pages of Marxian writings, especially against the Utopians and "pure-and-simple" anti-capitalists. The thought is as clear as day: the "old crap" is not a deformed workers' state or a crude brand of socialism. It is the revival of the old, even original and not very far advanced rule of capital, that is, of class domination, of class exploitation and oppression, of the struggle of each against all.

Is that precisely what happened in Russia? The abstract generalization as thought out by Marx was manifested in and applied

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*Marx-Engels Archiv*, Band I, p. 252; in the second and apparently more complete and exact version, *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Abt., Band V, p. 24; or in the "official" C.P. English translation, very crude, *The German Ideology*, (p. 24.)

concretely to a country with unique class relations at a given stage in its development as a unique part of a world capitalism at a specific stage in its development. *The "old crap" of class rule revived not in its old capitalist form but in a new, anti-capitalist but nonetheless anti-socialist form.*

From a reading of Deutscher's books and articles, there is not to be found so much as a hint that the question of the exploitive class character of the bureaucracy has been submitted to his critical scrutiny. Only by implication can the reader permit himself the inference that, if the question has been considered at all, the indicated conclusion has been dismissed without appeal. To Deutscher, the bureaucracy is the "*locum tenens*" of the socialist proletariat which is incapable of self-rule, just as Napoleon, Cromwell and Bismarck were the deputies of the capitalist bourgeoisie, each despot opening up progressive vistas for the class he (or it) represented, consolidating the revolutionary gains and prospects of his (or its) class, and more of the same wisdom which is now familiar to us.

In the first place, the theory of the "old crap," in Deutscher's version, completely and shatteringly destroys his entire theory of the Russian revolution, which is as much as to say that it makes *tabula rasa* of four-fifths of what he has written on the subject. His "basic" explanation, *i.e.*, apology, for Stalinism consist of a *general* theory of *all* revolutions. According to it, the Stalinist bureaucracy rose to take command of the Russian revolution for exactly the same reasons that the Cromwells, Napoleons and Bismarcks rose to take command of the bourgeois revolutions in England, France and Germany. It lies in the nature of all revolutions, it is a law of all revolutions.

*But*—all that becomes patent rubbish the minute he advances the theory that negates it utterly, that is, that Stalinism rose *in Russia* because, unlike the West with its wealth, culture, traditions of respect for the human personality, etc., etc., she was "poor with the accumulated poverty of over a thousand years," so that the "brand of socialism" which "Bolshevism" then produced "could not but show the marks of its historic heritage."

One or the other! Both it cannot be.

*Either* Stalinism (or "revolutionary despotism") is the invariable result of *all* revolutions, at least for a long stage in their development, in which case the reference to Russia's poverty is irrelevant.

*Or*—Stalinism is the inevitable result of a *particular* revolution, of an attempt to establish socialism in a backward country which was materially unprepared for it. From this it follows that

Stalinism would not result from a revolution in a country or countries which have the material and cultural prerequisites for socialism. In this case the whole theory of "the prophet armed" in all revolutions is pretentious nonsense, and worse than that reactionary nonsense (and even hilarious nonsense since its author cannot rightly say if the "prophet armed" is represented by the tragic hero of his work or by the man who murdered him).

That's in the first place. And normally that would be enough for one man and more than enough. But there is also a second place.

Out of the clear blue, we learn that Deutscher has, in fact, been asking himself whether the bureaucracy is a new exploiting class or not. In his books up to now? No, for as we said, there is no trace of such an announcement in them. But in one of his recent articles, as translated from the French review, *Esprit*, in *Dissent* (Summer 1954, p. 229f.) we note his awareness that there is a point of view that holds the Stalinist bureaucracy to be a new ruling class.

The managerial and bureaucratic class, it is said, has a vested interest in maintaining the economic and social inequality of the Stalin era. It must therefore preserve the whole apparatus of coercion and terror which enforces that inequality.

This argument assumes that there exists:

a) a high degree of something like class solidarity in the Soviet bureaucratic and managerial groups; and

b) that the ruling group is guided in its policies by a strong awareness of, and concern for, the distinct class interest of the privileged groups.

These assumptions may or may not be correct—in my view the evidence is still inconclusive. A weighty argument against them is that we have repeatedly seen the privileged and ruling minority of Soviet society deeply divided against itself and engaged in a ferocious struggle ending with the extermination of large sections of the bureaucracy. The victims of the mass purges of 1936-1938 came mainly from the party cadres, the managerial groups, and the military officers corps, and only in the last instance from the non-privileged masses. Whether these purges accelerated the social integration of the new privileged minority, or whether, on the contrary, they prevented that minority from forming itself into a solid social stratum is, I admit, still an open question to me.

The argument Deutscher invokes against the theory that the bureaucracy represents a class, is downright trivial. If applied to any number of the ruling classes that have existed throughout history, it would rule them out of that category instantly. But for a moment that is beside the point. What is positively incredible is to read that Deutscher has been writing all this time about the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia (and elsewhere!) and about how it has established socialism in Russia, or some brand thereof, without having determined in his own mind if this bureaucracy is a new exploiting class or not.

In our time, we have made our fair share of mistakes about the famous "Russian question" and according to some not wholly friendly critics, we have even oversubscribed our quota in this field. But yet we can say, with tightly reined pride, that we do not have and do not want anything like this to our dubious credit.

To speak of Russia as a socialist society (and with such casualness!) while the exploitive class character of those who established this "brand of socialism" its still "an open question to me"—that requires a brand of Marxism that it has not been our misfortune to have encountered anywhere else to date.

Yet we realize that there is one hurdle that many Marxists find it impossible, or at least exceedingly difficult, to take: the class character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the class character of the society they have established and defended with such murderous ardor. It is by no means superficial—this reluctance—and by no means trivial, as are so many of the views that are expressed with amazing lightmindedness in Deutscher's works. It is in harmony—this reluctance—with virtually a century of Marxian and historical tradition. Who else, in most of the past hundred years, but an abstractionist, a pedant, a constructionist, would have sought a field for contemporary political speculation outside the perspective of capitalism or socialism? Support of one automatically implied (except for a few incorrigible or romantic feudalists) opposition to the other and vice versa. "Down with capitalism!" was as plainly the battlecry of socialism as "Down with socialism!" was the battlecry of capitalism.

But with the advent of Stalinism, which is so unique that it continues to baffle and disorient tens of millions, and tens of thousands of the intellectual and political vanguard in particular, it becomes increasingly absurd, not to say criminal, to be imprisoned, in our analysis of it, by two dimensions, as it were: since it is so obviously not socialism, it must perforce be some sort of capitalism—or, since it is obviously not capitalism, it must of necessity be some brand of workers' or socialist régime. History allows only one or the other!

History is not an obsequious engine whose wheels are so set that it can only move forward along a route firmly prescribed by Marxism, without pauses, without ever running backward and without ever leaving the main rails to go off on a blind spur. Neither is it a precisely organized Cook's tour which meticulously sets a timetable for all nations and peoples to travel through primitive communism, then through chattel slavery, then through feudalism, then through capitalism, then through the dictatorship of the proletariat, then through the dictatorship of the secretariat, to be

allowed entry finally into the best brand of socialism, with vaulting arches, spires and lacework included—but with wandering off on side trips of any kind strictly forbidden. To attribute to Marxism such a conception of the historical route of march is, in Plekhanov's words, "an interesting psychological aberration."

Society has wandered off on side excursions and even blind alleys before, just as it is doing in some countries today, though we are strongly convinced that the wandering is not for long, not as long as the historical era of capitalism and certainly not as long as the historical era of feudal stagnation.

Of all the Marxists who, in our own day, allowed themselves to think out theoretically the possibilities of a new exploitive society, Bukharin stands out as the most searching mind, and that over a long span of time. It may further help those avowed Marxists who are immobilized between the two rigidly-conceived social dimensions to read what Bukharin wrote almost on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution.

In discussing the growth of state capitalism, he insists, and quite rightly, that the "capitalist mode of production is based on a monopoly of the means of production in the hands of the class of capitalists within the general framework of commodity exchange." Thereupon he adds this most remarkable theoretical extrapolation:

Were the commodity character of production to disappear (for instance), through the organization of all world economy as one gigantic trust, the impossibility of which we tried to prove in our chapter on ultra-imperialism, we would have an entirely new economic form. This would be capitalism no more, for the production of *commodities* would have disappeared; still less would it be *socialism*, for the power of one class over the other would have remained (and even grown stronger). Such an economic structure would most of all resemble a slave-owning economy where the slave market is absent. (N. Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, p. 157.—Emphasis in the original.)

The Stalinist state did not, of course, arise out of capitalism and the development of a state capitalist economy, but out of an economy that was socialist in type. But is not the terse definition of a new exploitive class society, where commodity production has disappeared (more or less) and the ruling class has concentrated all ownership and control into one hand, the state's, perfectly applicable to the slave-state of Stalinism?

In 1928, after eleven years of the Bolshevik Revolution and with God-knows-what unspoken thoughts roaming about in the back of his mind, the same Bukharin had occasion to return to the same subject from a somewhat different angle, in the course of a speech delivered to the Program Commission of the Sixth Con-

gress of the Communist International. In discussing, from the purely theoretical standpoint, the possibility of classical capitalist economic crises in a society in which all the means of production are owned by the state (naturally, not by a proletarian state), he points out that in such a society "only in world-economic relations do we have trade with other countries, etc." Thereupon he continues with these equally remarkable insights:

Now, we raise the question whether in such a form of capitalism—which actually represents a certain negation of capitalism, because of the fact that the internal market, the circulation of money, has disappeared—a crisis can occur. Would we have crises there? I believe *not!* Can there exist in this society a contradiction between the restricted consumption of the masses (consumption in the *physiological* sense) and the growing productive forces? Yes, that may be. The consumption of the ruling class grows continuously, the accumulation of the means of production, calculated in labor units, can grow to enormous dimensions, but the consumption of the masses is retarded. Perhaps still sharper here is the discrepancy between the growth of the consumption of the masses. But just the same we will not find any crises.

A planned economy exists, an organized distribution, not only with regard to the connections and reciprocal relations between different branches of industry but also with regard to consumption. The slave in this society receives his share of fodder, of the objects that are the product of the total labor. He may receive very little, but just the same crises will not take place. (*Kommunistische Internationale*, 1928, No. 33/34, p. 2063.)

Is this not an astoundingly apt description of the most basic relations in Stalinist society? Bukharin did not not hesitate to call such a society slavery, even if of a modern kind, but it would never occur to him to speak of such an abomination as socialism of any brand whatever. Or if, at a tragical stage of his life, he did speak of the Stalinist inferno as socialism, the pistol of the GPU was already jammed against the base of his skull. Deutscher has no such excuse.

Let us say that we close our mind to Deutscher's utterly wretched apology for the Stalinist dictatorship, his pseudo-historical justification for the massacre of the "Utopians" by the régime of the new Russian slaveowners, his sophomoric theories about revolutions in general, his logical preposterousness which would be derided by anyone accustomed to think with his mind instead of with his pyloric valve. To forget all these things is next to impossible but let us say it is done. Then we would have to reduce Deutscher's violence against the basic tenet of socialism—the self-emancipatory rôle which is exclusively assigned to the revolutionary proletariat—to a case of the opinion that capitalism can give way only to socialism. The opinion is as erroneous as it is common. Understandable fifty years ago, for adequate reasons rightly so, it is inexcusable

today, in the light of the Stalinist experience. The common notion has to be revised for accuracy, and the revision, far from upsetting the provisions of Marxism, amplifies and above all concretizes them:

Capitalism, nearing the end of its historical rope, is decreasingly able to solve the problems of society on a capitalist basis. The problems will nevertheless be solved anyhow and are already being solved. Where the proletariat takes command of the nation, the social problems will be solved progressively, and mankind will move toward the freedom of a socialist world. Where the proletariat fails for the time to discharge its task, the social problems will be solved nevertheless, but they will be solved in a reactionary way, solved at the cost of creating a dozen new social problems, solved by degrading and enslaving the bulk of mankind. That is the meaning today of the conflict between capitalism and socialism, socialism and Stalinism, Stalinism and capitalism.

That is the meaning that can and must now be read into the historical warnings of the great founders of scientific socialist theory and the proletarian socialist movements. They did not and could not hold that the decay of capitalism, which is a spontaneous and automatic process, would just as spontaneously and automatically assure the victory of socialism—of any brand.

In the most mature and instructive of his works, the *Anti-Duehring*, Engels clarifies the standpoint of Marxism on this score, not once but repeatedly:

By more and more transforming the great majority of the population into proletarians, the capitalist mode of production brings into being the force which, *under penalty of its own destruction*, is compelled to carry out this revolution. (P. 314.)

. . . modern large-scale industry has called into being on the one hand a proletariat, a class which for the first time in history can demand the abolition, not of one particular class organization or another, or of one particular class privilege or another, but of classes themselves, and which is in such a position that it must carry through this demand *or sink to the level of the Chinese coolie*. (P. 178.)

. . . *if the whole of modern society is not to perish*, a revolution of the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class divisions. (P. 179)

. . . [the bourgeoisie's] own productive powers have grown beyond its control and, as with the force of a law of Nature, are driving the whole of bourgeois society forward to *ruin or revolution*. (P. 188.) (My emphasis throughout—M. S.)

These do not have their value in determining if Engels was gifted with apocalyptic vision—that has no importance. But they reveal how Engels judged the relationship between the disintegration of capitalist society and the part of the proletariat in the process—victim of the outcome or master of a regeneration. The

failure up to now of the proletariat to play the latter part successfully is not our subject here. Except to say that ninety-five per cent of those "socialists" who have in effect capitulated either to the American bourgeoisie or the Stalinist bureaucracy are possessed in common by a thoroughgoing disbelief in the capacity of the proletariat to play that rôle, we leave the subject for another occasion. But it is incontestable that up to now it has not played the rôle triumphantly.

And the result of this failure? Is it perhaps the victory of a "rough and crude . . . brand of socialism" established without the proletariat and against it, not only in Russia but also in China (where the even vaster poverty should produce an even rougher and cruder and more monstrous form of "socialist" totalitarianism, should it not?), and throughout Eastern Europe (with some modest but unmistakable aid from Deutscher), and even in far from backward Czechoslovakia and Germany? Not at all. The essence of Engels' insights, amazing for their content even though they could not be marked off with clear lines, has been confirmed by the events.

For its failure, the proletariat has already paid the penalty, in the Stalinist countries, of its own destruction, that is, its reduction to modern slavery; in more than one sense it has been driven to the level of the Chinese coolie; where bourgeois society is not transformed by revolution it is transformed into the ruin of Stalinism; the alienation ("to use a term comprehensible to philosophers") which the development of capitalism brings man to the verge of abolishing, is enhanced by Stalinism to a degree which does not have its equal in our memory.

We have no greater confidence in the longevity of Stalinism than of capitalism, less if anything. It is not reasonable to believe that at the time when the greatest of all class societies is approaching its death, the meanest of class societies is entering a new and long life. But shortlived or longlived, it will not quietly pass away. It will have to be pushed into its delayed oblivion. The essential precondition for the social emancipation from Stalinism is intellectual emancipation from its mythology, be it in the crass form in which it is presented officially or in the form of urbane and cynical apologetics in which it is presented by Deutscher. In either form it implies the end of socialism, for it would indeed be an unrealizable Utopia if conceived as anything but the direct achievement of a self-conscious, self-mobilized socialist proletariat. The rebirth of the proletarian socialist movement requires not the revival of the mythology in a revised form but its entire demolition.

*March, 1954*

# THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

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*A Left Wing of the Labor Movement?*

THE LABOR AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS have had a good quarter century of experience with Stalinism. The experience is not yet at an end, but there is now enough of it to warrant the dogmatic statement that the working-class movement cannot and will not make real progress, let alone achieve its basic aim, until it has succeeded in destroying the incubus of Stalinism.

In 1858, Frederick Engels, disgusted with the direction taken by the British labor movement under the leadership of former Chartists like Ernest Jones, wrote to Marx that "one is really almost driven to believe that the English proletarian movement in its old traditional Chartist form must perish completely before it can develop itself in a new viable form. And yet one cannot foresee what this new form will look like." Almost a century later, the same thing must be said about the proletarian movement in its Stalinist form—that part of the labor movement which is under Stalinist inspiration and control—only more emphatically, more urgently, and with a hundred times greater justification.

If nothing more were required than agreement with this simple proposition, Stalinism would long ago have been driven out of the labor movement without any prospect of regaining its power and influence. The adversaries of Stalinism are numerous, not only outside the labor movement but inside it as well. If Stalinism nevertheless remains a considerable force in the working class of all countries—even the decisive force in countries like France and Italy—that is due primarily to the lack of full understanding of its significance.

This lack is widely prevalent, but nowhere is it so clearly marked—paradoxical as this may seem at first—as among the revolutionary adversaries of Stalinism. It is in the ranks of the latter, who are called upon to give the most clear-headed, consistent and progressive leadership in the fight against Stalinism, that the most confused, ambiguous and out-and-out reactionary conceptions are to be found. These conceptions paralyze the fight, or else they

cancel out in advance whatever it is able to accomplish. Intellectual conservatism prevents many militants from seeing the true social role and meaning of Stalinism which lies underneath its misleading appearance.

Everyone can see the fact that Stalinism came out of a socialist revolution (the Russian October), the fact that it came out of a revolutionary proletarian movement (the early Comintern), the fact that it seeks to base itself primarily upon the working classes and is in so many places actually at the head of their organizations, the fact that it conducts such aggressive struggles against the capitalist classes and is fundamentally irreconcilable in its hostility toward them, the fact that these classes are no less fundamentally irreconcilable in their hostility toward Stalinism, the fact that there is such a continuous mutual hostility between Stalinism and the traditional reformist leadership of the labor movement.

We emphasize that we do not simply admit but insist that they are facts. But they are given such a weight and meaning as to mislead the most radical opponents of Stalinism and prevent them from grasping its real nature, its essential characteristics *from the standpoint of the proletariat and of socialism*.

In all countries and movements, amid the most critical and even fierce attacks upon Stalinism, you can still read or hear: "Nevertheless, it represents a working-class party or movement." "Nevertheless, it represents a wing—a deformed, grossly bureaucratized wing—of socialism." "Nevertheless, it is the 'left' or 'part of the left' of the working class." "For all our opposition to Stalinism, we have of course just as little, or even less, in common with the right wing of the labor movement."

These observations contain misconceptions that have already contributed to more than one disaster in the working-class movement. To rid this movement of Stalinism before it is destroyed by Stalinism or any other reactionary force, requires that the revolutionary movement, the Marxists in the first place, rid themselves completely of all misconceptions about Stalinism.

The problem can perhaps be approached best by dealing with the "left" character of Stalinism. You can hardly read a single American or British newspaper account of a dispute between the Stalinists and any of their opponents in a trade union without seeing the former referred to as the "left wing." In France, to take another common example, the Stalinists are always referred to as "*la gauche*," not only by their bourgeois opponents but even by their most radical critics. In both cases, the designation is simply taken for granted; it is considered natural, obvious, established beyond controversy, like the name hydrogen for the chemical ele-

ment with the atomic number of 1. If all that were involved here was a question of terminology, then even in the interest of scientific exactitude it would be of decidedly minor importance. Its real importance, however, far transcends any pedantic consideration.

On what ground can the Stalinist movement be characterized, and therefore treated, as "left"? That should not be too difficult to determine. The history of the working-class movement is chock full of examples of right wings and left wings and of all sorts of intermediate tendencies. Of left wing and ultra-left wing tendencies in particular, there has been a tremendous variety: anarchists, syndicalists, Guesdists, De Leonists, Luxemburgists, Bolsheviks, Bordigists, KAPD-ists, Trotskyists—the list could be extended almost indefinitely.

Some of these tendencies were characterized as left wing because of opposition in principle to participation in parliamentary elections and parliamentary activity in general. Such opposition is nowhere to be found in the Stalinist movement, which participates uninhibitedly in all parliamentary activities, not only under its own name but under the name of any other political organization with which it is maneuvering or which it is trying to infiltrate.

Others of these tendencies were considered left wing because, while favoring parliamentary activity by the workers and the socialist movement, they were opposed in principle to participating in coalition governments with bourgeois parties. The Stalinist parties cannot be considered left wing on this ground, either. Wherever they are unable to make a direct drive for exclusive state power, they work continuously to create, or to exploit the already existing, opportunities to enter coalition governments with bourgeois parties, either as the barely concealed representatives of the Russian government or as sappers of the coalition for their own benefit or as both. Their practical attitude toward the question of coalition governments is unmistakably more opportunistic than anything ever practised by the Millerands or preached by the Kautskys of the old socialist movement. They are not only ready to enter but have already entered coalition governments with parties of the "progressive bourgeoisie." They even combine with parties of the most extreme bourgeois conservatism. Even out-and-out reactionary governments, which not even a hardened old reformist would think of supporting, have been supported and defended by the Stalinists with unashamed cynicism whenever it suited the foreign policy of Moscow.

Still others of the incontestably left-wing tendencies were marked out by their rejection of work in the conservative trade unions and collaboration with them; by their policy of organizing

or supporting only those unions which adopted a revolutionary program from the very beginning. The Stalinists not only work in the most conservative unions, but are known for their repeated advocacy of the most conservative policies, in some cases policies so completely anti-proletarian as to arouse the opposition of the most reformist of labor leaders. And they not only work for their policies in conservative and reformist trade unions, but in conservative and even reactionary bourgeois organizations. In this respect, they draw the line nowhere.

Still others of the old left-wing tendencies were distinguished by their opposition to putting forth or supporting "immediate demands," "a reform program," "the minimum program," or else by their insistence that the purely parliamentary or purely peaceful road to socialism is an illusion. The Stalinists are not distinguished by such views, either. If they put anything in the background, it is the program of socialism itself, not a "minimum program." They have not hesitated to adopt as their own outright bourgeois demands of outright bourgeois parties, and the coolness with which they have often taken over grossly chauvinist and reactionary planks from the program of Italian and German fascism is widely known.

Without exception, all the traditional left-wing tendencies were outstanding for their internationalism, in some of which it manifested itself to deplorable extremes. Their internationalism was always counterposed to the nationalist and pro-imperialist tendencies of the right wing of the socialist and labor movements. The Stalinist movement is world-wide, but it is internationalist in no sense that has ever been accepted in the working-class movement. In no country is it national in the entirely proper sense that the class struggle is national in form, in the sense that it seeks to serve as an instrument of the working class of the given country. It is nationalistic in the worse sense of the term, in that it serves as the universal instrument of the ruling bureaucracy of Russia, which is in turn a notorious oppressor of nations and peoples. It is "internationalistic" only in the sense that it demands the surrender of legitimate national aspirations of all peoples in the name of subservience to the Russian state (the case of Yugoslavia is only the most spectacular of dozens of other examples that could be cited). It is "internationalistic" in the same sense as Mr. Churchill who used to denounce the Indians for the narrow-minded and selfish nationalism they displayed in their demand for self-government.

Any number of other characteristics of the left wing (or ultra-leftist) movements will occur to everyone slightly familiar with

their history. But one more, of outstanding and decisive importance, must be cited here. Without exception, every one of them, in its fight against tendencies to the right of it, was characterized by its emphasis on democracy as against bureaucracy, on the rights and self-activity of the masses as against the disfranchisement and bridling of the masses. That the emphasis was extreme in some cases, is beside the point and need not be treated here. That practice did not always correspond to this emphasis or was not always effective in proving the correctness of this emphasis, is likewise beside the point. The characteristic itself remains decisive.

The 19th century social democracy was the left wing in politics by virtue of its fight for universal suffrage as against restricted suffrage, and its work for socialism as the realization of the fullest political and economic democracy—social democracy. Anarchists and syndicalists were distinguished as a left wing by their emphasis upon the mass action of the workers as against the bureaucratic maneuvers and procedures of the reformist officialdom in parliament or in negotiations with employers. Luxemburg was distinguished as a representative of the left by virtue of her emphasis on the spontaneous action of the masses breaking through the institutionalized conservatism of the reformist bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks counterposed the democratic Constituent Assembly to Czarist despotism, and then counterposed the Soviets to the Constituent Assembly because the Soviets were a “hundred thousand times more democratic” than the most democratic of bourgeois parliaments. The Trotskyist opposition was regarded as the left wing because, among other things, it demanded party democracy as against the party bureaucracy. As for some of the ultra-left groupings, it is well enough known that they almost made a fetish of their fight against bureaucratism in the labor and revolutionary movements. In this most important respect, the Stalinist movement, which is the veritable apotheosis of bureaucratism, does not have even a semblance of similarity with the left-wing tendencies known to the labor movement.

In not a single one of its important characteristics does the Stalinist movement resemble the left-wing tendencies. It does not measure up to a single one of the criteria which would place it in the category of the left wing. Whoever continues to believe that Stalinism falls into that category only shows that he stopped thinking many years ago.

Does this mean that there is no ground at all for the characterization of the Stalinists which is to be found on the pages of the bourgeois press and the lips of bourgeois politicians? The reader may recall that earlier in this article is emphasized the need

of grasping the real nature of Stalinism *from the standpoint of the proletariat and of socialism*. From that standpoint, Stalinism can in no sense be considered a left wing of the working class. Is it, then, a right wing of the working class? In our opinion, the answer is likewise and just as emphatically, No. This aspect of the problem can be best approached from another standpoint, which is not that of the proletariat and of socialism. For there is also the standpoint of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism.

From *that* standpoint, Stalinism is not only *a* left wing but *the* left wing; it is even the most "authentic" and "legitimate" left wing, as it were. From *that* standpoint, Stalinism is Bolshevism, it is the socialist revolution, it is socialism. Class instincts are valuable to the proletariat; but class consciousness is indispensable for its victory and rule. Class consciousness is valuable but not indispensable to the bourgeoisie; its class instinct is sufficient for its rule. This instinct has a powerful stimulating material base—the ownership of the means of production and exchange, capitalist private property. The bourgeoisie recognizes as its own, as its loyal kin and vassals, those who help preserve its private property and therewith its social power. The bourgeoisie can and has obtained the services of the Stalinists, in one country after another. It can and has arranged to have the Stalinist party defend its property and its régime from dangers represented by the working class. This has led some superficial observers to conclude that Stalinism, at bottom, is nothing but a variety of that reformist social democracy which has so often served, sometimes with machine guns at its hands, to maintain the rule of capital against the assaults of the proletariat. But now that even the most dullwitted bourgeois is learning that this is not at all the case, it is surely high time that revolutionists, especially those who consider themselves Marxists, should revise their own superficial and erroneous opinions.

Class instinct plus experience have taught every bourgeois that the support of the Stalinist parties can be *hired but not bought outright*. The Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries are for lease, but not for sale. So long as a given capitalist régime is the ally of Russia, the Stalinists are leased for service to that régime. They then appear to act as arch-patriots. They vie with the bourgeois parties in nationalism and chauvinism. They catch up with and outstrip the reactionary labor leaders in urging workers to accept the most onerous conditions of labor with docility. In general, they act in that abominable manner that distinguished them from ordinary scoundrels in the U.S.A. and Britain during the period of the "Grand Alliance."

But this lend-leased servant is unreliable in two respects from

the standpoint of the bourgeoisie. In the first place, in the very course of pretending to serve, he infiltrates and undermines the institutions of the bourgeoisie. And in the second place, the terms of the lease are not under the control of the bourgeoisie and can be altered or destroyed unilaterally by the Russian state, that is, by the real employer and owner of the Stalinist parties—a fact which requires no further proof than that which is (or ought to be) known to every political person. After the rich and instructive experience throughout the world in the last ten years, there is hardly a bourgeois left who places any reliance upon the “services” of “his” Stalinists. He regards their pledge of loyalty to the bourgeois régime with the same contemptuous distrust—and quite rightly—as the revolutionist regarded Hitler’s pledge of loyalty to socialism.

From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, Stalinism represents a revolutionary left wing and Russia represents a “socialist state” in two respects. From the inception of the socialist movement, the bourgeoisie has taught (and many have undoubtedly believed) that socialism means the “servile state”—the bureaucratic monster-state that deprives all the people of property, of liberty, of prosperity, and subjugates all to its despotic whim. Stalinist Russia is the unexpectedly full materialization of this hoary calumny against socialism—or so the bourgeoisie teaches. Regardless of how much or little it believes this, it is obviously in its class interest to teach it. “There, in Russia today, is your socialism! That is what socialism looks like, not in the books of Marx, but in reality! That is the only thing socialism will ever look like in reality! Russia is a horror—shun it! Socialism is a horror—shun it!” (To which should be added that anyone who, with the best intentions and the best “theory” in the world, continues to call Stalinist Russia a socialist or a workers’ state of *any* kind, is giving both the Stalinist and bourgeois enemies of socialism a free weapon.)

Secondly, there is hardly a bourgeois alive today who still retains the utterly vain hope that Stalinism represents the restoration of capitalism in Russia, that it facilitates this restoration, or is in any way the unconscious instrument of forces working for this restoration. In addition, especially since the end of the war, the international bourgeoisie has begun to see what Stalinism represents outside of Russia, too, and to see it with a clarity and political intelligence that would be a credit to more than one self-styled Marxist. Wherever it was politically possible (as it was in Poland, for example, but not in France; as it is in China, but not in Japan), the Stalinists have taken complete state power into their hands. Whether or not the Stalinists have established socialism in these countries, is far from the first concern of the bourgeoisie.

Their first concern is that the Stalinists have disestablished the bourgeoisie and capitalism. Wherever the Stalinists come to power, the bourgeoisie is deprived of all political, economic, military and social power and in many cases even deprived of its capacity to breathe.

To soothe the bourgeois by pointing out that where Stalinism takes power it reduces the workers to slaves, exploits them more mercilessly than anywhere else in modern times, destroys every working-class organization without exception, destroys every democratic right of the people—is of no use. The bourgeois is, unfortunately, very little concerned with the fate of the working class. He is, unfortunately, entirely preoccupied with the fact that under Stalinist rule it is his class property, his class power and his class that are destroyed.

To soothe the bourgeois by telling him that Stalinism believes only in socialism in one country, or in very few countries, and that it will not move beyond the Bug or the Elbe or the Spree or the Rhine or the Yangtse—is of no use. If he answers such a soothsayer at all, he will tell him that that will not be decided by a theory but by fists—and atom bombs.

To soothe the bourgeois with the assurance that Stalinism represents nothing more than state capitalism—is of no use, and it is to be feared that it will be of less use tomorrow than it was yesterday. He knows that state capitalism, in its fascist or Rooseveltian form, intervenes in the economy wisely or unwisely (from his standpoint) in order to try to bring some order out of the increasing chaos of capitalism; that although it adds heavily to the overhead of capitalism it nevertheless seeks to, and does, preserve whatever can be preserved of that social system in its deepening decay; that it may try to play off this group of capitalists against the other but nevertheless ends every time with the strengthening of the biggest capitalist powers. He knows also that Stalinism, on the contrary, simply wipes out all significant capitalist property and all the significant capitalists themselves. To him, that makes a difference, a profound difference, a decisive difference. Which is why, without the benefit of having studied Marx, he refuses to look upon Stalinism as a capitalist phenomenon of any kind.

To the revolutionary socialist, the Marxist, the triumph of Stalinism means primarily and above all the crushing of the working class, the crushing of all proletarian and revolutionary movements, the triumph of a new totalitarian despotism. To us, accordingly, every increase in the strength of the Stalinists in the working-class movement means another step toward that triumph which is a catastrophe for the movement. There is *our* standpoint!

The standpoint of the bourgeois is necessarily different. The triumph of Stalinism means primarily and above all the crushing of the bourgeoisie and all its social power. That is *his* standpoint! That is why he can and does, with genuine concern and sincerity, regard Stalinism as the same thing, at bottom, as Bolshevism, as the proletarian revolution, as socialism. From *his* standpoint, it makes no difference whatsoever whether he is expropriated by the authentic socialist revolution in Russia under Bolshevik leadership, which brought the working class to power—or he is expropriated by the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia which has brought the working class into a totalitarian prison. *To the working class*, there is all the difference in the world between the two; *to the bourgeoisie*, there is none. That is why the bourgeoisie expresses a deep and honest class feeling when it characterizes Stalinism as “left” in substantially the same way that it once characterized the Bolshevik Revolution and its partisans. From its class standpoint, the designation is understandable, it makes good sense. Likewise understandable is the political attitude which corresponds to this designation.

But that designation (and what is far more important, the political attitude that corresponds to it) *does not* make good sense from the class standpoint of the proletariat. It is totally false from the standpoint of the fight for its immediate and its historical interests—the fight for socialism. In this fight, Stalinism is no less the enemy of the working class than capitalism and the bourgeoisie. *Indeed, inside the working class and its movement, Stalinism is the greater and more dangerous of the two.*

The Stalinists very cleverly exploit the attacks made upon them by the bourgeoisie to enlist the support of those workers and revolutionists who, while opposed in general to Stalinism, are not less hostile toward the bourgeoisie. But it is an absurdity, where it is not suicidal, to react to every bourgeois attack or criticism of the Stalinists by rallying automatically to their support. Trotsky writes somewhere that any imbecile could become a revolutionary genius if proletarian policy required nothing more than learning what the bourgeoisie wants or does, and then simply doing the opposite. This very well applies, in the matter of the policy to follow toward Stalinism, to more than one anti-bourgeois imbecile (just as it applies, in the matter of the policy to follow toward the bourgeoisie, to more than one anti-Stalinist imbecile).

The first task, then, of all militants in the proletarian movements who understand the end of combatting Stalinism, is to rid themselves of all traces of the conception that Stalinism, in some way, in some degree, represents a left wing. It is not a proletarian

or socialist conception, despite the respectable (and fatal) status it enjoys in the proletarian and socialist movement. It is a bourgeois conception, well-suited to the bourgeoisie, its standpoint and its interests, but utterly distorting to the working class.

We will not have advanced far enough, however, if, in abandoning the notion that Stalinism is in any sense an authentic part of the left wing of the working class, we adopt the notion that it belongs in the right wing. The right wing of the labor movement, classically and contemporaneously, is its conservative wing, its reformist wing. It is that section of the working-class movement that stands closest to bourgeois democracy, that practises economic and political collaboration with the bourgeoisie, that confines itself to modest (increasingly modest) reforms of capitalism. That being the *fundamental* feature of the right wing, it should be clear that Stalinism is *fundamentally* different from any of the reformist currents and bureaucracies we know of in the labor movement.

None of the old designations—"right," "left," "centrist"—applies to Stalinism. Stalinism is a phenomenon *sui generis*, unique and without precedent in the working class. The fact that it is supported by tens of thousands of workers who are passionately devoted to the cause of socialism, who are ready to fight for it to their dying breath, is besides the point entirely. This fact is of importance *only* with regard to the forms of the agitation and propaganda work to be conducted among them. It does not decide the character of Stalinism itself. That is determined by the real program and the real leadership of the Stalinist movement, and not by the sentiments of those it dupes.

What then, is Stalinism? Our formula is not very compact, but it will have to stand until a more elegant one can be found:

*Stalinism is a reactionary, totalitarian, anti-bourgeois and anti-proletarian current in the labor movement but not of the labor movement.* It is the unforeseen but nonetheless real product of that advanced stage of the decay of capitalism in which the socialist proletariat itself has as yet failed to carry out the reconstruction of society on rational foundations. It is the social punishment inflicted on the bourgeoisie for living beyond its historical time and on the proletariat for not living up to its historical task. It is the new barbarism which the great Marxist teachers saw as the only possible alternative to socialism.

Stalinism is a current *in* but not *of* the working class and its movement, we repeat. The importance of the distinction is far-reaching. It demands emphasis not in spite of the prejudices and dogmas about Stalinism that exist in the revolutionary movement, but precisely because they exist. It underlines the unbridgability

of the gulf between Stalinism and *all* sections of the labor movement. And by "*all* sections" is simply meant, without diplomacy or equivocation, all of them—from the left wing to the right wing.

How violently such an idea shocks the revolutionary sentiments of many militants, not only in the U.S.A. but in Europe—especially in Europe—the writer has had more than one occasion to see personally in recent visits abroad. All the more reason for insisting on it, patiently but bluntly. Until it is accepted, Stalinism will continue to be able to rely on one of its strongest props: the reluctant support it receives in the labor movement from those anti-Stalinist militants who are so justifiably imbued with a long-standing antagonism to traditional reformism.

"The Stalinists? Yes, of course they are unmitigated rascals, agents of the Kremlin, and God know what else. But to fight them by supporting Reuther (or Green, or Lewis, or Jouhaux, or Bevin)? That—never! They are bureaucrats and reformists, they are agents of the bourgeoisie and the Devil knows what else!" That is a not unfair statement of the reaction of many genuine militants in the labor movement. As a spontaneous reaction, it is not altogether bad; as a political line, it is a first-rate calamity. It ignores the basic distinction between the two bureaucracies, the reformist and the Stalinist.

The reformist bureaucracy (trade-union or political) strives everywhere to raise itself to a privileged position in capitalist society. That is its social aim, and its actions correspond to it. It cannot even exist, let alone hold a privileged position, under fascism; hence, its genuine opposition (not necessarily successful, but genuine) to fascism. Neither can it exist under Stalinism; hence, its genuine opposition (again, not necessarily successful, but still genuine) to Stalinism. (It goes without saying that it is doomed in a workers' democracy, where special privileges for any such social group would be undermined, which is why it shuns the revolutionary struggle for socialism.) It can achieve its aim only under conditions of bourgeois democracy. Which means, concretely, only on the condition that it bases itself on and represents the trade unions.

It is this consideration that dictates to the reformist officialdom the preservation of the labor movement (as it is, to be sure, and not as it ought to be from the socialist standpoint). Without the trade unions, the reformist bureaucracy is, socially and politically, of no importance. In its own bureaucratic interests, it is compelled to maintain the labor movement. It does it badly, it does it at the expense of the best interests of the working class, but it does it and must do it.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, on the contrary, cannot achieve its social aim without destroying the labor movement root and branch and in every one of its forms. No matter where Stalinism has triumphed ("achieved its social aim") it has completely wiped out every branch of the revolutionary movement and put its representatives in prisons, slave camps or graves, and wiped out the trade-union movement as well. What passes under the name of "trade-union" in the Stalinist countries is far less of a workers' organization than the notorious "company unions" that existed in the U.S.A. years ago; in any case, it is not a trade union in any sense of the term. The advance of Stalinism is incompatible with the advance of the labor movement; the victory of Stalinism is incompatible with the existence of any labor movement, be it revolutionary or reformist. A revolutionist who has not learned this from the wealth of recent experiences in Europe will be fortunate if he does not eventually have to pay for his "mistake" with his head.

It should go without saying among genuine militants that in any struggle for leadership and control of the labor movement, or any section of it, they will always seek to counterpose a policy of class independence and class struggle against *both* the Stalinists and reformist bureaucracies. But where, as is the general rule nowadays, the militants are not yet strong enough to fight for leadership directly; where the fight for control of the labor movement is, in effect, between the reformists and the Stalinists, it would be absurd for the militants to proclaim their "neutrality" and fatal for them to support the Stalinists. Without any hesitation, they should follow the general line, inside the labor movement, of supporting the reformist officialdom against the Stalinist officialdom. In other words, where it is not yet possible to win the unions for the leadership of revolutionary militants, we forthrightly prefer the leadership of reformists who aim in their own way to maintain a labor movement, to the leadership of the Stalinist totalitarians who aim to exterminate it.

To support the reformists, or make a bloc with them, against the Stalinists, means nothing less than it says but also nothing more. To anticipate critics, both honest and malicious, it may be pointed out that a revolutionist does not at all need to become a social democrat when he supports the social democracy in a fight against the Austrian fascists. He does not at all need to become a bourgeois democrat when he supports bourgeois democracy against fascism in the Spanish civil war. He does not at all need to become a slaveholder when he supports Ethiopia against Italy. And he does not need to become a reformist when he supports

the reformists in the fight to smash or prevent Stalinist control of the labor movement. In every case, he gives his support in his own way, with his own openly expressed views.

The reformist bureaucracy has more than once played into the hands of Stalinism and it continues to do so. One can even go further: in the long run, if the fight against Stalinism is conducted under the leadership of the reformists, with the policies that characterize them, with the detestable bureaucratic methods they love so much, it is not they but the Stalinists who are more likely to triumph. The policies of reformism are not ours; nor are its methods; nor are its aims. We cannot and will not take any responsibility for them, and this should be made abundantly and constantly clear to all who are within reach of voice or pen, even if that does not always meet with the enthusiastic approval of those with whom we unhesitatingly ally ourselves in the labor movement in the fight against Stalinist domination. But while the revolutionists are not the equal of the reformists and the reformists are not the equal of the revolutionists, the two are now necessary and proper allies against Stalinism. The scores that *have to be* settled with reformism—those will be settled on a working-class basis and in a working-class way, and not under the leadership or in alliance with totalitarian reaction. Stalinism is the most virulent poison that has ever coursed through the veins of the working class and its movement. The work of eliminating it makes the first claim on the attention of every militant.

*September, 1949*



## *The Nature of the Stalinist Parties*

THE "RUSSIAN QUESTION" IS NOT MERELY a Russian question. It is directly and inextricably related to the question of the Stalinist parties throughout the capitalist world. A false theory on Stalinist *Russia* is, of course, a very serious matter. But the Fourth International no longer has any cadres in Russia; it has no movement there. Whatever practical actions we engage in on the basis of our respective theories cannot as yet have a *direct and immediate* effect upon the development of the class struggle in Russia. In many of the *capitalist* countries, the Fourth International does have a movement and cadres, even if weak ones. In these countries the practical actions in which it engages can have an effect upon the course of the class struggle. Without setting up an insurmountable wall between the problem of Stalinist Russia and the problem of the Stalinist parties abroad, it is nevertheless a fact that our policy with regard to the Stalinist parties abroad can and does have a more direct and immediate effect. A mistaken policy in this regard, especially when based on a mistake in theory (that is, on a mistake in basic generalization) can be disastrous, and that within a very short space of time.

The authors of the Socialist Workers Party Statement go out of their way to exaggerate the differences between their party and ours in a whole series of questions. To read their document in full and to believe it can easily produce the absurd impression that there is not one point of political similarity of any consequence between the two parties. In some cases trifling tactical differences, perfectly normal and multitudinous in any living revolutionary organization, are inflated all out of proportion to their importance in order to strengthen "the case" that the Cannonites seek to make out for an utter incompatibility between the two organizations in every conceivable field of party thought and party action. It is their method. And it would be futile to legislate or exhort against it.

There is one point of difference, however, whose magnitude and depth they do not exaggerate. It is the point that comes under the heading, "Our Divergent Evaluations of the Stalinist Parties." The point is not a small one and the difference is not a small one. Let us say at the very outset that it is still possible to reconcile the differences in the form of *practical agreements* in the struggle against Stalinism in one field or another. But it is no longer possible to reconcile the divergent evaluations of the Stalinist parties. If this is true, it follows that the area in which even practical agreements in the struggle against Stalinism can be made will continue to narrow as the divergence on the fundamental evaluation grows deeper. No attempt should be made to reconcile these evaluations! Every Marxist must choose between the fundamental line developed by the SWP and the fundamental line developed by us.

What is the Cannonite evaluation of Stalinism in the capitalist countries, of the Stalinist parties? We quote it exactly and in full: "We evaluate the Stalinist parties in capitalist countries as working class parties led by treacherous leaders, similar to the Social-Democratic traitors. We understand, of course, that the Social-Democrats are agents of their respective native capitalisms, whereas the Stalinist bureaucrats are agents of the Kremlin oligarchy. But they have this in common: they cannot fight for workers' power, nor do they wish to take power except as agencies of capitalism and usually in coalition with its direct representatives."

That is the whole of the evaluation. Almost every single word in it is wrong or misleading. It constitutes a theoretical disaster guaranteed to produce only political disasters. At best, it can only nullify any attempt to carry on a serious struggle against Stalinism. At worst, it condemns the revolutionary movement to the fatal role of a shapeless tail of Stalinism. That is our charge and we will seek to demonstrate it.

With what do the Cannonites charge us in turn? They write: "The Workers Party, however, has embraced the Burnhamistic thesis that the Stalinists can lead the working masses to power in the capitalist countries—in order to do what? Establish a Stalinist totalitarian state, a replica of the USSR."

Let us not dwell upon the falsification which is customary in this case and which is as usual compounded of equal parts of ignorance and malice. The "Burnhamistic thesis" is precisely that the Stalinists can *not* lead the working masses to power in the capitalist countries, and in this respect we unhesitatingly express complete agreement with Burnham—and with the Socialist Workers

Party. The "Burnhamistic thesis" is ridiculous, not because of this contention but because of its argument that Stalinism or fascism leads the new "managerial class" to power. But let us leave the unfortunate Burnham, whom the Cannonites introduce into every discussion out of habit, and proceed to examine the real differences.

The evaluation of the Cannonites has already been quoted in full. We will counterpose to it the evaluation developed by the Workers Party. The first rounded presentation of its position, developed from the traditional view of the Trotskyist movement, is contained in our party's 1942 resolution on the national question in Europe. It is preceded by an emphasis on the need "to combat mercilessly" the imperialists and their agents inside the ranks of the underground national revolutionary movements in Europe. This section is concluded with the emphatic statement that "the struggle against the imperialists and their ideologists is a *sine qua non* to the healthy and progressive development of the national movements in Europe." Then follows the section on "The Threat of Stalinism." The Socialist Workers Party Statement quotes from this section at some length. We hope the reader will bear with us if we quote it in full:

"The seizure of control of these movements by the organized Stalinists—not the sacrificing rank-and-file militant, but the organized bureaucratic clique—can be no less disastrous for the future of the struggle for national and socialist freedom. A victory over the German oppressor which brought the Stalinist bureaucracy to power would open up the road to a new totalitarian slavery for the just-liberated people. To realize this truth it is only necessary to look at the national oppression and disfranchisement suffered by numerous non-Russian peoples under the totalitarian rule of the Great-Russian autocracy. The revolutionary Marxists must be tireless in their explanations to the workers of the real significance of Stalinism.

"The idea that because the Stalinists are strong and influential, and not yet completely discredited among the workers, it is correct revolutionary policy to raise the slogan of 'Let the Communist Party take power,' is based on a complete misunderstanding of what appears to be a similar slogan raised by the Bolsheviks in Russia in the middle of 1917. When the Bolsheviks called for a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary government (by their slogan of 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers'), it was on the basis of the belief that such a government would be a *democratic* (i.e., a bourgeois-democratic) government, which would allow such democratic political rights to the workers and all other parties, the Bolsheviks included, that the Bolsheviks could sincerely pledge them-

selves not to resort to violence against that government but confine themselves to persuading the masses propagandistically, utilizing their normal democratic rights.

"To apply such a tactic to the Stalinists would be absurd. A social-reformist régime is a bourgeois-democratic régime, more or less. A Stalinist régime, call it 'proletarian' or anything else, is unmistakably a *totalitarian*, anti-democratic régime. From *all* experience, the conclusion flows with unquestionable certainty that whatever such a régime may hold in store for the bourgeoisie, its *first* action would be the utilization of state power for the promptest possible physical extirpation of the revolutionary proletarian elements, to be followed immediately, if not accompanied, by the destruction of all democratic and independent working class organizations and institutions. The revolutionary Marxists must seek to organize the firmest and bitterest proletarian resistance to the seizure of power by the Stalinists in the present national movements as well as to the seizure of state power by Stalinist reaction. The triumph of Stalinism can only result in the gutting of the movement for national freedom or proletarian socialism.

"It is not enough, however, to resist the deleterious and reactionary tendencies represented by imperialism, social-imperialism and Stalinism. The revolutionary Marxists must elaborate their own positive program in the ranks of the nationalist movement." (*The New International*, Feb. 1943, pp. 41f.)

The Statement of the Socialist Workers Party does not even pretend to give any arguments against the validity of what is set forth in this section. It does not bother to disprove our contention or to confirm its own. It labels our point of view "Burnhamistic" and party members are expected to ask no further questions. To this "argument" it adds something, to be sure. But what it adds is not an argument, only an abusive and disloyal commentary of the type which has become so depressingly familiar in the polemical literature issued against us by the Stalinists. It is worth quoting as a typical example of the polemical level to which the Socialist Workers Party leadership has sunk:

"Note, also, how in common with all vulgar anti-Stalinists, the Workers Party in its resolution idealizes, in a manner completely foreign to our tradition and practice, the Social-Democratic scoundrels—how in its lyricism about the 'democracy' of the Social-Democrats, it forgets the bloody deeds and hangman's work of Noske and Scheidemann, Kerensky, or the Spanish Social-Democratic People's Fronters. 'Democracy' is here torn out of its historic context and its connection with the development of class relations and the class struggle, and is presented as some sort of supra-

historical factor existing in time and space, standing above the class struggle."

Can you imagine a more compact mixture of the pathetic, the demagogic, and the vicious, all neatly jammed into two sentences? What is "completely foreign to our tradition and practice" and altogether native to the tradition and practice of "Third Period" Stalinism is this wretched, ignorant demagoguery.

The Social-Democrats are not real democrats. Make a note of that and don't forget it! Among them there have been a hundred Noskes and Scheidemanns guilty of bloody deeds and hangman's work. Make a note of that and don't forget it! Very well, we have made a note and we solemnly swear not to forget. May we now be permitted—we ask the Socialist Workers Party, as we asked Manuisky and the other Comintern theorists of "Social-Fascism" in 1931 and 1932—to pose these questions:

Does Social-Democracy, including its treacherous bureaucratic leadership (to be repeated ten times just to prove how radical you are) strive to establish a totalitarian régime? Is the existence of the Social-Democracy, of social reformism, including its bureaucratic and treacherous leadership (repeat ten more times so as to leave no doubt of your radicalism in the minds of the phrasemongers) compatible or incompatible with a totalitarian régime? Is it not ABC for every Marxist and, in general, for every serious person except the insane theorists of "Social-Fascism" that Social-Democracy rests upon and can exist only under the conditions of bourgeois democracy? Is it not ABC for every Marxist that "a social-reformist régime is a bourgeois *democratic* régime, more or less," including "the bloody deeds and hangman's work" which are a characteristic of bourgeois-democratic régimes but which does not prevent Marxists—in contrast to "Third-Period" Stalinists (and other phrasemongers) from making the fundamental *political* distinction between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois totalitarianism? And is it not ABC for Marxists that they are able to propose and even to realize a united front with the Social-Democrats, including their ten-times-accursed and treacherous leaders, *only* because the Social-Democracy can be compelled to fight for bourgeois democracy and all that that implies for the working class, even though they fight for it in their own lamentable, social-reformist and ineffectual way? And, finally, is it not a little disgraceful to hear self-styled Marxists refer to a simple summary of these ABC ideas in the style of the Third Period as "lyricism about the 'democracy' of the Social-Democrats"?

As for the second sentence in the commentary, you can only shrug your shoulders. It could have been written only by people

convinced to their bones that the reader is an incurable numbskull who cannot remember what was written in the paragraph that preceded it. We write repeatedly about a *bourgeois* democratic government, about a *bourgeois* democratic régime. This is quoted very faithfully. What is the comment made? That "'democracy' here is torn out of its historical context and its connection with the development of class relations," that democracy "is presented as some sort of supra-historical factor existing in time and space, standing above the class struggle." What can you do? It is their method.

But let us go back to the question itself and continue with the presentation of our own viewpoint. The Statement quotes from our editorial in *The New International* of August 1945 (p. 36), which states even more specifically our evaluation of the Stalinist parties which was finally incorporated, in greater detail in the Political Resolution adopted by the May 1946 convention of our party. We requote it at somewhat fuller length:

"The Stalinist Party in a country like the United States seeks to enslave the labor movement and the working class under a totalitarian régime, of which its own structure and procedure offers us a preview-model. It is not a socialist party. Yet, it is not a capitalist party, either. Its declarations in favor of capitalism have about as much meaning as Hitler's declarations in favor of socialism. It is ready under certain conditions to *hire itself out* to capitalism, but only as agent of the totalitarian bureaucracy in Russia.

"However, it is increasingly clear that the Stalinists are not *merely* the agents of the bureaucratic ruling class of Russia. That conception is proving to be too narrow. The Stalinist bureaucracy in the capitalist countries has ambitions of its own. It dreams of one day taking power, and establishing itself as ruler of substantially the same bureaucratic despotism that its Russian colleagues enjoy. Wherever conditions are favorable, it does not hesitate to exploit the anti-capitalist sentiments of the masses—sentiments which are growing throughout the world—and to emphasize the superiority of collectivism over the anarchy of capitalist production. All this provided these anti-capitalist sentiments are not expressed in the independent class action of the proletariat aiming at socialist power, only if they can be subverted, distorted and frustrated under the domination of Stalinist reaction."

The practical conclusions for revolutionary party policy that flow from this evaluation will be dealt with further on. For the moment, let us stick to the question of the evaluation. The view which is set forth in the question from our written position seems

to us to be self-evident. World political developments confirm it anew every single day.

The Social-Democracy is a bourgeois (or, more accurately, a petty bourgeois) party of social reform. It is based upon the preservation of capitalist democracy. This is not because some capitalists have paid the party leadership to take this position. It is because, among other reasons, it holds to the view that bourgeois democracy can gradually evolve into social democracy. Hence, on the one side, it seeks in its own way to defend bourgeois democracy from fascist totalitarianism; thus, it is objectively bourgeois-democratic. Hence, on the other side, it defends bourgeois democracy from the revolutionary assaults of a socialist proletariat; thus, it is objectively counter-revolutionary. This is our Marxist theory. It is a justified generalization from a mountain of empirical evidence, and evidence continues to accumulate to confirm this generalization over and over again.

This theory cannot be applied to the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries. The Stalinist parties are indeed agents of the Kremlin oligarchy, no matter what country they function in. The interests and the fate of these Stalinist parties are inseparably intertwined with the interests and fate of the Russian bureaucracy. The Stalinist parties are everywhere based upon the power of the Russian bureaucracy, they serve this power, they are dependent upon it, and they cannot live without it.

With this charge the Cannonites are compelled to agree. But let us go further. The power of the Russian bureaucracy is based upon the continued existence of nationalized property in Russia. This basis brings the bureaucracy in fundamental opposition to the bourgeoisie all over the world, regardless of all temporary agreements, regardless even of their common antagonism to the *socialist* revolution. This was emphasized a thousand times by Trotsky and we continue to believe that it is entirely correct. But by the same token, the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries, because they are agents of the Kremlin oligarchy, are likewise in fundamental opposition to capitalism and the capitalist state. The fact of this fundamental opposition is not cancelled out but is in a sense underlined by what we have written, namely, that the Stalinist party "is ready under certain conditions to *hire itself out* to capitalism, but *only* as agent of the totalitarian bureaucracy in Russia."

Here is where the significant and decisive difference begins between Social-Democracy and Stalinism. We refer to the Social-Democracy as the "labor lieutenants of capitalism," as the "agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working class." Understood

scientifically, and not in a vulgar sense, these characterizations are absolutely correct. But they cannot be applied to the Stalinist parties. They are agents, inside the working class *and* inside the bourgeois governments, of the Russian social group (call it caste, call it class—for the moment it is beside the point) which *is not* capitalist and which *does not* rest on a capitalist foundation. As agents of this grouping and in the interests of preserving its power, the Stalinist parties can be and are “hired out” to the capitalist class. In payment, the Stalinists received government positions from which they can strengthen the international political power of the Russian bureaucracy and the Kremlin itself directly receives a “pro-Russian” or a “more pro-Russian” political orientation of the capitalist class or government in question.

For this fair day's pay, the Stalinists do a fair day's work. We have a thousand examples in all countries of how, under these conditions, the Stalinists feverishly and cynically trample upon the interests of the working class and subject it to the arbitrary rule of the capitalist class. But above all, it is imperative to understand that this service to the capitalist class of a given country is only a function of their basic service to the Kremlin bureaucracy—only that and nothing more. They do not “give away” what they manage to gain control of; what they control is absolutely controlled and only “rented out” for a specific price paid them, in return, by the bourgeoisie. They do not *capitulate* to the bourgeoisie; they *trade* with it. Social-Democracy is *fundamentally* based upon preserving capitalist society (in its democratic form, to be sure). Stalinism is not *fundamentally* based upon preserving capitalist society but upon preserving Stalinist society. Hence, the *fundamental* antagonism between Stalinism and Social Democracy.

This fundamental antagonism between the two, reflecting the fundamental antagonism between Stalinist and capitalist societies, was pointed out by Trotsky years and years ago:

“. . . . It may be objected: If the present leading tendency in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is Centrism, how can one explain the present sharp attitude against the Left social democracy which is itself nothing but Centrism? This is no serious argument. Our Right (Bukharin, etc.) also, which, according to the opinion of the Centrists, is following the road to the restoration of capitalism, proclaims itself the irreconcilable enemy of the social democracy. Opportunism is always ready, when conditions demand it, to establish its reputation on a clamorous radicalism to be used in other countries. Naturally, this exportation of radicalism consists for the most part of words.

“But the hostility of our Centrists and Right against the

European social democracy is not entirely composed of words. We must not lose sight of the whole international situation and above all of the huge objective contradictions between the capitalist countries and the workers' states. The international social democracy supports the existing capitalist régime. Our internal opportunism, which grew up on the basis of the proletarian dictatorship, can only evolve on the side of capitalist relations. Despite the elements of dual power in the country and the Thermidorian tendencies in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the antagonism between the Soviet power and the bourgeois world remains a fact which can be denied or neglected only by 'Left' sectarians, by anarchists and their like. The international social democracy, by its whole policy, is obliged to support the designs of their bourgeoisie against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This alone creates the basis of a real, and not merely a verbal, hostility, despite the rapprochement of the political line." ("Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc," *The New International*, December, 1941, pp. 315, 316; written by L. Trotsky in Alma Ata, November, 1928.)

What Trotsky wrote then is ten times more correct today, even if in the different context of present social relations. It is true that the Social-Democratic leaders betray and that the Stalinist leaders betray. But it is not this commonplace which is in question or which requires primary emphasis here. What is important is that the Social Democracy betrays the proletariat in one way and for one basic reason, and that the Stalinist parties betray the proletariat in quite a different way and for quite a different basic reason. The two movements which Trotsky described as dissimilar as far back as 1928; the two movements which we characterize as dissimilar today; the two movements which the whole politically intelligent world sees as dissimilar every single day—the Cannonites call similar. Lack of understanding and blind factional passion can take you far off the road.

The Cannonites, after quoting from our position, pretend a great horror (their horror at our "revisionism" is always nine-tenths pretense). They write: "Here we notice not only a rejection of our transitional slogan, 'Let the Workers' Parties Take Power,' worked out by Lenin in 1917 and vindicated in the revolutionary struggle; but, as is usual with the Workers Party, a break with half a dozen other major programmatic positions or evaluations." Only one sentence on this point, and yet what a terrific body blow! Let us see on whom the blow has landed.

As is clear from the quoted section of our 1942 resolution, we reject the analogy between the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary

parties in Russia in 1917 and the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties of today. The Cannonites presumably make the analogy, and if words mean anything, propose to follow the same policy toward the Social Democracy *and* the Stalinist parties today that Lenin advocated toward the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in 1917. By and large the official Fourth International today holds the same view on this question as the Cannonites. Tragic superficiality! Tragic thoughtlessness!

The social-reformist parties of Russia in 1917, standing on the basis of the preservation of capitalist democracy (as usual, in their own way) were in a coalition government with the bourgeois parties and politicians. The reformist parties had the majority in the workers' and peasants' Soviets. At one stage of the struggle the Bolsheviks raised the slogan, "Down with the ten capitalist ministers!" By means of this slogan the Bolsheviks sought to mobilize the masses for the purpose of driving the reformist leaders out of the coalition with the bourgeoisie or of forcing the bourgeoisie out of the coalition, thus placing the political power in the hands of the reformist parties. If the reformists refused to break with the bourgeoisie and take the responsibility for political power, this would have the effect of dispelling the illusions of the masses and of rallying them to the banner of the Bolsheviks. This is what actually happened. If, however, the reformists *had* broken the coalition with the bourgeoisie, the Bolsheviks would have been able to say: "Take full power! Replace all the bourgeois politicians in all the political institutions! While we have our own program, we are still a minority. Therefore, we demand that you carry out in the fullest and most radical way the program you yourselves have promised the masses you would put into effect if you were free from the veto of the bourgeoisie in a coalition government." And so on and so forth. The Bolsheviks were profoundly convinced, and rightly so, that the reformists would not even carry out their own program, that they were so strongly wedded to bourgeois democracy they would not make any serious encroachments upon the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie. For that reason, the Bolsheviks were likewise deeply convinced that they could effectively show this to the masses on the basis of their own living experiences and thereby speed the movement to Bolshevism.

Now, if the Stalinist parties are *similar* to the Mensheviks, it would seem, would it not, that the revolutionary Marxists should apply to the former the same tactic today as the Bolsheviks applied in 1917, should raise the same slogan. But right at this point, where courage or consistency should be most evidenced, it is glaringly absent.

*Example:* After the liberation of Yugoslavia from German domination, a Tito-Subasitch government was established, that is, a coalition between the Stalinist party and the representatives of what remained of the bourgeois parties. *Nowhere* in the Cannonite press or in the press of the Fourth International in general did we read one word to suggest that the slogan of the Fourth Internationalists for Yugoslavia, addressed to the Stalinist party and its followers, was: "Down with the ten [or five or two or one or whatever there were] capitalist ministers!" If the Stalinist party is a "workers' party" or one "similar" to the Social-Democracy, why was not the slogan, "worked out by Lenin in 1917 and vindicated in the revolutionary struggle," applied to Yugoslavia in 1945 or even suggested by the Cannonites? Nobody knows the answer to this question, least of all the Cannonites. A little later, without any suggestion whatsoever from the Cannonites, Tito, that is, the Stalinist party, did break the "coalition" with the bourgeoisie. Subasitch and his bourgeois friends were driven out of the government; some of them were driven out of the country itself; and many were driven out of mortal existence. The Stalinists in Yugoslavia, like Noske and Scheidemann, committed bloody deeds and hangman's work—to the n-th power. But unlike the Social-Democrats, the Stalinists have practically destroyed all of the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie, destroyed also bourgeois democracy in any form, and have established what even a man with one eye in his head can recognize as a totalitarian régime. With the humility that is mandatory upon us when we face these masters of Leninist theory and tactics, we now ask the Cannonites: What is the Leninist slogan to raise in Tito Yugoslavia today? Since Stalinism is "similar" to Social-Democracy, what slogans would be raised in Yugoslavia under the Stalinist government that are "similar" to the slogans raised by us in England under the Labour Government? It is a pity, but answers to these questions we will not get. That we know.

*Example:* After the Germans were driven out of Poland, a "coalition" government was established in that country between the Stalinist party, the pseudo-parties led and dominated by the Stalinist parties and Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party. We do not know what slogans the Cannonites raised with regard to this "coalition" government. They did not tell us, and they told nobody else. On Poland they have maintained a silence which, if it is not a model of revolutionary politics, is a model of discretion.

If no slogan was raised by the Cannonites, we must ask what slogan should have been raised for Poland or by Fourth Internationalists whom the Russian and Polish GPU neglected to murder? "Drive Mikolajczyk and company and all the other capi-

talist ministers out of the government"? Or some other slogan "similar" to the one "worked out by Lenin in 1917 and vindicated in the revolutionary struggle"? We have scrutinized the Fourth International press, the Cannonite press included, with the most fruitless care. To make sure, we read it all over again. But no such slogan was to be found and there was not even a suggestion of it.

The absence of the slogan is bewildering and incomprehensible only for a moment, then everything becomes clear. The power of thought is greater than the power of words. So mighty is the thought of the Cannonite-Leninists that it communicated itself to the Polish Stalinists across thousands of miles of land and sea. Without hearing the slogan or seeing it on the banners of the Fourth International, the Stalinists have carried it out in life. They have broken the coalition with the bourgeois party. They have driven it out of one political institution after another and, in general, deprived it of all political power. For every one they killed, they put ten in prison. They expropriated the landowners. They nationalized the property of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, to confirm the theory that they are an authentic although somewhat degenerated "workers' party," they destroyed every independent workers' organization, every independent peasants' organization and destroyed or rendered farcical every serious trace of a democratic right. As this is written, the gun-filled fist of the Russo-Polish GPU has just about achieved supreme power.

The Cannonites assure us that the Stalinist parties do not "wish to take power except as agencies of capitalism and usually in coalition with its direct representatives." This is the last and *only* consolation left to the Polish bourgeoisie. It is a poor one, it is not their own, but it is better than nothing. The Polish Stalinists who, you see, have taken power only as "agencies of capitalism," turned out to be less merciful enemies of the capitalists whose agents they are than the Cannonites. For from these Stalinists the capitalists have received not so much as a literary consolation.

What is all this about Poland? Bah! After all, it is nothing but the facts. If we must choose between the facts and our theory, we are, everybody should know, unterrified Marxists and we choose theory. We do not have our "evaluation" for nothing!

*Example:* The coalition government of the Stalinists in Bulgaria—apply everything that was said in the preceding example. The coalition government of the Stalinists in Rumania—apply everything that was said in the preceding example. The coalition government of the Stalinists in Hungary—apply everything that was said in the preceding example.

The political courage of the Cannonites has leaked right out

of their "evaluation." Not surprising! Their evaluation of the Stalinist parties is a cask without a bottom.

The courage they do not show in putting their evaluation into political practice in a whole series of "similar" cases is evidently reserved for charging us with an inconsistency. "For some unexplained reason," they write, we "reversed" our position and accepted the "slogan of a Socialist-Communist—but not a Communist—government." Charity dictates an acknowledgment that the explanation for our position in favor of the slogan for a Socialist-Communist government in France was not good enough for the Cannonites. With hopes for greater success, we will try again.

Our statement in support of the slogan of a "Socialist Party-Communist Party-CGT Government in France" was drawn up in January, 1946. The French government of the time was based upon a coalition of the conservative bourgeois party (MRP), the Socialist party and the Stalinist party. The bourgeois party represented a minority of the people as a whole and an infinitesimal minority of the decisive class in France, the proletariat. Between them, the Social-Democracy and the Stalinists not only had the overwhelming support of the proletariat but had even received a majority of the votes in the nation.

"The Social-Democrats," said our resolution, "keep the proletariat tied to the bourgeoisie out of fear that a break with the latter would thrust them into an unwanted alliance with the Stalinists. The Stalinists keep the proletariat tied to the bourgeoisie out of an unwillingness to take power into their own hands even though they have the great majority of the proletariat behind them—an unwillingness dictated by the present interests of the Kremlin's foreign policy and by the unfavorable relationship of forces which faces them in France and Europe in general; and by an inability to oust de Gaulle [read: the politically organized bourgeoisie] from control by means of a coalition with the reluctant Social-Democracy alone.

"The first big step forward toward restoring the class independence of the French proletariat requires a radical break with the bourgeoisie and its political representatives, de Gaulle and MRP. This demands first of all, at the present time, the breaking of the existing coalition and the ousting of the de Gaulle government. Together, the Socialist party and the Stalinist party represent a majority not only of the proletariat but of the people as a whole. No other central political slogan is possible for the revolutionary Marxists, and none corresponds better to the needs of the situation than the slogan of a 'Government of the Socialist Party-Communist Party-GCT.'"

However, our resolution continues, support of this slogan without an understanding of what is involved and of how the slogan itself is to be employed, "would be worse than useless . . . it would be a dangerous trap for the working class as a whole and for the Fourth Internationalists in particular. This slogan can and must be advanced by our party in France, but only if it is inseparably linked with and subordinated to a detailed and clearly explained program of transitional demands." As examples of the demands which such a program should "prominently include" and around which our main agitation and propaganda must be centered, the resolution notes: nationalization "under the most democratic workers' control of production"; the demand for the most democratic constitution for the Constituent Assembly, with special emphasis upon unrestricted guarantees of all democratic rights; a democratic people's militia to replace an immediately demobilized army and all the special police and government spy services; the withdrawal of all French occupation forces from conquered territories, an immediate democratic peace and no indemnities or tribute burden; and other demands of the same order. Even after listing these demands, the resolution still found it necessary to emphasize that the slogan "undoubtedly carries with it grave risks," to which the Fourth International cannot be blind and which it must not conceal or gloss over—that is, precisely those grave risks which the French Trotskyists, if they are not blind to them, nevertheless do conceal and gloss over.

". . . The slogan is not the same, adapted to French conditions, as that put forward by the Bolsheviki in Russia in 1917 in advocating a coalition government of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary parties. It is not the same, adapted to French conditions, as that put forward, originally by the Communist International and in our time by the Fourth International, in advocating a Labour Party government in England. In those cases, there were involved bourgeois or petty bourgeois democratic reformist workers' (or workers' and peasants') parties. In France today, there is involved, so far as the Stalinist party is concerned, not a democratic but a totalitarian party operating as an instrument of the Kremlin and the GPU. Hence, we oppose any slogan which means lifting this counter-revolutionary totalitarian instrument into the position of state power in any country, or into the position where there is a clear threat of its use of the state police power for the extermination of the independent working class and revolutionary movements, as in Russia, as in Poland, as in Yugoslavia, etc."

In the face of this analysis, which, it is perfectly obvious, is not

at all the "reversal" of our evaluation of Stalinism which the Cannonites ascribe to us, how was it possible to advocate this slogan? This was the question posed by many of the leaders and members of our party. If the revolutionary Marxists must resist every attempt of Stalinism to come to power in the capitalist countries, how is this to be squared with support of a slogan which calls for them to establish a government together with the Social-Democracy? In reply to this question, our resolution pointed out that

"... a concrete and objective examination of the political situation and the relationship of forces in France today, and in Europe and the world in general, indicates that the totalitarian Stalinist party cannot and will not and does not seek to take state power in France in any way comparable to its seizure of power in Poland and Yugoslavia; and indicates further that in a coalition government with the Socialist Party and the CGT, the Stalinists could not and would not proceed, either in the field of economic life or of political power, in any way comparable to their procedure in Poland and Yugoslavia, inasmuch as such a course, extended to France, would not only precipitate civil war in the country but would bring infinitely closer the outbreak of the Third World War, both of which it is clearly the Kremlin's policy to avert, at least in the next period."

To us it seems that the subsequent developments in France have served to confirm this analysis, and to dispel the by no means unjustified doubts expressed by many of the opponents of the slogan in our party. To these comrades, we said at the time that it was only necessary for them to show by "a concrete and objective examination of the political situation and the relationship of forces in France today, and in Europe and the world in general" that support of the slogan signified that Stalinism would be brought to power in France in any way comparable to the power it was acquiring in Yugoslavia and Poland. If that had been demonstrated, there is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of our party would have rejected the slogan. If, instead, it supported the slogan, it was only upon the conviction that its proper use by the French Trotskyists would facilitate the disclosure to the French masses of the real, that is, the reactionary nature of Stalinism and thus help to loosen its hold upon the French masses. In other words, what was primarily involved in the discussion in our party over this slogan was not so much a dispute over the character of the Stalinist parties, as over the concrete analysis of the political situation in France and of the specific prospects of Stalinism. This is not to deny that in the dis-

cussion, as is usually the case in questions of this sort, there were no further implications that could be drawn from the respective positions. But that is another matter. It has no direct relation to the matter at hand—and that is the setting forth of the reasons why, given our evaluations of Stalinism, it was nevertheless possible for us to support the slogan of a Socialist Party-Communist Party-CGT government in France.

But suppose the concrete analysis sketched in our resolution proved to be incorrect? In that case, we would not have hesitated to say that our support of the slogan was a grave mistake. We would have had to say much more. The resolution itself posed that question and provided a tentative answer:

"If, contrary to this analysis, the Stalinists should now be on the verge of taking state power in France in their own name, or in the name of a coalition with the Socialist Party which would, along with the French bourgeoisie, which is in turn backed by Anglo-American imperialism, prove to be as impotent to prevent the consolidation of Stalinist state power as their equivalents have proved to be in Poland and Yugoslavia, then an altogether different conclusion would be dictated to the Fourth International. Then it would no longer be a question of raising or abandoning the slogan of a 'Socialist Party-Communist Party-CGT Government.' The Fourth International would then have to reconsider and revise fundamentally not only its whole European and international perspective, but also its whole concept of the character of our epoch. Nothing less than such a reconsideration would be mandatory to the Fourth International if it were confronted by the reality of the consolidation of Stalinist power on the European Atlantic, which would mean nothing else but the complete domination of Europe and Asia, at least most of Asia, by Stalinism.

"There are, however, altogether insufficient grounds for any such analysis and conclusion. Stalinism has not only not triumphed over Europe, but there are ample indications that its power and influence are receding from the immediate post-war peak and that the popular resistance to it is increasing. This is evident, in different degrees, not only in France and Italy, in Austria and Hungary, but even in occupied countries like Poland and Rumania."

Our position on the use of the slogan in France thus in no wise contradicts our evaluation of the Stalinist parties. In any case, the use of that slogan in France was a purely tactical and incidental question. Let us repeat: It would only be necessary really to *demonstrate* that it is in conflict with our evaluation of the Stalinist parties for us to abandon it without hesitation.

At the conclusion of their Statement, the Cannonites set up

three "rock-bottom programmatic criteria operating today to demarcate the revolutionary tendency from all forms and varieties of opportunism." For the Cannonites these "new criteria" are the knife with which the Fourth International is to be cut in two, thus effectively eliminating it as the revolutionary International and transforming it into a mere international Cannonite faction. As the corollary to their first criterion which deals with the evaluation of Russia, they list the evaluation of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and the attitude toward these parties. What they mean by this should be clearly understood and properly appraised by revolutionary Marxists everywhere. It is, as they so correctly say, no minor question.

In their chapter on the Stalinist parties, this is how they characterize our position. What they place between parentheses is quoted from one or another document written by us.

"1. Trotsky's evaluation of the Stalinist movement must be rejected. (The theory that the Stalinist parties like the traditional reformist organizations are agents of the capitalist class, that they "capitulate to the bourgeoisie," is fundamentally false.)

"2. The Stalinist parties seek state power in order to form Stalinist states, akin to the Soviet Union. (Stalinism is not merely the servant of Russian imperialism. . . . It seeks to establish in every capitalist country in which it functions the same social and political régime as prevails in Russia today.)

"3. The Stalinist party is similar to the Nazi party (. . . Fascism and Stalinism, while not identical, are symmetrical phenomena.)

"4. Hence our established tactical approach to the Stalinists is no good and must be rejected. (The traditional policy of the revolutionary vanguard toward the labor-reformist movements [or bureaucracies] does not, therefore, apply to the Stalinist movements.)"

Although not exact, this is nevertheless a good enough statement of our point of view. By clear implication, this point of view is rejected and the contrary point of view is maintained by the Cannonites. If the Fourth International persists in the Cannonite point of view on the Stalinist parties, its suicide is guaranteed. There is no need whatsoever to court this fate. We repeat that the Cannonite standpoint is based on a misunderstood "traditional policy," upon ignorance of Trotsky's real position, upon a gross failure to appraise correctly the evolution of Stalinist Russia and of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries, and not least of all upon factional malice and blindness which has caused them literally to *forget themselves*. Unlike the Cannonites, we will not confine ourselves to mere assertion. We will *demonstrate* this, point by point, and demonstrate it to the hilt.

1. and 2. The Cannonites write that we reject Trotsky's evaluation of the Stalinist movement. Strictly speaking, this is not correct. The Cannonite view must indeed be rejected, from start to finish. Trotsky's view must be extended, amplified in the light of the recent real evolution, and deepened. We have already quoted what Trotsky wrote years ago in "The Crisis of the Right-Center Bloc" about the fundamental antagonism between Social-Democracy and the Stalinist parties. This basically correct view we have sought to develop in accordance with the development of the living forces. Any theory which holds that Stalinism "capitulates to the bourgeoisie" in the same sense as the Social-Democracy is false to the very bottom and can only disorient the Fourth International and those workers who follow it. It can only raise still higher the barrier that separated us from those workers who support the Stalinist parties and thereby only increase the numerous difficulties that already exist for our work of winning these workers away from Stalinism.

The Cannonites indignantly reject our view that Stalinism "seeks to establish in every capitalist country in which it functions the same social and political régime as prevails in Russia today" (and note that we say "seeks to establish," and not "will succeed in establishing"). The Cannonites simply do not understand Trotsky's point of view, let alone our own; they do not even *know* Trotsky's point of view. Read carefully the following words:

"The predominating type among the present 'Communist' bureaucrats is the political careerist, and in consequence the polar opposite of the revolutionist. *Their ideal is to attain in their own country the same position that the Kremlin oligarchy gained in the USSR.* They are not the revolutionary leaders of the proletariat but *aspirants to totalitarian rule. They dream of gaining success with the aid of this same Soviet bureaucracy and its GPU.* They view with admiration and envy the invasion of Poland, Finland, the Baltic states, Bessarabia by the Red Army because these invasions *immediately bring about the transfer of power into the hands of the local Stalinist candidates for totalitarian rule.*" (My emphasis—M. S.)

Who is guilty of uttering this gross Burnhamite-Shachtmanite-Satanic anti-Trotskyist blasphemy? Who is the author of these views which are almost word for word, and certainly thought for thought, the views of our party? Leon Trotsky! Not only was this written by Trotsky, but it may even be considered his final political testament, so far as the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries are concerned. It was not written as an accidental phrase out of harmony with the text that surrounds it. It is contained in what is

not only a lengthy but an obviously well-thought-out and weightily considered last judgment on the Stalinist parties. It is contained in the very last political article written by Trotsky before his assassination—it is dated August 7, 1940. There is no good excuse for not knowing this decisively significant passage. It is not in an unpublished manuscript. It was not only published but—it is hard to believe and yet it is true—published in the theoretical organ of the Socialist Workers Party, *The Fourth International*, November, 1940, where it can be found on page 149.

When we accept or reject Trotsky's point of view on any question, we make at least a serious effort to find out what that point of view is. Is it not plain that the Cannonites have been talking all this time about "Trotsky's evaluation of the Stalinist movement" without even knowing what Trotsky's evaluation was? That they have charged us with rejecting an evaluation which is our own, and which they—and which only they—actually reject? Can you imagine a more humiliating position for the avowed followers—no, the only real followers!—of Trotsky to have placed themselves in by their aggressive ignorance and factional malice? We could continue with this by the page, but it is not necessary. All you need to do is to read over again our evaluation, the abuse and ridicule the Cannonites heap upon us, and then check the two against the last evaluation of the Stalinist parties made by Trotsky.

3. The Cannonites quote from one of our documents where we write that "fascism and Stalinism, while not identical, are symmetrical phenomena." They do not comment on this sentence. Why not? Obviously because for them the mere reproduction of this thought is sufficient to revile and condemn it as a monstrosity which is made up of equal parts of Burnhamism, Shachtmanism and in general the work of the devil; and, as every genuine, undiluted Trotskyist knows, it has nothing—but absolutely nothing—in common with Trotskyism. Repetition is tedious but we have no choice. We must repeat what we said before. The Cannonites do not understand Trotsky's point of view, let alone our own; they do not even *know* Trotsky's point of view. Read carefully the following words:

"Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social functions, are symmetrical phenomena. In many of their features they show a deadly similarity."

Where is the difference between these words and the thoughts contained so clearly in them, and the words quoted from our documents (and quoted with such disdain and contempt) by the Cannonites? There is none! Who is the author of these words? Leon

Trotsky. Written in some unavailable manuscript? No, it appears in his great work, *The Revolution Betrayed*, and it is to be found on page 278. Bitter joke: the Cannonites have published their own edition of *The Revolution Betrayed*. They try to sell it everywhere. They recommend it highly. But their leaders obviously have not read it.

4. The final point in the pitifully ignorant indictment of us points out that we say, as indeed we do, that the traditional policy of the revolutionary vanguard toward the reformist movements and even the reformist bureaucracies does *not* apply to the Stalinist movements. On the basis not of a haphazard, hand-to-mouth, empirical approach but on the basis of a thought-out and fundamental analysis of the Stalinist movement, our party has drawn a basic distinction between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the reformist bureaucracy. Our practical policy, above all in the trade unions, has been guided by this fundamental analysis. We have not hesitated, as our general rule, to make blocs with the progressive reformists in the unions against the Stalinists, and not only with the progressive but even with the conservative bureaucrats. (We are speaking, of course, of all those cases where it was impossible for the revolutionists in the union to present their own independent candidates against both the Stalinists and the reformists.) We have set forth this policy, and the basic reasons for it, time and again in our press. For it, we have received only the malignant and contemptuous epithets of the Cannonites. In contrast, the latter have vacillated between one policy and another, because in reality their "evaluation" is as solid as a sucked-out egg. In the last few years in particular, the Cannonites (and this, unfortunately, is also true of the rest of the Fourth International) have been a ship without a rudder, sails or chart in the practical political struggle against Stalinism.

Now, impelled by factional animus against us, and in practice by a growing affinity, let it be said, for the Stalinists, they attack us for holding the position we have quoted. But we have not always been alone in holding this position. Read carefully the following words:

"... We must be very careful. If we allow ourselves to become confused and mixed up with the Stalinists, we will cut off our road of approach to the rank and file of the trade union movement, the anti-Stalinist rank and file, which, in my opinion, is a more important reservoir of the revolution than the Stalinist rank and file. . . .

"We must classify the Stalinists and the reactionary and 'progressive' patriotic labor fakers as simply two different varieties of

enemies of the working class employing different methods because they have different bases under their feet. It brings us into a complicated problem in the trade union movement. It has been our general practice to combine in day-to-day trade union work with the progressives and even the conservative labor fakers against the Stalinists. We have been correct from this point of view, that while the conservatives and traditional labor skates are no better than the Stalinists, are no less betrayers in the long run, they have different bases of existence. The Stalinist base is the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. They are perfectly willing to disrupt a trade union in defense of the foreign policy of Stalin. The traditional labor fakers have no roots in Russia nor any support in its powerful bureaucracy. Their only base of existence is the trade union; if the union is not preserved they have no further existence as trade union leaders. That tends to make them, from self-interest, a little more loyal to the unions than the Stalinists. That is why we have been correct in most cases in combining with them as against the Stalinists in purely union affairs."

We do not think that this analysis is as thoroughgoing as it might be; and even the conclusions are unnecessarily restricted. But the line it indicates, the orientation which it seeks to give the party—that is indubitably correct and for our purposes adequate. Who is the author of these words? Some members of the Workers Party, perhaps? It might well be, but in this case it is not. We have quoted from a speech delivered at the 1940 Chicago conference of the Socialist Workers Party by no less authoritative a party leader than James P. Cannon. The speech is not contained in a secret, unavailable manuscript. The stenographic record of the speech appears in the weekly organ of the Socialist Workers Party, *The Socialist Appeal*, of October 19, 1940. The Russian proverb reads, "Do not spit in the well from which you may have to drink." The Cannonites need another version of this proverb: "Do not spit into the good clean well from which you once drank and from which you may find it necessary to drink again."

*March, 1947*



# SINCE STALIN DIED

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## *A New Stage in the Russian Crisis*

THE ERUPTION OF THE LATEST PURGE in the Russian leadership has precipitated a new discussion in the political world. What is the meaning of the expulsion of Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov from the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and from its Presidium? Does it presage a political reform, a democratization, of the régime in the country to be carried out by the new leadership? Is it a step backward to the kind of personal dictatorship represented by the now officially abjured rule of Stalin? Is it a step toward a new kind of régime in Russia, a military dictatorship, under which the army officers replace the Party officials? Or is it an unmeant prologue to a revolutionary intervention in the affairs of state by the millions who have till now been throttled and shackled by their rulers?

It is not a single one of these alone. But it is all four of them, combined in an interplay of conflicting forces and trends unleashed since the death of Stalin. Not one of the forces is reconcilable with any of the others. If one seems to be dominant for a moment, it would be well to bear in mind that the situation in Russia is now *exceptionally* fluid and unstable. It would be hard to make a bigger mistake than to assume that the kind of final decision has been made which clearly indicates the course of development for a whole period. The disturbances and rearrangements at the summits of Russian society have their greatest importance in signaling the turbulence that is warming up at the foundations. The ruling class is sitting nervously on a vast accumulation of powder kegs. That much is absolutely certain. The only important element of uncertainty is how long it will take for the attached fuses to burn to the kegs. It should not surprise even the most optimistic if it takes less time than anyone expects.

The quickening of the tempo of events is indicated in the first place, as is usually the case in despotic societies, by the rapidity of the changes made in the composition of the ruling personnel. If we do not forget that stability and instability are

relative terms it can be said that the Bolshevnik revolution, in the course of its victory and its establishment of order in the country, produced a stable leadership. It took no less than fifteen years for the Stalinist counterrevolution to exhaust and annihilate this leadership, politically and physically, leaving only a tiny handful to give a simulacrum, utterly illusionary, of continuity from the past.

At the time of Stalin's death in 1953, he had succeeded in establishing an entirely new leadership which appeared to have far greater power and solidity than the Lenin leadership had in the five years of its rule. Outwardly, for the first five minutes, so to speak, the succession seemed to establish itself as pre-arranged and foreseen. Malenkov, ostentatiously groomed as heir apparent by Stalin at the last Party congress he allowed to take place, became Prime Minister. He was associated with four deputies: Molotov as minister of foreign affairs, Bulganin as minister of defense, Beria as head of all the police, and Kaganovich as chief of industry. The pre-arrangement was even fortified by lifting Voroshilov, who had for a time been in the light shadows, to the position of President of the republic.

In four short years, there is nothing, or next to nothing, left of this team. Its stability, its "collectiveness" as distinguished from Stalin's personal rule, proved to have only an external character.

Beria was the first to go, executed in secret, without a trial worthy of the name, without the public knowing how he defended himself against what were undoubtedly the justified but after all long-known charges against him, or how he in turn accused his accusers. He is now officially known, in the words of Khrushchev's sensational speech last year, as "the provocateur and vile enemy, Beria, who had murdered thousands of Communists and loyal Soviet people," in other words, as a man perfectly suited for a part in the collective leadership of his compeers.

Even before Beria was disposed of totally, Malenkov was launched on a greased slide. Less than a fortnight after being named Prime Minister and secretary of the party, he resigned from (i.e., he was jerked out of) the latter position and the lesser-known figure of Khrushchev was named in his place. The solemn specialists all over the world nodded wisely at this move as an indication of the dispersal of power among the new "collective leadership" as against the reconcentration of power into the hands of a new Stalin. Malenkov rapidly became touted as the leader of the "reformers," of the "peace party," of the "consumer public," of the relaxation and the thaw. There was no end to the blessings, according to the specialists, that the condescending but affable savior

would vouchsafe to the masses without their having to lift a finger of their own to achieve them. His gallant presentation of a flower to a gentlelady at a British garden party removed all doubts as to his character.

All doubts as to his future were also soon removed. He lost his post as party secretary less than two weeks after assuming pre-eminent power in the régime. Less than two years afterward, he lost his power as head of the government, accompanied by an extorted confession that he knew nothing about the problems he was assigned to resolve, as if to underline the insight and foresight of the colleagues so long associated with him. Bulganin took his place. That was in February, 1955. Twelve months later, at the party congress, Khrushchev drove a broader blade into Malenkov by his dark description of him as the very right bower of Stalin in the days of his ugliest capriciousness. At the June, 1957, Central Committee Plenum, Malenkov was expelled from the body as an anti-Leninist, an enemy of world peace, relaxation and welfare of the people, and a plotter against the party, its leadership and its integrity. A month later, Shvernik, now returning to the prominence he lost when Voroshilov replaced him in the presidency of the republic, informed the public in passing that the same Malenkov, among others, had been active in framing the notorious "Leningrad affair" ten years earlier and was guilty, in general, of "breaches of revolutionary legality committed . . . during the period of mass repression." In a word, Malenkov now seems to have just enough time in which to count the remaining number of his days.

Molotov, the best-known party leader next to Stalin, and his unwavering faction lieutenant for thirty years, was eliminated from the post of foreign minister in May, 1955, about the time the treaty with Austria, which he is now accused of having opposed, was signed by the Kremlin. He is now named as the chief of the "secret anti-party factional group" and as the only one who was impertinent enough to vote against his expulsion from the Central Committee (more exactly, who abstained from the voting—did his co-factionalists therefore vote dutifully for their own ouster?) at its June, 1957, meeting. Thrown out with him was his successor as foreign minister two years earlier, Shepilov. Kaganovich suffered the same punishment.

Of the ruling quintet installed in 1953, only one remains—Bulganin. But he failed to jump to Khrushchev's defense as instantaneously as Mikoyan did at the meeting of the Presidium (the former Political Bureau) where, according to all the obviously authorized reports, the "anti-party" faction all but succeeded in

crushing the new party secretary. Bulganin is, at this writing, plainly in disgrace. A conservative insurance company would be ill-advised to take his account. Below the uppermost ledge of party leadership to which he now clings with only one hand is the familiar oblivion or worse. Voroshilov, already an official nonentity, from whom Khrushchev last year openly demanded a denunciation of Stalin for which "even his grandsons will thank him," shares Bulganin's precarious position.

In sum, the bulk of the first post-Stalin leader-team has been ✓ wiped out in four years. In any country, a change of this kind would be regarded as clear manifestation of a crisis of the régime. Russia is no exception. What has happened in the past four years, culminating in the June purge, marks the opening of a new stage in a crisis of much longer duration whose roots reach deep into the soil of Stalinist society. Khrushchev seems to have triumphed over all possible or visible rivals. Some take this to demonstrate that the new stage will be dominated by him, that he will be able to determine the course of its development, that his rise to power will be similar to Stalin's. A comparison will be instructive.

Stalin started his real rise to dictatorial power with advantages that, especially now that we are able to look backward upon them, were extraordinarily great. He had the task of destroying the achievements of a revolution. The fact that it could no longer maintain itself by its isolated efforts alone, that it could not solve its fundamental economic problems on socialist foundations and ✓ in a socialist way, was his greatest advantage. The revolution's ✓ utter destruction of a native bourgeoisie that might have been able to solve the economic problems on capitalist foundations and in a capitalist way, and the inability of the foreign bourgeoisie to undertake such a solution, was an accompanying advantage.

Where basic social problems are not solved in a progressive way, they are solved (except where society lapses into utter mori- ✓ bundity) in a reactionary way. In Russia they were solved—by which is simply meant that the country was completely modernized and raised to one step from the very top of the world ladder economically—in a reactionary, unique and never-foreseen way. All the higger-mugger about the progressive role of Stalinism "in the economic field" overlooks the fundamental and overwhelmingly decisive fact that in order to play this role Stalinism established over the nation the rule of a new and more ruthlessly exploitive class than any known in history. The establishment of the social power of a new exploiting class in the epoch of the decay of capitalist society and its overripeness for socialist reorganization is a phenomenon of reactionary significance and consequences. Its

reactionary character is confirmed by the fact that the only serious resistance offered to the rise of Stalinism came from the working classes and the revolutionary socialists of Russia, and that this resistance had to be curbed, cheated and crushed before the new rulers could achieve a real measure of consolidation, economic and political.

The dilemma of the more earnest apologists of Stalinism, especially those who try to think or write in Marxian terms, is two-fold:

One, either the social role played by those who resisted Stalinism was reactionary; or the social role played by those who crushed this resistance in the course of establishing, expanding and consolidating the "progressive economy" was reactionary.

Or two, either the struggle against the Stalinist régime carried on by the socialist elements in Russia was utopian, like the fight for socialism in the days before modern socialist theory and movement were established, because the bourgeois social order, and therefore exploitive class rule, was the then historical and necessary bearer of social progress; or the "progress" achieved under Stalinism was correspondingly the work that could be performed only by a historically necessary exploitive class and its class rule.

The indicated answer in either case leaves little to be said for the progressive, let alone the socialist, character of Stalinism. It is well to add that we for our part do not regard it as a historically progressive social formation, or "historically necessary" in any sense comparable to the role played in its time by the bourgeoisie.

To the advantages mentioned, was added the fact that Stalin was, from the beginning of his new career, an outstanding and established leader. He was not, to be sure, known to the masses in 1923-1924, but then again, it was not to the masses that he directed his appeal. He was known to the party bureaucracy and was already well entrenched in its midst. His ability was widely underrated, but not by Lenin who named him and Trotsky as the "two most able leaders of the present Central Committee"—which was itself not made up of nobodies. In the course of twelve years of bitter, dogged, merciless struggles, he disposed of all the able and articulate representatives of the socialist revolution of 1917 and its ideals. In the course of another five years, he wiped them out physically. In the course of the same period, he destroyed completely the revolutionary party without permitting any other to take its place—he supplanted it with a compliant *apparatus*, which is something else again (all talk of a Communist *party*, under Stalin or since his death is, basically and literally, nonsense). ✓

Along with the destruction of the party went the destruction of the remnants of the Soviets, the entire trade-union movement, the factory councils, as well as any and every form of free and independent organization and expression.

Back in 1928 Trotsky wrote that "the socialist character of industry is determined and secured in a decisive measure by the role of the party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade-union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc. If we allow that this web is weakening, disintegrating and ripping, then it becomes absolutely self-evident that within a brief period nothing will remain of the socialist character of state industry, transport, etc." In this he proved to be fundamentally correct, even though the subsequent development took a historically unexpected turn. The "web" was weakened, ripped and destroyed; with it went the socialist character of the stratified economy.

That is what Stalin was called upon to achieve. An apparent paradox: the rule of the working class is absolutely indispensable to the development of a *socialist* economy, but in isolated Russia the rule of the working class was an obstacle to the solution of the economic problem by an exploiting class. Stalinism eliminated the obstacle. In doing so, it attracted the enthusiastic support of the elements required to make up the new bureaucratic class. It was not that they were indifferent to Stalin's crushing of all opponents—they were ardently satisfied with it. It was not simply that he provided them with the mantle of the authority of a revolution in whose name he always spoke—he also provided them with an apparatus to maintain their rule, with an unparalleled police machine to smash all resistance to their rule. He fashioned a shameless but Marxistically-couched theory to give ideological justification for their class privileges over the working classes, namely, that Marxism rejects equalitarianism. No ruling class ever owed so much to one man. Stalin was strategist and tactician, theorist and political leader, ideologist and hangman for the collectivist bureaucracy. In the obscene welter of extollment to "the greatest genius of all ages," so revolting to any civilized ear and eye, the bureaucracy, at least, expressed at bottom a sincere, heartfelt gratitude to a man who lavishly deserved it from them. In outlawing socialism, its principles, ideals and aims from Russia, he gained not merely an obligatory but a genuine and veritably immense authority from the beneficiaries of his leadership.

There is, however, a fatal and ever exasperating flaw in the rule of the bureaucracy. Every step required for the consolidation of its power over society has led inexorably to a greater centraliza-

tion of state power until it reached its peak in the establishment of the personal despotism of Stalin. No other way was possible, and no other way is possible now. The bureaucracy was enabled to exercise every liberty over the working classes, ruling them with an arbitrariness unknown in any other modern country. But it was not and is not able to rule itself. Self-rule is possible for the ruling class in capitalist society, has long been exercised there, and it still is. For the ruling class in Stalinist society, self-rule is impossible.

To whom shall it submit the differences of opinions which reflect the conflict of interests, economic, political and even personal? To the objective decision of the market, that "blind regulator" to which all capitalist producers of commodities are fundamentally subjected? The Stalinist economy knows no market and it is not based upon the production of commodities. To the democratic decision of the people? But the moment it invites the people to make any decisions that are binding on the economic or political régime, is the moment when the rule of the bureaucracy comes, as it is perfectly aware, to an end. To its own ruling ranks? But that is a practical impossibility from a dozen standpoints. Even if it were possible to organize its ranks for such a purpose, ✓ the open discussion of its disputes would be tantamount to an invitation to the masses to intervene in the decision. It is not for nothing that Khrushchev closed his speech at the 20th Congress with the warning that "we should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy; we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes." (Who "the enemy" really is, is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the speech has not been published inside Russia to this day; and by the fact that the Russian people are always informed only of the *conclusions* reached by the victors in any dispute that arises in the ranks of the bureaucracy.)

In actual fact, disputes of *any* kind, even if not openly conducted, are a menace to the bureaucracy, and there is an excellent reason why it forbids factions ("parties") in its midst. What ground is there for the belief among the bureaucracy, whose rule is a perpetual defiance of the majority, that a defeated minority will abide by the "democratic decisions" of the whole and resist the temptation to seek support for its interests and views outside the ranks of the ruling class, that is, among the ruled, thus throwing the entire social structure into jeopardy?

By its very nature this class, which is unique in the long history of ruling classes, must abandon all thought of self-rule and, however reluctantly, raise up above itself, as well as above the nation as a whole, a supreme arbiter to whose decisions the rulers bow by common consent. In turn, it can justify his omni-

potence only by ascribing to him omniscience. The megalomania which Khrushchev attributed to Stalin may have been a psychic disturbance. But the power of his megalomania was systematically stimulated and nurtured by the bureaucracy itself in its own interests. Stalin presents a problem in social analysis, not in psychoanalysis.

In concentrating all power into his hands, Stalin was able to assure order in the country. Translated, this means: to defend the rule of the bureaucracy from the masses at home and from enemies abroad. But if the power to make all decisions on differences and conflicts of interests in the bureaucracy was transferred to him, it does not mean that the differences no longer existed, that the conflicts were eliminated, or that his decisions were accepted with equal satisfaction by all. The further the country advanced toward modernization and the more critical the international situation became, the more complex, diversified and multitudinous became the problems they posed.

Stalin's purely personal decisions on the vast and complicated problems could not but arouse increasing hatred and increasing fear in all sections of Russian society, the bureaucracy itself not excluded. He could assure order, but he could not assure security. The capitalist who is interested in a general or an abstract way in the "social rule of the capitalist class," rapidly loses this interest if his personal position as an owner of a share in the total capital is wiped out. The bureaucrat is after all interested in the "social rule of the bureaucracy" only abstractly, but is most intensely concerned with his own position in the bureaucracy. If, overnight, he finds he has been cast out of the job of regional party secretary or of director of a trust, without recourse, and lucky to be alive for the moment, he may very well find little consolation in the assurance that the incumbents still rule society "as a class." He wants security in *his* position and, better still, sure prospects of advancement. Stalin offered the bureaucracy everything, but not security.

The régime was coiled around the whole nation like hoops of iron riveted at every point by the G.P.U. At the height of his power and the adulation he was bathed in, Stalin was universally detested and feared, even by his closest larrikins. There is no reason whatever to doubt the description that Khrushchev gives in this regard of the feeling that filled the manly breasts of himself and the other intimates of Stalin. But it is equally important to note that while the bureaucrats hated Stalin, they were not in opposition to him. *They had no political alternative to the megalomaniacal supreme arbiter who was their authentic creation.*

The totalitarian régime is not the absolute monarchy, although it has many features in common with it. The succession in the former is not so simply indicated and effected as in the latter. With the death of Stalin, a new situation was created. It was obviously impossible merely to put forward another Stalin who would continue where the other left off. Stalin acquired his enormous power and authority only after many years of bitter and arduous struggle for it, in which he not only wiped out all opponents and rivals but reduced his own supporters to the position of subordinates with so little power and authority of their own that they lived, toward the end, in daily trepidation. The bureaucracy, in March, 1953, presented any number of alternatives for the succession, but not one of them with Stalin's authority or anything comparable to it. In fact, the one who had been implicitly nominated by Stalin as his candidate, speedily found out that the recommendation did not guarantee him the sword of power in the hand but the stab of the dagger in the back. Indeed, the race for the succession started with the candidates vying for prominence, first in the implicit disavowal of Stalin's régime and then in disavowing and even violently denouncing the man to whom they owed whatever position they had. This proves not merely that there is no gratitude in politics, but that the process of recreating the kind of despotism that Stalin ultimately represented is unfolding under radically different conditions than those prevalent in the days of Stalin's own rise to power.

*All of Stalin's work, all of his achievements, have combined in a complex way to make the continuation of his régime, if not downright impossible, then extraordinarily difficult, and in any case to burden every attempt to stabilize the régime with convulsing crises.*

Stalin did not appeal to the people against his opponents or his rivals. He scarcely pretended to appeal to them. On the contrary, the masses were, generally speaking, disinherited, disfranchised and driven into silent drudgery like oxen. Stalin appealed to the bureaucracy. With Stalin dead, the bureaucracy is left with little or no authority of its own and with a tremendous uncertainty about its own position. One of the accomplishments over which Stalin presided was the establishment of a tremendous working class which hardly existed at all at the beginning of his rise. Another accomplishment was the establishment of a huge industry now capable of satisfying the still unfulfilled needs and aspirations of the working class.

The bureaucracy can now acquire authority, and confidence in itself, only by appealing for the support of the people. It will

not confer full power, that is, place all reliance upon any leader or leadership who cannot assure the position of the bureaucracy among the people. It does not dare to make a definitive choice among the candidates for leadership until one of them has demonstrated by his policy that he can assure this position. The whole past régime in which the bureaucracy was the basic social force is so discredited in the eyes of the people, and the bureaucracy itself is so disoriented, that it feels it is risking its very existence unless it finds a broad base of support or at least acquiescence for its continued rule among the working classes. The demonstration of this fact is given by the words and deeds of every candidate for the succession to Stalin.

Beria, immediately after the death of Stalin, was the first to present himself as a reformer of the régime, seeking to enlist popular support by promising the national minorities and the minority nations a change for the better from the chauvinistic and oppressive policy pursued so brutally by Stalin. He followed the promise by announcing that the "doctor's plot" invented by Stalin (surely with the complicity of Beria himself!) had proved to be a frame-up. He was given no chance by his rivals to expand on his role as reformer and friend of the people. His position as head of the detested G.P.U. not only made such a role incongruous, but made it easier for his rivals to appear as reformers themselves by the arrest, defamation, secret trial and execution of Beria as the man who "murdered thousands of Communists and loyal Soviet people."

In their own eagerness to win the people, the residue of the post-Stalin leadership placed Serov, a secondary figure, at the head of the G.P.U. and rigorously reduced the powers of the G.P.U. itself without, of course, abolishing the secret police completely. At one stroke, the leadership made a concession to three forces: to the masses who hated the G.P.U. even more than they feared it; to the bureaucracy which had been perpetually subjected to the insufferable intervention of the till then omnipresent and omnipotent secret police; and to the regular army officer corps which suffered not only from the same intervention but also from the existence of an army-within-the-army constituted by the externally-controlled and independent G.P.U. troops—Stalin's own combination of S.S. divisions and Gestapo.

The rivalry among the would-be dictators was given pause for a moment by the first big manifestation of open struggle of the masses against the Stalinist régime, the June 17 rising of the workers of East Germany. But only for a moment. Malenkov, who had begun with an announcement that the hypertrophied horde

of bureaucrats and bureaucratic institutions would be reduced, proclaimed the doctrine, unknown under Stalin, that the successes in heavy industry had now produced all the conditions "for organizing a rapid rise in the production of consumers' goods" and that "it is indispensable to increase substantially the investments devoted to the light and food industries." In that sentence he unquestionably voiced the deepest conviction of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people. On Malenkov's lips, this pledge was anxious demagoguery, not unknown on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and calculated above all other things to promote his own political interests. That did not prevent the rise of the most excited predictions about the worthy intentions of the new régime and its apparent spokesman. One observer (he turned out to be Isaac Deutscher), reminded his readers that Trotsky had once advocated a "limited political revolution" against Stalinism, and that although he was tragically ahead of his time, "he could not imagine that Stalin's closest associates would act in accordance with his scheme. What Malenkov's government is carrying out now is precisely the 'limited revolution' envisaged by Trotsky." That did not turn out to be precisely the case. The "limited revolution" was not carried out, but in little more than a year the "Malenkov government" was kicked out. The over-eager observers consoled themselves with the thought that Malenkov, after all, had not been, or had not yet been executed by the now rising Khrushchev, forgetting that Stalin, too, did not begin by executing the opponents he removed or expelled.

Khrushchev became the most spectacular and in his conduct, at least, the most self-assured of the candidates. He best reflects—not represents, but reflects—the conflicting forces whose interplay is the outstanding characteristic of the new stage.

He appeals for support to the masses more outspokenly, one might almost say more recklessly, than Beria or Malenkov did, or than any of the others who are now in the official leadership. Even though his 20th Congress speech has not yet been published in Russian, it is safe to believe that virtually everybody knows of its substance. In effect, he has told the Russian people: "This is what the mad tyrant was in reality and in detail, and I feared and hated him no less than you did. The thoroughness and vehemence with which I exposed and denounced his evils are the best proof I can give that under my leadership the dread régime of terror and caprice will come to an end." It is hard to overrate the importance of the fact that Stalin started his rise to power with the oath that he would be nothing but a faithful disciple of Lenin, the leader of the preceding régime; whereas Khrush-

chev starts with a bitter denunciation and renunciation of the leadership and régime of his predecessor.

Khrushchev must know that the successor régime cannot even think of maintaining itself without popular support. To gain it, not even the curbing of the G.P.U. was enough. The monstrous slave camps had to be largely liquidated. The release of millions of only half or one-third productive workers from the camps served to satisfy the increasingly desperate need for industrial manpower, and that was not the least of the reasons for the grand gesture. But it was skillfully made to invest the leadership with the mantle of reformers. Nobody has been heartier than Khrushchev in promising that, now at last (or at any rate in the not distant future!) the people, and not merely the bureaucrats, will eat their fill, as much as the Americans eat and maybe even more.

He gives whatever bond he deems it safe to give in order to show that his promises are being implemented. It is not only Stalin who is disavowed and, at least as a cadaver, dethroned. It is the whole despised gang around him who are being repudiated, except for a few worthy exceptions among whom Khrushchev nominates himself as the worthiest. With the expulsion of his three opponents from the Central Committee, he not only strengthens his own position but assures the people that it is now rid of practically the last of the outstanding members of Stalin's immediate circle: Malenkov, the heir apparent and for that reason alone the most personal embodiment of Stalin's régime; Molotov, reputed the "hardest" of the Stalinists, the most unyielding in seeking to maintain the old régime, and now, above all, the opponent of relaxation of international tension that might break out into a war which the Russian people (and not they alone) dread more than anything else; and Kaganovich, the very incarnation of the Simon Legrees of Stalin's harshest exploitation of the toilers.

But the whole point of all the reforms, the real as well as the sham and apparent, those already vouchsafed and those that will in all probability be granted in addition, is that they must be *safe* reforms. They cannot and will not go beyond what is required to restore that adequate measure of stability to the foundations of the régime which it has lost since Stalin's death, or more exactly, which it has lost to such an extent that the régime is in a state of crisis. The foundations of the régime are the totalitarian powers of the bureaucracy, guaranteed by the abolition of all representative institutions of the people, without which democracy, above all workers' democracy, exists only in the imagination. And while Khrushchev appeals and must appeal for the support of

the people, he cannot, *and he will not under any circumstances*, allow that support to be asserted and tested in the *only* meaningful way, namely, by enfranchising the disfranchised masses, by universal suffrage and with it, necessarily, all the other elementary democratic rights without which voting ceases to be voting and becomes nothing more than a classical Bonapartist plebiscite.

Unless you live in the dream-world where one luminous day the bureaucracy announces to the masses, "Ekh, you are now old or bold enough to be granted all the power to determine your own fate," the inherent limitations upon reforms are plainly indicated. Anything and everything is possible from the bureaucracy now in its days of indecision and apprehension, but not the freedom of the people expressed in the self-maintained machinery of representative government. Ruling classes in the past have fought like tigers against the attempt to deprive them of their power, and in some cases they have yielded forlornly to the will of the people without offering armed resistance. But there is no recorded case of a ruling class committing suicide in deference to the popular will. There is no indication that the Stalinist bureaucracy will offer itself as the first case in history.

But if Khrushchev, or a restored Malenkov (he is after all still alive and therefore still available if the bureaucratic wheel should turn) or any other candidate at present not visible, cannot rule through the machinery of representative government, what machinery is left? It is not possible to rule without a machinery of rule to enforce sovereignty and authority, to see to the execution of decisions, or if it is preferred, an apparatus. Can Khrushchev rule through the rule of the bureaucracy, the party bureaucracy in the first place? Stalin ruled through the rule of the party apparatus, indispensably supplemented by the G.P.U. The G.P.U. is not presently available to Khrushchev, and with its former powers, at least, it is not likely to be available for some time. Is the party apparatus, the party bureaucracy, available to him? It is not. And therein lies another decisive change from the days of Stalin's despotic power.

There are two important reasons why it is not simply at his disposal, at least not yet.

The bureaucracy is not to be had in a day by the first one to come along with the demand that it surrender its favors. Malenkov, has learned this, despite the advantage of having been for years at the central control point of the party bureaucracy under Stalin and of having been designated by Stalin as his successor. He was discarded by machinations and intrigue at the very top without the bureaucracy lifting a finger to protect him. Stalin,

we recall again, had to fight tough and numerous battles before the bureaucracy entrusted him with full power, and even then it was only after he had succeeded in reorganizing and replacing the bureaucracy literally from top to bottom. He won out with them and over them only after having demonstrated over a long period of time and in a whole series of vital questions, that his policies and his leadership sufficed to satisfy their basic requirement, the stability of their rule.

Why should the present bureaucracy, overnight, as it were, turn over full power to Khrushchev, place itself completely at his disposal? He has relieved them of the unendurable terror of Stalin's days, and that is welcome. But it is far from enough. Stability, order—that is enough, or at any rate, it is adequate. The bureaucracy is in its nature obsessed with the fear of self-rule. It has no way of discussing and deciding freely the policies it requires for its preservation. Indeed, it does not want any such way, for inherent in it are the open divisions in its ranks, the cracks in the monolithic structure through which the masses can so easily pour and wash away all the obstacles to popular sovereignty.

The inexorable trend toward extruding a supreme arbiter, even though it has slowed down in the present crisis, is still in operation. The bureaucracy, without a clear course of its own, disoriented by events, can tolerate a Khrushchev while he demonstrates what his capacities are and what they can yield, but it is far from ready to give him full confidence and blind obedience. It does not, or does not yet, oppose Khrushchev; but neither is it committed to him. In the crucial hours when—as all the reports agree—the “anti-party faction” of Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich tried a *coup de palais* against Khrushchev, they seemed to manage without too much difficulty to get a majority in the uppermost circle of the bureaucracy, the Presidium, to favor the ouster of the apparent party boss, and even Bulganin was won to their side for a moment. The *coup* did not, to be sure, succeed; and on that point, more later. But it is preposterous to assume that the bureaucracy as a whole has attached itself slavishly and irretraceably to Khrushchev's claim to supremacy when its most authoritative representatives at the top were ready to challenge the claim so rudely.

On his side, in turn, Khrushchev has little reason to submit his claim for endorsement by the bureaucracy. In the very first place, he has no guarantee of the outcome, since he cannot but know the position and the state of mind of the bureaucracy. He was able, two years ago, to oust Malenkov from the position of Prime Minister, but Malenkov remained in the Presidium. Even

at the June, 1957, meeting of the Central Committee where he succeeded in having Malenkov-Molotov-Kaganovich-Shepilov expelled from the Central Committee, they were not expelled from the party even though the resolution makes a significant allusion to the threat of such expulsion. To attribute such restraint to Khrushchev's oath to avoid Stalin's road or to a passion for the principle of collective leadership, is absurd. The all-but-successful attempt of the Presidium members, who incarnated the "collective leadership," to vote Khrushchev out of his post, just as Malenkov was voted out of his post two years earlier, is sure to have cooled any passion he may have had for the famous principle.

In the second place, there is a sharp conflict between the attempt to gain popularity among the masses and the attempt to rule through the bureaucratic apparatus as before. The bureaucracy is enormously discredited among the people. When Khrushchev delivered his massive blows at Stalin, the bureaucracy as a whole was morally shattered. It is inconceivable that the people would thereafter retain any respect for the representatives of a régime guilty not merely of failing to resist the frightful abominations of Stalin but of defending and participating in them with enthusiasm and praise.

The Russian people are not cattle. There is not a country in the world whose government would last five minutes after it was shown that its entire officialdom had been the active or passive accomplices of such monstrous crimes as Khrushchev catalogued at the 20th Congress, provided the people were free to act. The only difference here is that the Russian people are not yet free to act. But they are free to think to themselves. Their thoughts cannot be consoling to the bureaucracy which was stripped to revolting nakedness by Khrushchev himself. And he would have to be the biggest dolt of all to entertain illusions on this score.

And, in the third place, Khrushchev finds himself compelled to undertake such actions against the bureaucracy as are guaranteed to achieve anything but its enthusiastic support.

*The pores of the Russian economy are choking with bureaucracy.* There is no régime possible in Russia today or tomorrow that could any longer tolerate such a condition. Since Stalin's death, almost a million bureaucrats have had to be sacked from their posts, according to Khrushchev's own report earlier this year. Almost half a million other superfluous bureaucrats, he added, should be up for discharge. These two figures alone are enough to give the appalling picture of the waste, inefficiency and downright parasitism spawned by bureaucratic collectivism. This is the main respect in which it has caught up with, if it has not outstripped,

the vices of capitalism. In addition the vertical super-centralization of industry has multiplied the waste and inefficiency of the economy in grotesque ways. In a situation where the still enormous bureaucracy must be maintained, where the wretched conditions of the workers and peasants must be alleviated to some degree at least, where yesterday's exploitation of the economy of the satellite countries for the benefit of the Russian economy is no longer so easy to pursue, and where the international situation demands strenuous efforts to achieve industrial and military equality and even superiority over the United States—a change in the economic structure is an unpostponable elementary necessity. Khrushchev is trying to undertake the change. The central Moscow ministries of most industries (but not of war industry!) have been eliminated, and Russia has been divided into 92 regions with 92 Economic Councils to manage the industrial establishments of their respective areas, with restricted rights of local planning and of local inter-industrial and inter-factory transactions.

This is not the place to evaluate the economic prospects of the new economic arrangement, except, perhaps, to note that in general, in capitalist economy, too, where industrial and technological rationalization is not unknown, observers tend to abstract their evaluations from what turns out to be decisive in the long run, the influence of the social relations which develop out of the structural changes, and the political consequences that follow. But it is in place to point out that the "horizontal" reorganization of industry, the "decentralization," will not result in greater power for the local bureaucracy and a corresponding "withering away" of the omnipotence of the central state power. This is now the claim of over-enthusiastic observers who expect the early flowering of socialist democracy in Russia as an organic outgrowth of bureaucratic benevolence. But it is the contrary that is indicated. Despotism and decentralization are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, atomization is often the essential precondition for the preservation of despotism. It is worth noting a relevant passage in the well-known official Russian government organ, *Economic Problems* (April, 1957): "It is obvious that the division of the territory not only does not diminish the centralization of the economy by the state throughout the country as a whole, but on the contrary, requires its reinforcement. The economic role of the state is not only not relaxed under present conditions [the conditions created by the establishment of the 92 regional Economic Councils.—M.S.], but acquires a greater reality, becomes more effective." So that, apart from the objective conditions that dictate the "horizontal reform" of the economy, the change has the effect of *dispersing*

the bureaucracy, of reducing its possibilities for cohesion and mutual contact to a local level, and of concentrating the power to make unobstructed decisions on the most vital and fundamental questions in the hands of the uppermost ranks of the centralized state bureaucracy.

What is left? The army, or to be precise, the army apparatus, the officer corps. Khrushchev may inveigh against bureaucrats twice as much as he does in order to elicit the sympathy of the masses. But he needs something stronger than their sympathy to assure the continued domination of the régime over them. The army machine is stronger. Its rise is *entirely* new in the history of the Stalinist régime. It constitutes an important new element of the latest stage in the crisis.

Throughout Stalin's career, he employed political means against his opponents and to solve political problems; he employed bureaucratic means of all sorts toward the same ends; from 1927 onward, he supplemented these increasingly with the employment of the G.P.U. But the military machine was kept apart. Even when it was decimated in the Tukhachevsky purge, it did not lift a finger to intervene in the situation. Politically, it was inert, except to the extent that the party bureaucracy kept it under rigorous surveillance and control through political commissars and G.P.U. spies. There is little doubt that the officer corps, in its own way, shared the growing general apprehensions and discontent over Stalin's policies and despotism, and that is certainly all that ✓ Tukhachevsky and his colleagues were guilty of. But so long as the party bureaucracy was intact and capable of ruling the country and maintaining order, the officer corps remained in its own field and obeyed orders. Even at the end of the war, after the army, and with it its leadership, had acquired a tremendous moral prestige among the people, Stalin was able to keep it in its allotted place and even to banish to the provinces the most popular of the Marshals, Zhukov (under "socialism" there are, of course, Marshals).

Since Stalin's death, a radical change has been in process. There is a crisis of the régime—the rulers can no longer rule in the old way, the ruled do not want to be ruled in the old way. The bureaucracy is no longer intact, no longer solid, no longer self-confident, and order is in jeopardy. The military machine now has to play, dares to play, and is even called to play an increasingly active and direct political role.

Immediately after Stalin's death, Zhukov was brought back to Moscow from his banishment to resume leadership of the army, although still under the civilian control of the minister of defense, "Marshal" Bulganin (Bulganin is as much a military man as

Zhukov is a party man). A few months later the Beria crisis supervened. The reports then current that Zhukov mobilized regular army troops to invest Moscow in order to prevent a possible *coup d'état* by Beria at the head of his G.P.U. divisions, ring with verisimilitude. In any case, Beria was executed after a secret trial presided over by Marshal Koniev, in whose person the officer corps took revenge upon its rival and tormentor, the G.P.U. From that moment on, the exceptional power and prerogatives of the G.P.U. were drastically reduced. Less than two years later, in the Malenkov crisis, Bulganin replaced Stalin's heir, and his own position as war minister was given to Zhukov. It was *the first time*, under Lenin or under Stalin, that this post (or for that matter any other post of cabinet rank) was given to a military man, or to anyone but a party leader. However, it was still only a government post, whereas the real governing body of the country is the Political Bureau or as it is now called the Presidium.

At the 20th Congress, the advance of the new element in the situation was further and more clearly manifested. The more violently Khrushchev denigrated Stalin, the more lyrically did he sing the praises of the army chiefs, of Zhukov in particular. He ridiculed and riddled Stalin's reputation as a military strategist, laughed at him because he "planned operations on a globe," cited case after case of his "nervousness and hysteria" during the war, and topped it all by claiming that Stalin's orders caused numerous defeats at the hands of the Germans, untold and unnecessary deaths of troops, and all but utter disaster in the war. For the military, he had only the most lavish praise. Everything went calamitously in the first period of the war "until our generals, on whose shoulders rested the whole weight of conducting the war, succeeded in changing the situation." To Stalin's contemptuous remarks about Zhukov, Khrushchev reported in 1956 that he had answered stoutly: "I have known Zhukov for a long time; he is a good general and a good military man." At the Congress Zhukov was elected an alternate member of the party Presidium, again an act without precedent in the history of the Stalinist régime, let alone of Lenin's.

Early in 1957, the "anti-party faction" tried its *coup* against Khrushchev, and in his absence, in the meeting of the Presidium. Only Mikoyan stood by Khrushchev; Bulganin wavered. Khrushchev returned precipitately to Moscow; so did Zhukov. All the unofficial newspaper reports agree, and it should be obvious that the account was deliberately "leaked" from an authoritative source, that it was Zhukov who turned the momentary Presidium majority into a minority with the ominous warning that the army stood by Khrushchev.

It is true that Khrushchev called an emergency meeting of the Central Committee to call the Presidium to account. By this act, he violated a fundamental precept of Stalinist rule which had always been not to appeal to a lower body against the decision of a higher one, and no body is higher in the bureaucratic hierarchy than the Presidium. In the unwritten rules of the totalitarian hierarchy, this is an unprecedented, inadmissible and dangerous procedure, which can lead to appealing to a party congress against the Central Committee and God alone knows how much further from there. But Khrushchev was able to venture on this procedure not so much because he was sure that the wider group of the bureaucracy had confidence in him, but because of the crucial and decisive support he had from Zhukov as the authentic representative of the officer corps. He was saved not by the party bureaucracy but by the military. In return, Zhukov was elevated by the Central Committee from alternate member to full member of the Presidium. It has never happened before. For the first time the military occupy not merely decorative positions at Congresses or in government posts, but a full position in the real ruling body of the party and the country as a whole.

Is the road now opening up to a Bonapartist dictatorship of the classical military type? It is. It does not follow that the road will be travelled to the end, but it has opened up. The officer corps, too, wants order and stability in the country. Professional soldiers, officers in particular, are notorious for their contempt of "politicians," that is, of the civilian authorities and even of the civilian population as a whole. When all goes well "at home," the contempt is in check; when there is trouble, difficulty, incompetence and bungling in the civilian government, the contempt becomes more active, outspoken and even defiant; and when the social order itself seems imperilled without anyone being able to stabilize it, the contempt is idealized into the call they feel to intervene to save society with a strong and firm hand.

The party apparatus is not in a position to end the crisis of the régime by stabilizing it. It does not have a consolidated leadership or a clearly-set policy, it has lost heavily in cohesion, and even more heavily in prestige among the people. Can the army apparatus substitute for it? Unlike the party bureaucracy, the officer corps unquestionably enjoys immense popularity, not only because of its successful defense of the country in the war but also because it is not regarded as sharing in complicity and responsibility for the Stalin régime. Indeed, it bears the aura of heroically silent victims and even martyrs of Stalinism, as well as the laurels of heroes in the war victory. The huge popular demon-

stration reported for Zhukov in Leningrad after the June Plenum bears the marks of authentic spontaneity, in contrast to the dreary, manufactured, enforced "ovations" exacted from the people by the bureaucracy. The military has that advantage, and Khrushchev's exceptional efforts to associate himself with it shows that it is not a trifle.

On the other hand, however, the idea that the military has a greater cohesiveness than the disoriented party machine, a greater capacity for decisive political action and the resolve to take the risks of assuming power or trying to—and they would certainly prove to be great risks—is still only a hypothesis, a strongly-indicated hypothesis without which any analysis would be faulty, but still only a hypothesis. It has not yet given sufficient proof in action of the necessary qualities. It cannot be equated, for example, with the Prussian Junkers, who had a long and practiced tradition not only of military but also of political leadership and on top of that a long and strong class bond. The Russian army corps is appearing on the political scene for the first time. This is a phenomenon of first-rate importance, but as yet its importance is more symptomatic than effective. In its first appearance, it is likely to proceed with the greatest caution, feeling its way gradually and resorting only to minor tests of strength and acceptability—*unless* the crisis suddenly sharpens and compels it, in the absence of any other force for "law and order" to make precipitate decisions.

The complexity and fluidity of the situation permits of no certain answer for the next period. To forestall the inevitable, the régime, while it is wrestling with the crisis, may alleviate it by more and more concessions to the masses. To master the bureaucracy, Khrushchev (this one or another one) may invoke the prestige and power of the military as the only means of cowing the party apparatus, an initial indication of which was given by the June crisis. The officer corps may move to the seizure of political power as the savior of the country as a whole and the benevolent protector of the people from the rule and vices of the quarrelsome and incompetent "politicians"; or it may smash the party bureaucracy and try to administer the economy of the country through the medium of a subordinated industrial bureaucracy. These are all real possibilities, and unexpected combinations are not excluded. But anything between or outside of the re-consolidation of the dictatorship over the masses in the old form or in a new one, and the smashing of the dictatorship by a revolutionary people, that is not a real possibility.

And the people, the Russian workers and peasants—and students? Is it really possible for them to undertake a revolution?

After the series of demonstrations, strikes, local uprisings and in one case a national revolution that have marked the post-Stalin period in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, not to mention isolated outbreaks in Russia itself, the skepticism implied in the question should at least be modified. It is not a matter of whether or not the Russian masses want a revolution. They did not want one in 1916 or even in the first month of 1917. It is a question of what they are being driven to in order to solve the crisis of the régime and establish their own law and their own order. The fact that the uprisings against Stalinism started at the ends of the new Russian empire should not disorient the conclusions about the possibilities of an uprising in Russia. Because a decaying organism so often shows the first manifestations of weakness and even paralysis at its extremities does not warrant the diagnosis that the heart is therefore sound. It is certain that the Russian régime itself does not have confidence in such a diagnosis. It is not at all excluded that one of the considerations of the bureaucrats in bringing or allowing the army into such unprecedented prominence and association with the régime is to ward off a revolutionary intervention from below which they take with far greater seriousness than do the gullible visitors from abroad. ✓

The Russian people is a revolutionary people with living revolutionary traditions and very recent revolutionary examples on their borders to remind them of these traditions. The working class in particular is a new, vastly more numerous and compact, more self-confident and more demanding mass than any working class known in Stalin's days. So are the peasants and the students, each in their own way. It was Chesterton who is supposed to have said long ago: "We don't know what the British working classes think because they haven't spoken yet." Neither have the Russian working classes. Not yet. When they do, they will speak with the voice of the revolution whose aim it is, in the forgotten but ever-timely words of Marx, to establish democracy.

*May, 1957*



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