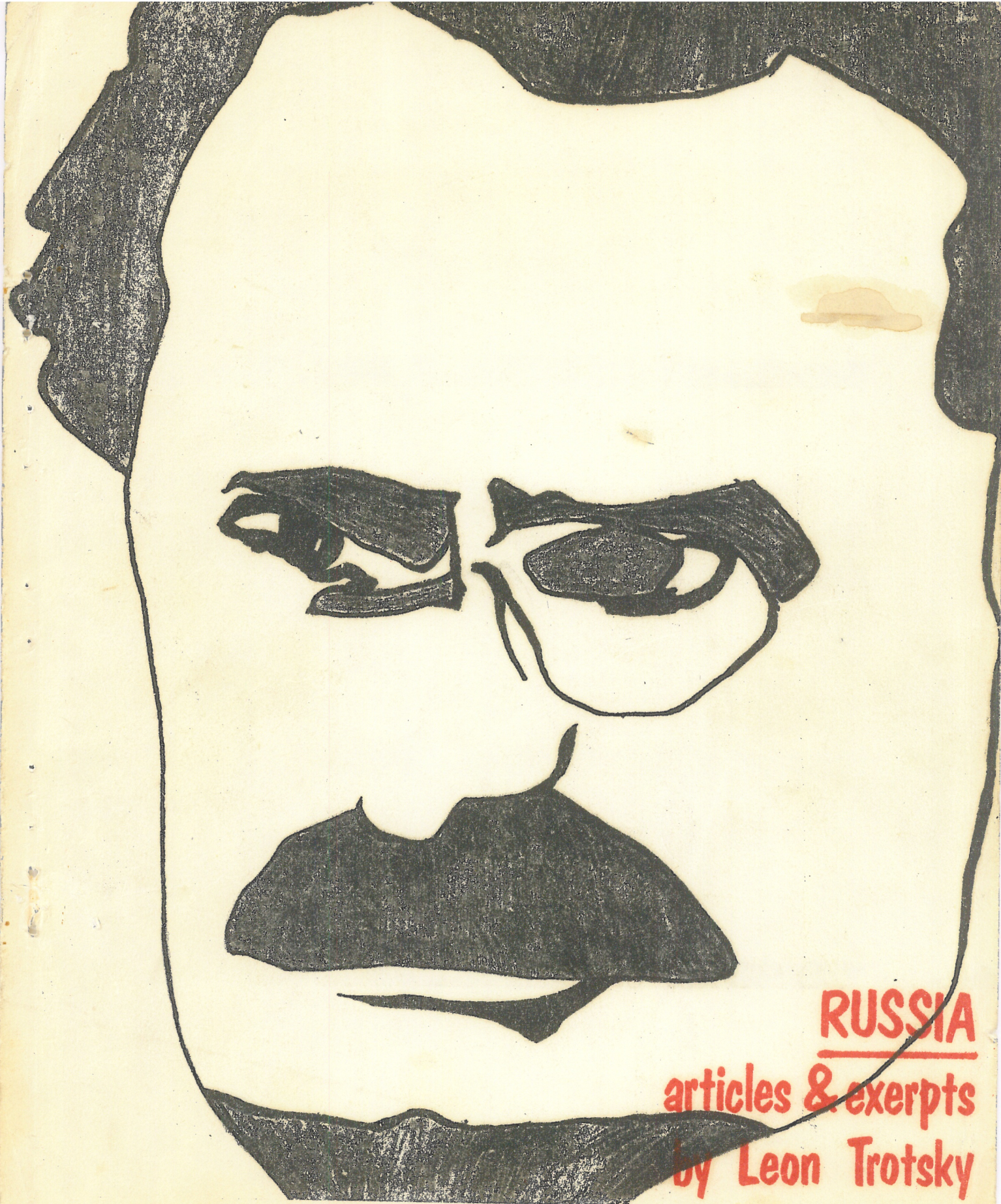




RUSSIA
articles & excerpts
by Leon Trotsky

INTRODUCTION

IS is a new organisation. New in the sense of most of its members being fresh to revolutionary politics. And new in the sense that the present IS is qualitatively different from the old Cliff Socialist Review group of the 1950s.

The qualitative difference lies in the approach it is trying to make to the working class; and not least in the piecemeal abandonment of a whole number of its old politics and attitudes. The epitome of this change is found in its support for North Vietnam and the NLF: a welcome contrast with the flag under which the group was founded - no support to North Korea and China in their war of defence against US imperialism.

Most new members, attracted by the new politics and approach of the Group, take for granted the basic theories of the organisation. Calling Russia, where the workers obviously don't rule directly (and which oppresses the countries of Eastern Europe), state capitalist, seems more than reasonable. If anything, the ruling group in Russia appear worse than our own rulers.

Most of the new members of the organisation are aware of no other approach to Russia - except the absurd claim of the CL that it is socialist. The Trotskyist analysis, that it is a degenerated workers' state, and what this means, is largely unknown to most comrades, or is totally misunderstood. The writings of Trotsky on this question are relatively rare, and even the classic Revolution Betrayed is neglected.

The Trotskyist Tendency believes that Trotsky's analysis of Russia was and remains fundamentally correct. Moreover the issue is not a quibble of secondary importance. The Russian question is fundamental for a revolutionary orientation in the modern world. Russia is the revolution that took place. An analysis of what happened to that revolution and the present results will fundamentally affect our appreciation of the world we are living in today. If Russia is a degenerated workers' state, then it is not difficult to identify countries like China, Cuba etc, in the same category but as deformed workers' states. This means that the Bolshevik analysis of the epoch we are living in as the epoch of world revolution and the overthrow of capitalism, remains a viable one - even though Trotskyists believe that the revolutionary process will not be completed until the democratic power of workers' councils in these countries is won by a political revolution. The basic character of the epoch remains one of the overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of post-capitalist societies, transitional between capitalism and socialism.

PERSPECTIVES

If, however, Russia and the other countries are state capitalist it follows that we are living in the epoch of expanding capitalism, when all that can be expected even from struggles like the Vietnamese, is the emergence of new state capitalist regimes. If capitalism on a world scale is expanding, this in turn places the question of a socialist revolution in the west way down on the agenda - at best. It means that the defeats of the workers in the west over the last decades were not accidental. As Marx said: no social system disappears before all the productive potential contained within it has been exhausted. It also follows that the stalinist bureaucracies which Trotskyists see as usurpers, are legitimate ruling classes, have a necessary historical role and are probably the model for new ruling classes of a state capitalism expanding into new areas of the world.

So it is not a semantic quibble but has vital implications. Embedded in the terminological dispute are many fundamental issues for revolutionary socialists: the evaluation of the Russian Revolution itself; the marxist analysis of the state; the attitude to be adopted - defence, neutralism or hostility - towards the stalinist states; the attitude towards the struggles in the third world where material conditions are much the same as those which bred stalinism. The Russian Revolution remains ^{the} touchstone, the compass, for general revolutionary orientation. It is impossible to understand the great revolutionary movements in China, Cuba and Vietnam since the Second World War without understanding, in a marxist fashion, the class nature of the Soviet union as being fundamentally different from capitalism.

Comrades must not accept the prevailing state capitalist analysis in the Group so easily. Study of the basic documents putting the alternative revolutionary socialist case must be undertaken by all those who are serious. That is why we reproduce a selection of Trotsky's writings on this question. To too many people in IS the Trotskyist case is unfamiliar. For many their 'state capitalism' is merely an awareness of the horrors of stalinism.

ENIGMAS

The designation of Russia as a workers' state of any sort is emotionally satisfying only to GPs - who call it socialist. For those who know the realities of Russia, with its repressive regime, it is otherwise. On the face of it, to call the dictatorship over the workers the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and to call the state which is employed by the bureaucrats against the workers a "workers' state" seems a grotesque sarcasm in bad taste.

It is easier to find other terms, or to find new applications of old terms (state capitalism) to describe the strange Russian reality - this society evolving out of the greatest revolution in history. Internally it lacks all the marks of capitalism (spontaneous regulation of the economy by the free play of the national and international market, and the competition of private capitals). It has shown a dynamic over 50 years that contrasts remarkably with capitalism in this period. Yet it seems as remote from socialism and the ideas of those who made the revolution as it is from classical capitalism.

Trotsky's writings explain the enigmas: how and why the bureaucracy is not a fully fledged ruling class; how and why Russia is neither socialist nor capitalist but a post-capitalist, transitional society; how it is that the actual dictatorship of the bureaucracy can be legitimately described as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Trotsky did more than anyone to analyse the degeneration of the Russian revolution and to fight its degeneration, leading the Bolshevik rearguard. Yet to his dying day he was convinced that Russia remained a workers' state. Grossly deformed - yes, and with the working class ousted from political power, but with the basic social conquests of the revolution still fundamentally intact. Calling it a degenerated workers' state, Trotsky developed a programme for a new, supplementary revolution. Let it be said clearly that there are no differences in substance here between adherents of the degenerated workers' state and state capitalist theories. Trotsky's programme aimed to smash (drastically reorganise) the bureaucratic state machine and re-establish the direct rule of the workers. Adherents of the state capitalism theory have added nothing - not a jot, not a comma, not a full

stop - to this programme. They merely insist on calling it a social as opposed to a political revolution.

On an emotional level of course we are all 'state capitalists' - except that the theory is totally inadequate, useless and has reactionary overtones. Together with Trotsky we hold that between what he called the "hypochrites" (the stalinists) on Russia, and the "snobs" (who 'reject' the Russian reality because it departs from the norms of socialism) it is necessary to find a road which takes account of the living reality in all its contradictions. And which avoids the ultra left utopianism of simply dismissing out of hand the living revolution that had degenerated. That road was opened up by Trotsky's analysis of Russia.

CLIFF

At the end of world war II Tony Cliff developed a theory that aimed to replace Trotsky's analysis of Russia. It added one more to the already wide range of state capitalist analyses. The features of Cliff's theory of state capitalism are: the bureaucracy is a ruling class because it owns the state which owns the means of production; it is moreover a capitalist class because it personifies the drive to accumulate capital, under pressure of international competition. This competition is not directly economic. It takes the form of arms competition - and not competition to sell arms, but to pile up newer, bigger and better arms. Cliff says categorically that without the world pressures and relationships, expressed thus, Russia, on the basis of its own internal relations, would not be capitalist.

The simple critique of this view is that it is not Marxist. Capitalism is impossible except as a more or less freely functioning market economy (monopoly capitalism remains qualitatively of this sort: Russia with its total plan is qualitatively different). It might be argued that international competition, with the country seen as a single firm, makes Russia capitalist (as in the classic marxist theory of state capitalism). Except that the proportion of the G.N.P. of the USSR involved in trade with the west is almost negligible. Cliff admits this: not economic competition but competition of arms.

For Marxists economic competition is fundamentally regulated by the law of labour value as the objective economic regulator of an economy without a plan. The market determines which products of labour are socially necessary and the allocation and reallocation of resources from one economic sphere to another (through shifts in the rate of profit). In this objective process the exchange of commodities is basically regulated according to the amount of socially necessary labour embedded in them. This underlies their exchange value. To take part in this process, to avoid rejection by the market, to be realised in money, all goods, to have exchange value, must be useful: exchange value presupposes use value.

But it is through exchange value and not use value that the basic regulator of the economy, the law of socially necessary labour, expresses itself. Cliff's theory of the capitalist character of the Soviet Union being determined by arms competition - arms which are not sold, nor even (thank god!) used - means that the basis of competition is not exchange value but use value.

This is a fundamental break with marxist economics, owing more to the post-Marx bourgeois economics which degenerated to apologetics by throwing overboard

the objective labour theory of value of Ricardo and Marx (because from it Marx had irrefutably proved that the workers were exploited). They developed a whole new set of economics based on concepts of subjective appreciation of the use values of the goods. In order to substantiate his theory, Cliff has to break with Marxist economics on this level. Consequently he doesn't even use the term capital as a Marxist: in vulgar bourgeois economics this is seen merely as physical accumulation of productive goods. This is how Cliff sees it. This is what is accumulated in Russia, and according to Cliff's schema it is capitalist.

STATE CAPITALISM INEVITABLE ?

The implications of the view that state capitalism inevitably flows from the drive to accumulate 'capital' under international pressure, are developed openly by some of Cliff's followers. Pressure from the international capitalist environment to accumulate, to engage in military competition and accumulation, would of course operate on even a healthy workers' revolution in a relatively advanced country, and would soon lead to the erection of a state or ruling group which would be forced to play the role of pumper of surplus ~~product~~ from the workers. That is, unless the revolution is spread very rapidly, state capitalism is inevitable. As developed by Cliff and his followers (some more crudely than others) this means that unless revolution breaks out either simultaneously or in rapid succession in the major countries of the world any workers' revolution would lead to state capitalism - ie that only state capitalist or capitalist states are possible until capitalism on a world scale has essentially been smashed. For the backward part of the world, this must be seen as an immediate imperative.

As part of the renovating process in the Group now there is a move back to the view that a permanent revolution-type development, with the workers capable of leading a revolution in a backward country, is possible. The inescapable conclusion from the state capitalist theory remains, however, that rapid, if not immediate, degeneration into state capitalism is inevitable without a very immediate revolution in the advanced countries. On this point the state capitalists come close to the crude caricature Trotskyism - 'world revolution means simultaneous revolution' - often held up by the CP. This is a crude utopian and ultimately defeatist position - a perspective of ultra despair. Because the comrades lack any conception of a society transitional between capitalism and socialism, a conception explored by Trotsky and since developed by the FI, they can't avoid this: Or if they think their ideas through to their conclusions, they can't avoid it.

Another implication is that even if the Left Opposition of Bolsheviks had won in Russia in the 1920s state capitalism would inevitably have followed anyway (this has been said openly in debates by people like Ode Nagliatti), and the Left Opposition too would have been forced to play the role of capitalists. Everything here is pre-ordained by the crudest of economic determinism. At the same time the now rejected Marks/Nagliatti Manifesto had to present a crude idealisation of the Left Opposition as "fighting bureaucracy" - in fact to falsify history, because the Left Opposition called in the middle 1920s ^{for} "civilised bureaucracy". But if the choices are so black and white, simon-pure workers' democracy free from all pressures of reality, or state capitalism, then the Left Opposition, to fit the preconceptions of the authors of this manifesto, had to be made to 'fight bureaucracy' - and to hell with the facts. Remarkable what results from the lack of a conception of a transitional society!

We have already glanced at the perspective of the epoch implied - an epoch of expanding capitalism on a world scale. Here it is a matter of the logic of ideas and all the assertions - and wishes - of Cliff and Co, to the contrary won't change that logic.

In general the theory is ultra mechanistic, based on vulgar non-marxist economics, and is irredeemably pessimistic.

POLITICS OF STATE CAPITALISM

Politically it leads to terrible contradictions, because the logic of the ideas which are anti revolutionary and pessimistic are at variance with the subjective desire of those who hold them, to be revolutionary. Politically a state capitalist faces a bleak world where capitalism is stronger than it has ever been, where the stalinist states are not abortions but legitimate class societies, where the most successful struggles in the third world must lead either directly or indirectly to state capitalism. Some see state capitalism being generated within 'liberal' capitalism. Where a Trotskyist sees the struggle in the third world, the upsurge in the west and the crisis of stalinism as a totality indicating that this is the epoch, the era of world revolution. - a state capitalist has no reason to be so sure.

Politically the state capitalist followers of Cliff do not take sides between state capitalism and western capitalism; here again the life-line is broken with Marxism. For a Marxist if it could be shown, as it can be, that what is called state capitalism has led, and is leading, to a gigantic development of the means of production in the third of the world dominated by it, then certain political conclusions would follow necessarily. For Marxists the basic motive force in society is the development of the means of production which create the basis of future socialism. If the formerly backward Russia and the other backward countries are state capitalist then state capitalism is obviously the form through which these countries smash through the road block on development which imperialistic (ie parasitic) western capitalism used to present to them. They are progressive in the sense that Marx said capitalism was once progressive. The marxist conclusion would follow that any victory for western imperialism which threw the 'state capitalist' countries open to its penetration would be reactionary. A Marxist state capitalist would be a defencist. That is, he would be in favour of defending statified property of the stalinist states against the West (while of course advocating a workers' revolution in these states). Marx took sides in various wars: in the US Civil War he took the side of wage slavery against chattel slavery without ceasing to stand for the proletarian revolution. Moralistic attitudes weren't the deciding factors. Marx was a consistent Marxist...

IS has never been consistent. The politics drawn from the state capitalist analysis have never been consistent or stable, and the present shifts politically are but the latest and won't be the last. Political conclusions are drawn arbitrarily, subjectively. Vietnam is supported. Korea was not. The Marxist compass has been smashed. These fundamental characteristics of the non Marxists (or at best semi-Marxists) who lead the Group pervade even its daily life. Different leading comrades, of course, draw different conclusions (the theory of state capitalism allows a real political "consumers' choice" to its adherents!) from the extremely mechanistic and politically prostrate old guard represented by Kidron (see the devastating critique by Mandel, The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism), to the younger "Trotskyists" around Marxist Current who, with equal subjectivism and

arbitrariness attempt to blend the state capitalist basis with some of the politics of Trotskyism.

Any serious critique of the theory of state capitalism which is other than a short sketch must deal systematically with Cliff's book. This the writer had hoped to do in this introduction. But to work, pen in hand, through only the first seven chapters of Cliff's book is to uncover such a heap of confusion and un-Marxist nonsense that clearly a very long critique is needed. This we can't attempt here.

Not the least shoddy part of Cliff's book (and here we refer comrades to it) is his attempt to deal with Trotsky's views: any reader of the articles printed here alone will appreciate how shoddy is Cliff's treatment of Trotsky, whose disciple he claims to be.

In general Cliff's book on Russia reads less like a Marxist tract and more like a moralistic 'primitive socialist indictment'. It is totally subjective, and totally incoherent. Always he measures the backwardness of Russia against ideal norms of - socialism (ie the lowest stage of communism, if used as a marxist term, though one is never sure with Cliff). Contrast this approach with Trotsky's Revolution Betrayed which begins with an attempt to sum up reality in the historical perspective of the actual level of Russia, not against ideal norms. All the time Cliff argues as an outraged moralistic socialist rather than a marxist scientist such as Trotsky tried to be: not surrendering the socialist norms, but also understanding the necessary logic of reality, above all the reality of the transitional regime. One is tempted to believe that if Marx himself were to come across the socialist emotional-moralising of Cliff on Russia he would paraphrase himself: 'I am no socialist - I am a Marxist!'

Cliff's feelings do him credit - but what is needed is the scientific approach of Trotsky. But one could go on and on. What is needed is a systematic review of Cliff's book. For our part the Trotskyist Tendency will publish a comprehensive critique of Cliff's book within the next 3 months.

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AGAIN AND ONCE MORE AGAIN ON THE NATURE OF
THE USSR

Psychoanalysis and Marxism

Certain comrades, or former comrades, such as Bruno R., having forgotten the past discussions and decisions of the Fourth International, attempt to explain my personal estimate of the Soviet state psychoanalytically. "Since Trotsky participated in the Russian Revolution, it is difficult for him to lay aside the idea of the workers' state inasmuch as he would have to renounce his whole life's cause", etc. I think that the old Freud, who was very perspicacious, would have cuffed the ears of psychoanalysts of this ilk a little. Naturally I would never risk taking such action myself. Nevertheless I dare assure my critics that subjectivity and sentimentality are not on my side but on theirs.

Moscow's conduct, which has passed all bounds of abjectness and cynicism, calls forth an easy revolt within every proletarian revolutionary. Revolt engenders need for rejection. When the forces for immediate action are absent, impatient revolutionaries are inclined to resort to artificial methods. Thus arises, for example, the tactic of individual terror. More frequently resort is taken to strong expressions, insults, and to imprecation. In the case which concerns us certain comrades are manifestly inclined to seek compensation through 'terminological' terror. However, even from this point of view the mere fact of qualifying the bureaucracy as a class is worthless. If the Bonapartist riffraff is a class this means that it is not an abortion 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. Here we have the end to which impatient revolt leads when it cuts itself loose from Marxist discipline!

When an emotional mechanic considers an automobile in which, let us say, gangsters have escaped from police pursuit over a bad road, and find the frame bent, the wheels out of line, and the motor partially damaged, he might justifiably say: "It is not an automobile - devil knows what it is!" Such an estimate would lack any technical and scientific value, but it would express the legitimate reaction of the mechanic at the work of the gangsters. Let us suppose, however, that this same mechanic must recondition the object which he named "devil-knows-what-it-is". In this case he will start with the recognition that it is a damaged automobile before him. He will determine which parts are still good and which are beyond repair in order to decide how to begin work. The class-conscious worker will have a similar attitude toward the USSR. He has full right to say that the gangsters of the bureaucracy have transformed the workers' state into "devil-knows-what-it-is". But when he passes from this explosive reaction to the solution of the political problem, he is forced to recognise that it is a damaged workers' state before him, in which the motor of economy is damaged, but which still continues to run and which can be completely reconditioned with the replacement of some parts. Of course this is only an analogy. Nevertheless it is worth reflecting over.

"A Counter-Revolutionary Workers' State"

Some voices cry out: "If we continue to recognise the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state". This argument attempts to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality. But haven't we observed from day to day since 1923 how the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role on the international arena? Have we forgotten the experience of the Chinese Revolution, of

the 1926 general strike in England and finally the very fresh experience of the Spanish Revolution? There are 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 the 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? In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power. The difference in attitude in these two cases is explainable by the simple fact that the trade unions have a long history and we have become accustomed to consider them as realities and not simply as "categories" in our programme. But, as regards the workers' state, there is being evinced an inability to learn to approach it as a real historical fact which has not subordinated itself to our programme.

"Imperialism"?

Can the present expansion of the Kremlin be termed imperialism? First of all we must establish what social content is included in this term. History has known the "imperialism" of the Roman state based on slave labour, the imperialism of feudal land-ownership, the imperialism of commercial and industrial capital, the imperialism of the Tsarist monarchy, etc. The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of "imperialism" in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes, medieval estates and classes. However, in contemporary literature, at least Marxist literature, imperialism is understood to mean the expansionist policy of finance capital which has a very sharply defined economic content. To employ the term "imperialism" for the foreign policy of the Kremlin - without elucidating exactly what this signifies - means simply to identify the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy with the policy of monopolistic capitalism on the basis that both one and the other utilise military force for expansion. Such an identification, capable of sowing only confusion, is much more proper to petty bourgeois democrats than to Marxists.

Continuation of the Policy of Tsarist Imperialism

The Kremlin participates in a new division of Poland, the Kremlin lays hands upon the Baltic states, the Kremlin orients toward the Balkans, Persia and Afghanistan; in other words, the Kremlin continues the policy of Tsarist imperialism. Do we not have the right in this case to label the policy of the Kremlin itself imperialist? This historical-geographical argument is no more convincing than any of the others. The proletarian revolution, which occurred on the territory of the Tsarist empire, attempted from the very beginning to conquer and for a time conquered the Baltic countries; attempted to penetrate Rumania and Persia and at one time led its armies up to Warsaw (1920). The lines of revolutionary expansion were the same as those of Tsarism, since revolution does not change geographical conditions. That is precisely why the Mensheviks at that time already spoke of Bolshevik imperialism as borrowed from the traditions of Tsarist diplomacy. The petty bourgeois democracy willingly resorts to this argument even now. We have no reason, I repeat, for imitating them in this.

Agency of Imperialism?

However, aside from the manner in which to appraise the expansionist policy of the USSR itself, there remains the question of the help which Moscow provides the imperialist policy of Berlin. Here first of all, it is necessary to establish that under certain

conditions - up to a certain degree and in a certain form - the support of this or that imperialism would be inevitable even for a completely healthy workers' state - in virtue of the impossibility of breaking away from the chains of world imperialist relations. The Brest-Litovsk peace without the least doubt temporarily reinforced German imperialism against France and England. An isolated workers' state cannot fail to manoeuvre between the hostile imperialist camps. Manoeuvring means temporarily supporting one of them against the other. To know exactly which of the two camps it is more advantageous or less dangerous to support at a certain moment is not a question of principle but of practical calculation and foresight. The inevitable disadvantage which is engendered as a consequence of this constrained support for one bourgeois state against another is more than covered by the fact that the isolated workers' state is thus given the possibility of continuing its existence.

But there is manoeuvring and manoeuvring. At Brest-Litovsk the Soviet government sacrificed the national independence of the Ukraine in order to salvage the workers' state. Nobody could speak of treason toward the Ukraine, since all class-conscious workers understood the forced character of this sacrifice. It is completely different with Poland. The Kremlin has never and at no place represented the question as if it had been constrained to sacrifice Poland. On the contrary, it boasts cynically of its combination, which affronts, rightfully, the most elementary democratic feelings of the oppressed classes and people throughout the world and thus weakens extremely the international situation of the Soviet Union. The economic transformations in the occupied provinces do not compensate for this by even a tenth part!

The entire foreign policy of the Kremlin in general is based upon a scoundrelly embellishment of the 'friendly' imperialism and thus leads to the sacrifice of the fundamental interests of the world workers' movement for secondary and unstable advantages. After five years of duping the workers with slogans for the "defense of the democracies" Moscow is now occupied with covering up Hitler's policy of pillage. This in itself still does not change the USSR into an imperialist state. But Stalin and his Comintern are now indubitably the most valuable agency of imperialism.

If we want to define the foreign policy of the Kremlin exactly, we must say that it is the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy of a degenerated workers' state in imperialist encirclement. This definition is not as short or as sonorous as "imperialist policy", but in return it is more precise.

"The Lesser Evil"

The occupation of eastern Poland by the Red Army is to be sure a 'lesser evil' in comparison with the occupation of the same territory by Nazi troops. But this lesser evil was obtained because Hitler was assured of achieving a greater evil. If somebody sets or helps to set a house on fire and afterwards saves five out of ten of the occupants of the house in order to convert them into his own semi-slaves, that is to be sure a lesser evil than to have burned the entire ten. But it is dubious that this firebug merits a medal for the rescue. If nevertheless a medal were given to him he should be shot immediately after as in the case of the hero in one of Hugo's novels.

"Armed Missionaries"

Robespierre once said that people do not like missionaries with bayonets. By this he wished to say that it is impossible to impose revolutionary ideas and institutions on other people through military violence. This correct thought does not signify of course the inadmissibility of military intervention in other countries in order to

co-operate in a revolution. But such an intervention, as part of a revolutionary international policy, must be understood by the international proletariat, must correspond to the desires of the toiling masses in the country on whose territory the revolutionary troops enter. The theory of socialism in one country is not capable, naturally, of creating this active international solidarity which alone can prepare and justify armed intervention. The Kremlin poses and resolves the question of military intervention, like all other questions of its policy, absolutely independently of the ideas and feelings of the international working class. Because of this, the latest diplomatic "successes" of the Kremlin monstrously compromise the USSR and introduce extreme confusion into the ranks of the world proletariat.

Insurrection on Two Fronts

But if the question thus shapes itself - some comrades say - is it proper to speak of the defense of the USSR and the occupied provinces? Is it not more correct to call upon the workers and peasants in both parts of former Poland to arise against Hitler as well as against Stalin? Naturally, this is very attractive. If revolution surges up simultaneously in Germany and in the USSR, including the newly occupied provinces, this would resolve many questions at one blow. But our policy cannot be based upon only the most favourable, the most happy combination of circumstances. The question is posed thus: What to do if Hitler, before he is crushed by revolution, attacks the Ukraine before revolution has smashed Stalin? Will the partisans of the Fourth International in this case fight against the troops of Hitler as they fought in Spain in the ranks of the Republican troops against Franco? We are completely and whole-heartedly for an independent (of Hitler as well as of Stalin) Soviet Ukraine. But what to do if, before having obtained this independence, Hitler attempts to seize the Ukraine which is under the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy? The Fourth International answers: Against Hitler we will defend this Ukraine enslaved by Stalin.

"Unconditional Defense of the USSR"

What does "unconditional" defense of the USSR mean? It means that we do not lay any conditions upon the bureaucracy. It means that independently of the motive and causes of the war we defend the social basis of the USSR, if it is menaced by danger on the part of imperialism.

Some comrades say: "And if the Red Army tomorrow invades India and begins to put down a revolutionary movement there shall we in this case support it?" Such a way of posing a question is not at all consistent. It is not clear above all why India is implicated. Is it not simpler to ask: If the Red Army menaces workers' strikes or peasant protests against the bureaucracy in the USSR shall we support it or not? Foreign policy is the continuation of the internal. We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. We have promised to defend only the USSR as a workers' state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers' state.

An adroit casuist can say: If the Red Army, independently of the character of the 'work' fulfilled by it, is beaten by the insurgent masses in India, this will weaken the USSR. To this we will answer: The crushing of a revolutionary movement in India, with the co-operation of the Red Army, would signify an incomparably greater danger to the social basis of the USSR than an episodic defeat of counter-revolutionary detachments of the Red Army in India. In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the USSR.

A trade union led by reactionary fakers organises a strike against the admission of Negro workers into a certain branch of industry. Shall we support such a shameful strike? Of course not. But let us imagine that the bosses, utilising the given strike, make an attempt to crush the trade union and to make impossible in general the organised self-defense of the workers. In this case we will defend the trade union as a matter of course in spite of its reactionary leadership. Why is not this same policy applicable to the USSR?

The Fundamental Rule

The Fourth International has established firmly that in all imperialist countries, independent of the fact as to whether they are in alliance with the USSR or in a camp hostile to it, the proletarian parties during the war must develop the class struggle with the purpose of seizing power. At the same time the proletariat of the imperialist countries must not lose sight of the interests of the USSR's defense (or of that of colonial revolutions) and in case of real necessity must resort to the most decisive action, for instance, strikes, acts of sabotage, etc. The groupings of the powers since the time the Fourth International formulated this rule have changed radically. But the rule itself retains all its validity. If England and France tomorrow menace Leningrad or Moscow, the British and French workers should take the most decisive measures in order to hinder the sending of soldiers and military supplies. If Hitler finds himself constrained by the logic of the situation to send Stalin military supplies, the German workers, on the contrary, would have no reason for resorting in this concrete case to strikes or sabotage. Nobody, I hope, will propose any other solution.

"Revision of Marxism"?

Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article ("The USSR in the War") of the system of "bureaucratic collectivism" as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realisable "by itself", but as a result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties. The proletariat's decisive advantage in this struggle resides in the fact that it represent historical progress, while the bourgeoisie incarnates reaction and decline. Precisely in this is the source of our conviction in victory. But we have full right to ask ourselves: What character will society take if the forces of reaction conquer?

Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism. After the Italian 'experience' we repeated thousands of times: either communism or fascism. The real passage to socialism cannot fail to appear incomparably more complicated, more heterogeneous, more contradictory than was foreseen in the general historical scheme. Marx spoke about the dictatorship of the proletariat and its future withering away but said nothing about bureaucratic degeneration of the dictatorship. We have observed and analysed for the first time in experience such degeneration. Is this revision of Marxism?

The march of events has succeeded in demonstrating that the delay of the socialist revolution engenders the indubitable phenomena of barbarism - chronic unemployment, pauperisation of the petty bourgeoisie, fascism, finally wars of extermination which do not open up any new road. What social and political forms can the new "barbarism" take, if we admit theoretically that mankind should not be able to elevate itself to socialism? We have the possibility of expressing ourselves on this subject more

concretely than Marx. Fascism on one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other outline the social and political forms of a neo-barbarism. An alternative of this kind - socialism or totalitarian servitude - has not only theoretical interest, but also enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for socialist revolution appears most graphically.

If we are to speak of a revision of Marx, it is in reality the revision of those comrades who project a new type of state, "non-bourgeois" and "non-worker". Because the alternative developed by me leads them to draw their own thoughts up to their logical conclusion, some of these critics, frightened by the conclusions of their own theory, accuse me of revising Marxism. I prefer to think that it is simply a friendly jest.

The Right of Revolutionary Optimism

I endeavoured to demonstrate in my article "The USSR in the War" that the perspective of a non-worker and non-bourgeois society of exploitation, or "bureaucratic collectivism", is the perspective of complete defeat and the decline of the international proletariat, the perspective of the most profound historical pessimism. Are there any genuine reasons for such a perspective? It is not superfluous to inquire about this among our class enemies.

In the weekly of the well-known newspaper PARIS-SOIR of August 31st 1939, an extremely instructive conversation is reported between the French ambassador Coulondre and Hitler on August 25th, at the time of their last interview. (The source of the information is undoubtedly Coulondre himself.) Hitler sputters, boasts of the pact which he concluded with Stalin ("a realistic pact") and "regrets" that German and French blood will be spilled.

"But", Coulondre objects, "Stalin displayed great double-dealing. The real victor (in case of war) will be Trotsky. Have you thought this over?"

"I know", - der Fuehrer responds, "but why did France and Britain give Poland complete freedom of action?" etc.

These gentlemen like to give a personal name to the spectre of revolution. But this of course is not the essence of this dramatic conversation at the very moment when diplomatic relations were ruptured. "War will inevitably provoke revolution", the representative of imperialist democracy, himself chilled to the marrow, frightens his adversary.

"I know", Hitler responds, as if it were a question decided long ago. "I know". Astonishing dialogue!

Both of them, Coulondre and Hitler, represent the barbarism which advances over Europe. At the same time neither of them doubts that their barbarism will be conquered by socialist revolution. Such is now the awareness of the ruling class of all the capitalist countries of the world. Their complete demoralisation is one of the most important elements in the relation of class forces. The proletariat has a young and still weak revolutionary leadership. But the leadership of the bourgeoisie rots on its feet. At the very outset of the war which they could not avert, these gentlemen are convinced in advance of the collapse of their regime. This fact alone must be for us the source of invincible revolutionary optimism!

October 18th 1939

ONCE AGAIN: THE U.S.S.R. AND ITS DEFENCE

CRAIPEAU FORGETS THE PRINCIPAL TEACHINGS OF MARXISM

Comrade Craipeau wants to persuade us once again that the Soviet bureaucracy as such is a class. It is not a question, however, for him, of pure "sociology". No. All he wants, as we shall see, is once and for all to mark out a free and straight path to his kind of internationalism, alas, which is not at all sure of itself. If the bureaucracy is not a class, if the Soviet Union can still be recognised as a workers' state, it is necessary to support it during the war. How then can one remain in irreconcilable opposition to one's own government, if the latter is allied to the Soviets? There you have the terrible temptation to fall into social-patriotism! No, it is far more preferable to make a radical sweep of the field; the stalinist bureaucracy is an exploiting class, and in the case of war, we hardly need to distinguish between the Soviets and Japan.

Unfortunately, this terminological radicalism does not advance things very much. Let us admit for a moment that the bureaucracy is really a CLASS, in the sense of Marxist sociology. We then have a new form of class society which is identical neither with feudal society nor with capitalist society, and which never was foreseen by Marxist theoreticians. Such a discovery is worthy of a little more attentive analysis.

Why does capitalist society find itself in a blind alley? Because it is no longer capable of developing the productive forces either in the advanced countries, or in the backward countries. The world imperialist chain was broken at its weakest link, Russia. Now we learn that in place of the bourgeois society there has been established a new class society. Craipeau has not yet given it any name nor analysed its internal laws. But that does not prevent us from seeing that the new society is progressive in comparison with capitalism, for on the basis of nationalised property the new possessing "class" has assured a development of productive forces never equalled in the history of the world. Marxism teaches us, does it not, that the productive forces are the fundamental factor of historic progress. A society which is not capable of assuring the growth of economic power is still less capable of assuring the well-being of the working masses, whatever may be the mode of distribution. The antagonism between feudalism and capitalism and the decline of the former has been determined precisely by the fact that the latter opened up new and grandiose possibilities for the stagnating productive forces. The same applies to the USSR. Whatever its modes of exploitation may be, this new society is by its very character superior to capitalist society. There you have the real point of departure for Marxist analysis!

This fundamental factor, the productive forces, also has its reflection in the ideological domain. While the economic life of capitalist countries no longer teaches us anything except different forms of stagnation and decay, the nationalised and planned economy of the USSR is the greatest school for all humanity aspiring to a better future. One must be blind not to see this difference!

In the war between Japan and Germany on one side, and the USSR on the other, there would be involved not a question of equality in distribution, or a proletarian democracy, or of Vyshinsky's justice, but the fate of the NATIONALISED PROPERTY AND PLANNED ECONOMY. The victory of the imperialist states would signify the collapse not only of the new exploiting "class" in the USSR, but also of the new forms of production - the lowering of the whole Soviet economy to the level of a backward and semi-colonial capitalism. Now I ask Craipeau: when we are faced with the struggle between two states which are - let us admit it - both class states, but one of which represents imperialist stagnation and the other tremendous economic progress, do we not have to support the progressive state against the reactionary state? Yes or no?

In his entire thesis, Craipeau speaks of the most diverse things, and things furtherest away from the subject, but he does not mention a single time the decisive factor of Marxist sociology, the development of the productive forces. This is precisely why his entire construction remains suspended in air. He juggles with terminological shadows ("class", "non-class") instead of grasping the reality. He believes that it suffices to attribute the term class to the bureaucracy in order to avoid the necessity of analysing what place the new society occupies in the historic rise of humanity. Wishing to force us not to distinguish between a society which is absolutely reactionary since it fetters and even destroys the productive forces, and a society which is relatively progressive, since it has assured a great upsurge in the economy, Craipeau wants to impose upon us the policy of reactionary "neutrality". Yes, Comrade Craipeau, reactionary!

BUT IS THE BUREAUCRACY A CLASS ?

One sees from the preceding that we could very well dispense with again analysing this theoretical question, that is to say, the question preoccupying Craipeau, which in itself is far from being decisive for our policy in time of war. But the problem of the bureaucracy's social character is, despite everything, very important from a general viewpoint and we do not see any reason to make the slightest concession to Craipeau on this level. Our critic changes his arguments without putting himself to any inconvenience. This time he draws his smashing argument from a statement in THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED, to the effect that, "all the means of production belong to the state, and the state to the bureaucracy, the latter becomes the collective proprietor of the means of production and by that alone, the possessing and exploiting class." The remainder of Craipeau's argumentation, with the air of polemicising against me, is that the Thermidorian bureaucracy is evil, rapacious, reactionary, blood-thirsty, etc. A real revelation! However, we never said that the stalinist bureaucracy was virtuous! We have only denied it the quality of class in the Marxist sense, that is to say, with regard to ownership of the means of production. But there is Craipeau forcing me to disown myself, since I recognised that the bureaucracy treats the state as its own property. "And that's the key to the enigma!" By this oversimplified argument Craipeau shows a deplorable lack of dialectic sense. I have never stated that the Soviet bureaucracy was equal to the bureaucracy of the absolute monarchy or to that of liberal capitalism. Nationalised economy creates for the bureaucracy an entirely new situation and opens up new possibilities - of progress as well as of degeneration. We more or less knew this even before the revolution. The analogy between the Soviet bureaucracy and that of the fascist state is much greater, above all from the viewpoint that interests us. The fascist bureaucracy likewise treats the state as its property. It imposes severe restrictions upon private capital and often provokes convulsions within it. We can say, by way of a logical argument: if the fascist bureaucracy succeeded in more and more imposing its discipline and its

restrictions on the capitalists without effective resistance on the part of the latter, this bureaucracy could gradually transform itself into a new ruling "class" absolute analagoud to the Soviet bureaucracy. But the fascist state belongs to the bureaucracy only "in some respect". Those are three little words that Craipeau deliberately ignores. But they have their importance. They are even decisive. They are an integral part of the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality. If Hitler tries to appropriate the state, and by that means, appropriate private property completely and not only "in some respect", he will bump up against the violent opposition of the capitalists; this would open up great revolutionary possibilities for the workers. There are, however, ultra-lefts who apply to the fascist bureaucracy the reasoning that Craipeau applies to the Soviet bureaucracy and who place an equal sign between the fascist and stalinist regimes (some German Spartakists, Hugo Urbahns, certain anarchists, etc.) We have said of them what we say of Craipeau: their error is in believing that the foundations of society can be changed without revolution or counter-revolution; they unwind the film of reformism in reverse.

But it is here that Craipeau, still jubilant, quotes another statement of "The Revolution Betrayed" regarding the Soviet bureaucracy: "If these relations should be stabilised, legalised, become the norms, without any resistance or against the resistance of the workers, they would end up in the complete liquidation of the conquests of the proletarian revolution." And Craipeau concludes; "Thus Comrade Trotsky envisages the possibility (in the future) of a passage without military intervention (?) from the workers' state to the capitalist state. In 1933, that used to be called unrolling the film of reformism in reverse." That is called the same thing in 1937. What for me is purely logical argument, Craipeau considers a historical prognosis. Without a victorious civil war the bureaucracy cannot give birth to a new ruling class. That was and that remains my thought. Besides, what is happening in the USSR is only a preventive civil war, opened up by the bureaucracy. And nevertheless, it has not yet touched the economic foundations of the state created by the revolution and which, despite all the deformation and distortion, assures an unprecedented development of the productive forces.

Nobody has ever denied the possibility - especially in the case of prolonged world decay - of the restoration of a new possessing class springing from the bureaucracy. The present social position of the bureaucracy which by no means of the state holds the productive forces in its hands "in some respect" is an extremely important point of departure for this transformation. It is, however, a question of a historic possibility and not of an already accomplished fact.

IS A CLASS THE PRODUCT OF ECONOMIC CAUSES OR OF POLITICAL CAUSES ?

In THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED I attempted to give a definition of the present Soviet regime. This definition comprises nine paragraphs. It is not very elegant, I'll admit, this series of descriptive and cautious formulas. But it attempts to be honest with regard to reality. That's always an advantage. Craipeau doesn't even mention this definition. He doesn't oppose another one to it. He doesn't say if the new exploitive society is superior or inferior to the old one, and he doesn't ask himself if this new society is an inevitable stage between capitalism and socialism or if it is merely a historic "accident". However, from the point of view of our general historical perspective, as it is formulated in the "Communist Manifesto" of Marx and Engels, the sociological definition of the bureaucracy assumes capital importance.

The bourgeoisie came into the world as an element born of the new form of production; it remained a historic necessity as long as the new form of production had not

exhausted its possibilities. The same assestion can be made with regard to all previous social classes; the slave-owners, the feudal lords, the medieval master-artisans. In their time they were all the representatuves and the leaders of a system of production which had its place in the advance of humanity. How, then, does Craipeau appraise the historical place of the "bureaucracy-class"? He doesn't say anything on this decisive question. Nevertheless, we have repeated many times, with the aid of Craipeau himself, that the degeneration of the Soviet state is the product of the retardation in the world revolution, that is to say, the result of political and "conjunctural" class? I really doubt that. If Craileau will consent to verify his rather hasty conception from the point of view of the historic succession of social regimes, he will surely recognise himself that to give the bureaucracy the name possessing class is not only an abuse of terminology, but moreover a great political danger which can lead to the derailment of our historic perspective. Does Craipeau see sufficient reasons to revise the Marxist conception on this capital point? As for myself, I do not see any. That is why I refuse to follow Craipeau.

However, we can and must say that the Soviet bureaucracy has all the views of a possessing class without having any of its "virtues" (organic stability, certain moral norms, etc.). Experience has taught us that the workers' state is still a state, that is, a product of the barbaric past; that it is doubly barbaric in a backward and isolated country; that under unfavourable conditions it can degenerate to the point of becoming unrecognisable; that it may require a supplementary revolution in order to be regenerated! But the workers' state nonetheless remains an inevitable stage on our road. This stage cannot be overcome except by the permanent revolution of the international proletariat.

AND WHERE IS THE DIALECTIC ?

I cannot follow the entire argumentation of Comrade Craipeau point by point; for that it is really necessary to recapitulate the entire Marxist conception. The trouble is that Craipeau does not analyse the facts as they are, but rather collects logical arguments in favour of a preconceived thesis. This method is in its essence anti-dialectic and therefore anti-Marxist. I will give some samples of this.

A) "The Russian proletariat lost all hope of political power many years ago..." Craipeau takes care not to say exactly just when. He merely wants to create the impression that our tendency has nurtured illusions for "many years". He forgets to say that in 1923 the bureaucracy was quite shaken up and that only the German defeat and the discouragement of the Russian proletariat which followed it allowed a re-stabilisation of its position. During the Chinese revolution (1925-27) the crisis was repeated with similar phases. The first Five-Year Plan and the great rumblings in Germany which preceded Hitler's rise (1931-33) once again threatened bureaucratic domination. Finally, can we doubt for an instant that, if the Spanish revolution had been victorious and if the French workers had been able to develop their May-June offensive of 1936 to its conclusion, the Russian proletariat would have recovered its courage and its combativity and overthrown the Thermidoreans with a minimum of effort. It is only a succession of the most terrible and depressing defeats throughout the entire world that has stabilised Stalin's regime. Craipeau opposes the result which is quite contradictory in itself, by the way, to the process which produced it and to our policy, which was the reflection of this process.

B) In order to refute the argument that the bureaucracy manipulates the national resources only as a corporation guild, an extremely wobbly one at that, and that the isolated bureaucrats do not have the right to freely dispose of state property,

Craipeau replies: "The bourgeois (?) themselves had to wait for a long time before they could transmit to their descendants title to property over the means of production. At the dawn of the guilds, the boss was elected by his peers..." etc. But Craipeau leaves aside the trifle that precisely at the "dawn of the guilds", the latter were not yet divided into classes and that the boss was not 'bourgeois' in the modern sense of the word. The transformation of quantity into quality does not exist for Craipeau.

C) "Private property is being restored, inheritance re-established ..." But Craipeau avoids saying that it is a matter of property over objects of personal use, and not of the means of production. He likewise forgets to mention the fact that what the bureaucrats, even those in high places, possess in private property is nothing in comparison with the material resources opened up to them by their posts, and that precisely the present 'purge', which by one stroke of the pen throws thousands upon thousands of the families of the bureaucrats into the greatest poverty, demonstrates how entirely fragile are the links between the bureaucrats themselves, and all the more so between their families, and state property.

D) The preventive civil war being conducted at present by the ruling clique demonstrates anew that the latter cannot be overthrown, except by revolutionary force. But since this new revolution must develop on the basis of state property and planned economy, we have characterised the overthrow of the bureaucracy as a political revolution in contradistinction to the social revolution of 1917. Craipeau finds that this distinction "remains in the domain of casuistry". And why such severity? Because, you see, the recapture of power by the proletariat will also have social consequences. But the bourgeois political revolutions 1830, 1848 and September 1870 also had social consequences insofar as they seriously changed the division of the national income. But, my dear Craipeau, all is relative in this world which is not a creation of ultra-left formalists. The social changes provoked by the so-called political revolutions, serious as they were, really appear to be secondary when they are compared with the Great French Revolution, which was the bourgeois social revolution par excellence. What Comrade Craipeau lacks is a sense of proportion and the concept of relativity. Our young friend is not at all interested in the law of transformation of quantity into quality. And yet that is the most important law of the dialectic. It is true that the authorities of the bourgeois academic world find that the dialectic in itself is in the "domain of casuistry".

E) It is not by chance that Craipeau is inspired by the sociology of M. Yvon. The personal observations of Yvon are honest and very important. But it is not by accident that he has found refuge in the little haven of the "REVOLUTION PROLETARIENNE". Yvon is interested in the 'economy', in the 'workshop' - to use Proudhon's word - and not in 'politics'; that is, in generalised economy. He belongs, in form, to the Proudhonist school; this permitted him precisely to remain neutral during the struggle between the Left Opposition and the bureaucracy; he did not understand that the fate of the 'workshop' depended on it. What he has to say about the struggle "for the heritage of Lenin" without distinguishing the social tendencies - even today, in 1937! - clearly reveals his altogether petty bourgeois conception, entirely contemplative and not at all revolutionary. The notion of class is an abstraction for Yvon which he superimposes over the abstraction "workshop". It is really sad that Craipeau does not find any other source of theoretical inspiration!

DEFENCE OF THE USSR AND SOCIAL-PATRIOTISM

This whole sociological scaffolding, unfortunately very fragile, only serves Craipeau, as we have said, to flee from the necessity of distinguishing between the

USSR and the imperialist states during the war. The last two paragraphs of his treatise, which deal with the subject, are particularly revealing. Craipeau tells us: 'every European or world war is resolved in our day by imperialist conflicts and only the stalinist and reformist fools can believe that, for example, the stakes of tomorrow's war will be the fascist regime or the democratic regime'. Mark well this magisterial thesis; somewhat simplified, it is true, but nevertheless borrowed, this time, from the Marxist arsenal. Immediately after this, in order to characterise and to flay the USSR as the "champion of the imperialist war", Craipeau tells us: "In the camp of Versailles, its (the USSR's) diplomacy now plays the same animating role as Hitlerite diplomacy in the other camp." Let us admit it. But is this imperialist character of the war determined by the provocative role of fascist diplomacy? Not at all. "Only the stalinist or reformist fools can believe it." And I hope that we others are not going to apply the same criterion to the Soviet state. One is a defeatist in the imperial countries - isn't that so? - because one wants to crush the regime of private property and not because one desires to castigate some "aggressor". In the war of Germany against the USSR, it will be a matter of changing the economic base of the latter, insofar as the imperialists are concerned, and not of punishing Stalin and Litvinov. And then? Craipeau has established his fundamental thesis solely in order to take the opposite road. The danger, the real danger, consists, according to him, in that the social-patriots of every calibre will take the defense of the USSR as the pretext for a new treachery. "In those conditions any equivocation in our attitude becomes fatal." And in conclusion: "Today it is necessary to choose; either the 'unconditional defense' of the USSR, that is (!!!), the sabotage of the revolution in our country and in the USSR, or defeatism and the revolution." There we are. It is not a matter at all of the social character of the USSR - what does that matter - since according to Craipeau, the defense of a workers' state, even when it is most authentic, implies that the proletariat of the allied country concludes a sacred union with its own bourgeoisie. "And there is the key to the enigma" as others say. Craipeau believes that in the war - the war with a capital W - the proletariat should not be interested in whether it is a war against Germany, the USSR, or against Morocco in rebellion, because in all these cases it is necessary to proclaim "defeatism without phrases" as the only possibility of escaping the grip of social-patriotism. Once again we see, and with what clarity, that ultra-leftism is always an opportunism which is afraid of itself and demands absolute guarantees - that is, non-existent guarantees - that it will remain true to its flag. This type of intransigent calls to mind that type of timid and weak man who, becoming furious, shouts to his friends: "Hold me back, I'm going to do something terrible!" Give me hermetically sealed theses, put impenetrable blinkers over my eyes, or else I'm going to do something terrible! Really, we have found the key to the enigma!

But in any case does Craipeau, for instance, doubt the proletarian character of the Soviet state between 1918 and 1923 or at least, in order to make a concession to the ultra-left, between 1918 and 1921? In that period the Soviet state manoeuvred on the international arena and sought temporary allies. At the same time, it is precisely in that period that defeatism was made a duty for the workers of all the imperialist countries, the 'enemies' as well as the temporary 'allies'. The duty of defending the USSR has never meant, for the revolutionary proletariat, giving a vote of confidence to its bourgeoisie. The attitude of the proletariat in the war is a continuation of its attitude in the time of peace. The proletariat defends the USSR by its revolutionary policy, never subordinated to the bourgeoisie, but always adapted to the concrete circumstances. That was the teaching of the first four congresses of the Communist International. Does Craipeau demand a retrospective revision of this teaching?

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If Blum, instead of proclaiming the perfidious "non-intervention" and - always obeying the orders of finance capital - had supported Caballero and Negrin with their capitalist democracy, would Craipeau have renounced his irreducible opposition to the "People's Front" government? Or would he have renounced the duty to distinguish between the two camps fighting in Spain and of adapting his policy to this distinction?

The same holds for the Far East. If Chiang, following England, should tomorrow declare war against Japan, is Craipeau going to participate in a sacred union in order to help China? Or will he, on the contrary, proclaim that for him there is no difference between China and Japan that can possibly influence his policy? Craipeau's alternative: either the defence of the USSR, of Ethiopia, of Republican Spain, of colonial China, etc. by concluding the sacred union, or thoroughgoing defeatism, hermetically sealed and cosmic in scope - this fundamentally false alternative will crumble into dust at the first test of events and open the doors wide for the crassest sort of social-patriotism.

"Our own theses on the war" Craipeau asks, "are they exempt from any equivocation on this question?" Unfortunately not! Analysing the necessity of defeatism, they underline that "IN THE CHARACTER OF THE PRACTICAL ACTIONS THERE MAY BE CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCES PROVOKED BY THE CONCRETE SITUATION IN THE WAR." For instance, the theses point out in case of a war between the USSR and Japan, we must not "sabotage the sending of arms to the USSR", consequently we must avoid instigating strikes which sabotage the manufacture of arms, etc. One can hardly believe one's eyes. The events have confirmed our theses on this point remarkably, with an indisputable force, and especially in France. Workers' meetings for months vibrated with the cry "Airplanes for Spain!" Imagine for a moment that Blum had decided to send some. Imagine that at this particular moment a strike of longshoremen or of sailors was in process. What would Craipeau have done? Would he have opposed the cry "Airplanes for Spain"? Would he have counselled workers on strike to make an exception for this cargo of airplanes? But the USSR really did send airplanes (at quite a high price and on the condition of support for the capitalist regime, I know that very well). Should the Bolshevik-Leninists have called upon the Soviet workers to sabotage these shipments? Yes or no? If tomorrow the French workers learn that two boatloads of ammunition are being prepared for shipment from France, one to Japan and the other to China, what will Craipeau's attitude be? I consider him enough of a revolutionist to call upon the workers to boycott the boat destined for Tokio and to let through the boat for China, without, however, concealing his opinion of Chiang Kai-shek, and without expressing the slightest confidence in Chautemps. That is precisely what our theses say: "In the character of the practical actions there may be considerable differences provoked by the concrete situation in the war." Doubts were still possible, concerning this formula, at the time when the draft these were published. But today, after the experience of Ethiopia, of Spain, and of the Sino-Japanese war, to speak of equivocation in our theses seems to me to be an ultra-left Bourbon who wants to learn nothing and forget nothing.

Comrade Craipeau, the equivocation is entirely on your side. Your article is full of such equivocations. It is really time to get rid of them. I know very well that even in your errors you are guided by your revolutionary hatred of the oppression of the Thermidorian bureaucracy. But sentiment alone, no matter how legitimate, cannot replace a correct policy based on objective facts. The proletariat has sufficient reasons to overthrow and to chase out the stalinist bureaucracy, corrupt to the bone. But precisely because of that, it cannot directly or indirectly leave this task to Hitler or to the Mikado. Stalin overthrown by the workers - that's a great step forward toward socialism. Stalin crushed by the imperialists - that's the counter-revolution triumphant. That is the precise sense of our defence of the USSR. On a world scale, analogous, from this point of view, to that of our defence of democracy on a national scale!

November 4th 1937

THE USSR: NON-PROLETARIAN AND NON-BOURGEOIS STATE ?

POLITICAL FORM AND SOCIAL CONTENT

Comrades Burnham and Carter once more put a question mark against the class character of the Soviet state. The answer that they suggest is, in my estimation, absolutely incorrect. However, as these comrades do not, like certain ultra-lefts, seek to replace scientific analysis by noisy shouting, we can and must once more discuss in detail with them this exceedingly important question.

B. and C. have not forgotten that the chief difference between the USSR and the modern bourgeois state manifests itself in a powerful development of the productive forces, a result of the altered forms of property. They admit further that "the economic structure, created by the October Revolution, remains fundamentally unchanged." From this they draw the conclusion that it is the duty of the Soviet proletariat and the world proletariat to protect the USSR against imperialism. Within these limits there is complete agreement between us and B. and C. Yet, however important these limits may be, they do not cover the whole question. Without solidarising themselves with the ultra-lefts, C. and B. are nevertheless of the opinion that the USSR is, "in the traditional (?) sense given to this expression by Marxism", no longer a workers' state. As, however, the "economic structure remains fundamentally unchanged", the USSR has not become a bourgeois state either. B and C do not - and in this one cannot but congratulate them - characterise the bureaucracy as an independent class. It follows from these contradictory theses that, just as the Stalinists say, the Soviet State is not at all an organisation of class rule. But what then is it?

Thus we are faced with a new attempt to revise the class theory of the state. It goes without saying that we are not fetishists; if new historical facts demand a revision of the theory, we shall not be deterred from this. But the lamentable experience of the old revisions warns us to be circumspect. We shall reconsider the old theory and the new facts ten times before we advance a new doctrine.

B and C observe, incidentally, that the rule of the proletariat "can according to objective and subjective conditions, be expressed in a considerable number of varying government-forms". Let us add, for clarity's sake in the free conflict of various parties within the Soviets, just as in the monopoly of a single party, as also in the factual concentration of power in the hands of one man. Of course the personal dictatorship is a symptom of extreme danger for the regime. But at the same time it is on occasions the only means of saving the regime. Consequently the class nature of the state is not determined through its political forms, but through the social content, ie through the character of the forms of property and the production relations, that the state concerned protects and defends.

B and C do not query this in principle. If, nevertheless, they do not look upon the USSR as a workers' state, then it is for two reasons, one economic and the other political. "In the course of the last year" they write "the bureaucracy has finally entered upon the road of the destruction of the planned nationalised economy". (Only "entered upon the road"?) Further we hear that the direction of development "is leading the bureaucracy to a constantly growing and ever deeper conflict with the demands and interests of the national economy." (Only "is leading"?) The contradiction between the bureaucracy and economy could already be observed earlier, yet

for a year now the actions of the bureaucracy have been actively sabotaging the Plan, and destroying the state monopoly." (Only "are destroying"!!? Consequently it is not destroyed yet?)

The second argument is, as we have said, a political one. "The conception of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is in the first place not economic, but above all a political category. ... All forms, organs, institutions of the class rule of the proletariat are today destroyed; but this means that the class rule of the proletariat is destroyed." This second argument, taken in isolation, comes as a surprise to us after we have heard about the "various forms" of the proletarian regime. Of course the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is not only "above all" but fully and completely a "political category". Yet politics itself is only concentrated economy. The rule of the Social Democracy in the state and in the councils (Germany 1918-19) had nothing in common with proletarian dictatorship, inasmuch as it left bourgeois property untouched. On the other hand a regime that defends expropriated and nationalised property against imperialism is, independent of the political forms, a dictatorship of the proletariat.

B and C apparently recognise this "in general". Hence they have recourse to a connection of the economic argument with the political argument. The bureaucracy, they say, not only finally deprived the proletariat of its political powers, but also drove the economy into a cul-de-sac. If the bureaucracy in the preceding period, with all its reactionary traits, nevertheless played a comparatively progressive role, it has recently become a definitely reactionary factor. In this sequence of thought there is a sound kernel that is in complete harmony with the earlier assessments and prognoses of the Fourth International.

We have more than once pointed out how "enlightened absolutism" plays a progressive role in the development of the bourgeoisie, to become in its turn a brake upon this development; the conflict ended, as is known, in revolution. In the preparation of socialist economy, we wrote, "enlightened absolutism" can, during a much shorter period of time, play a progressive role. This prognosis is being clearly corroborated before our eyes. Led astray by its own successes, the bureaucracy thought to attain even higher coefficients of economic growth. Meantime it found itself suddenly in the midst of a sharp economic crisis, which is one of the sources of the present panic and fierce repressions. Does that mean that the development of the productive forces in the USSR has already come to a standstill? We would not venture such a hypothesis. The productive capabilities of nationalised economy are so great that the productive forces are still able to develop for a number of years in spite of the bureaucratic brake, even if in a much more moderate progression than heretofore. It is hardly possible to make exact prophesies in this connection at the present time. In any case the POLITICAL crisis that is rending the bureaucracy is today much more dangerous for that bureaucracy than the perspective of a standstill in the development of the productive forces. To simplify the question we nevertheless concede that the bureaucracy has already become a complete hindrance for the economic development. Yet does this fact of itself mean that the class nature of the USSR has changed, or that the USSR has lost every class characteristic? Here lies in my opinion the chief mistake of our comrades.

Bourgeois society developed the productive forces before the world war. Only during the last 25 years did the bourgeoisie become an absolute hindrance to development. Yet does that mean that the bourgeois society is no longer bourgeois? No, as far as fascism, with its barbarous methods, maintains private ownership of the means of production the state remains bourgeois under fascism.

We do not intend in any way to give exhaustive importance to our analogy. But it shows that the concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucracy and even the encroachment upon the development of the productive forces, does not of itself alter the class nature of the society and of its state. This nature can only be altered by the entrenchment of revolutionary or counter-revolutionary forces in connection with property.

Perhaps history knows no case of a class contradiction between state and economy? Oh yes! When the Third Estate siezed power and society remained feudal for the first few months. During the first few months of the Soviet regime the proletariat administered a bourgeois economy. As regards agriculture the dictatorship of the proletariat supported itself upon a petty bourgeois economy (to a perceptible degree even today). In the case of a successful bourgeois counter-revolution in the USSR the new government would have to rest for a long period upon the nationalised economy. But what is the meaning of this kind of temporary contradiction between state and economy? It means REVOLUTION or COUNTER-REVOLUTION. The victory of one class over another is gained precisely in order to transform the economy in the interest of the victory. But such a dual state of affairs, a necessary moment of every social revolution, has nothing in common with the theory of a classless state that through the lack of a real master is being exploited by a clerk, ie by the bureaucracy.

CRITERION AND FACT

What makes a correct sociological judgement of the USSR difficult for many comrades is that they approach the question, not objectively and dialectically, but subjectively and according to a criterion. It is not by chance that B and C say that one cannot regard the Soviet Union as a workers' state "in the traditional sense that has been given to the expression by Marxism". That means simply that the USSR does not correspond to the criterion of a workers' state that is advanced in our programme. In this connection there can be no argument. Our programme supposes a progressive development of the workers' state, and hence its gradual disappearance. History, however, which does not always proceed "according to programme", gave us the process of the degeneration of the workers' state. Does that mean, though, that the workers' state has reached a stage where it is in contradiction to the postulations of our programme, thereby ceasing to be a workers' state? A malaria-infected liver does not correspond to a normal type of liver any more. Yet it does not cease to be a liver because of this. Anatomy and physiology is necessary in addition. Naturally it is much easier, at the sight of an infected liver, to say "This thing displeases me" and to turn away from it. But a doctor cannot permit himself this luxury. He has, in the condition of the illness itself and in the deformations of the organ, brought about by the sickness, to discover the means of therapeutic healing ("reform") or of the surgical measures ("revolution"). For this, however it must be clear to him that the abnormal organ is an infected liver and nothing else.

But let us take a closer comparison, that between a workers' state and a trade union. Regarded from the view-point of our programme, the trade union should be an organisation of class struggle. But what of the American Federation of Labour? At its head stand arrant agents of the bourgeoisie. In all essential questions Messrs. Green, Wall & Co. carry on a policy directly opposed to the interests of the proletariat. We may carry the analogy further and say: even though the AFL performed, before the coming into being of the CIO, a task which, to a certain degree, was still progressive, yet today Green's apparatus, where the main content of the AFL's activity in the battle against the progressive (or less reactionary reactionary) tendencies of the CIO is displayed, has become finally a reactionary factor. This would be quite correct. But the AFL does not cease because of this to be a trade union organisation.

The class character of the state is determined by its relation to the forms of ownership of property in the means of production. The character of workers' organisations like trade unions is determined by their relation to the distribution of the national income. The circumstances that Green and Co. defend the private ownership of the means of production characterises them as bourgeois. If these gentlemen defend above all the receipts of the bourgeoisie against all attacks from the workers, ie if they carried on a fight against strikes, against wage increases, against unemployment benefit, we should have an organisation of "yellows" to deal with, and not a trade union. Meantime Green and Co., in order not to be cut adrift from the ground they stand on, are compelled within certain limits to take on the leadership of the struggle of the workers for increases, or at least against decreases of their share of the national income. This objective characteristic is sufficient to enable us in all important cases to draw a line of division between the most reactionary union, and the yellow organisations. We are therefore bound not only to work in the AFL, but also to defend it against yellows, the Ku Klux Klan, etc.

Stalin's function is a double one, just as Green's is. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thereby the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without maintaining the social foundations that the bureaucracy is exploiting in its own interest. To this extent Stalin is defending nationalised property against imperialism and even against the most intolerant and greedy sections of the bureaucracy. This defence, however, he carries on with methods that make for a general collapse of Soviet society. For this reason particularly it is necessary to bring about the downfall of the Stalin clique. But this downfall must be only the work of the revolutionary proletariat, who cannot entrust this work to the imperialists. The proletariat defends the USSR against imperialism in spite of Stalin.

Historical development acquainted us with various types of trade unions; militant, reformist, revolutionary, reactionary, liberal, Catholic. It is different with the workers' state. We are going through this experience for the first time. Hence the tendency to approach the USSR exclusively from the angle of the CRITERIA of the revolutionary programme. Meanwhile, the workers' state is an objective historical FACT, that is undergoing the effect of various historical forces, and we see can come into complete contradiction with the "traditional" criteria.

Comrades B and C say quite rightly that Stalin and Co. serve the international bourgeoisie with their policy. Yet it is necessary to place this correct idea in the definite circumstances of time and place. Hitler serves the bourgeoisie likewise. But there is a difference between the functions of Stalin and Hitler. Hitler defends bourgeois forms. Stalin makes the interests of the bureaucracy conform to proletarian property forms. The same Stalin fulfills in Spain, ie on the territory of the bourgeois regime, the function of Hitler (in political methods they differ on the whole only slightly). The juxtaposition of the various social rôles of one and the same Stalin in the USSR and in Spain makes it to an equal degree recognisable both that bureaucracy is not an independent class, and that one cannot determine the social nature of the state from the excellence or the vileness of the bureaucracy.

BOURGEOIS BUREAUCRACY IN A WORKERS' STATE ?

The assertion that the bureaucracy of a workers' state is of the bourgeois character seem not only incomprehensible but quite senseless to people who think formally. Only, chemically pure state types never existed and do not exist. The semi-feudal Prussian monarchy fulfilled the most important political tasks of the bourgeoisie, but in their own style, ie feudal not Jacobin. In Japan we may observe even today

an analagous relation between the bourgeois character of the state and the semi-feudal character of the ruling caste. But all that does not prevent us from clearly distinguishing between the feudal and the bourgeois society. Certainly one might object that the collaboration of feudal and bourgeois forces is by far and away easier to bring about than bourgeois and proletarian forces, for in the first case it is a question of two forms of class exploitation; that is absolutely true. Yet the workers' state cannot create the new society in a day. Marx wrote that the workers' state BOURGEOIS norms of distribution continued in the first period (chapter on "Socialism and State"). It is necessary to think over this idea carefully and fully. The workers' state as a STATE is necessary precisely because bourgeois norms of distribution still remain in effect. The bureaucracy is the organ of this distribution. This means that even the most revolutionary bureaucracy is to a certain extent a BOURGEOIS ORGAN in the workers' state. Of course, of decisive importance is the DEGREE to which the bureaucracy is bourgeois and the general tendency of development. If the workers' state slowly de-bureaucratizes itself and gradually dissolves into nothing, then the development is moving in the direction of socialism. If on the other hand the bureaucracy becomes ever more powerful, more desirous of power, more privileged and more conservative, then bourgeois tendencies are growing in the workers' state at the cost of socialist tendencies; in other words the inner contradiction that is found IN A CERTAIN MEASURE in the workers' state from the day it is set up does not wane, as our 'criterion' demands, but grows. Yet as long as this contradiction is not taken out of the sphere of distribution into the sphere of production, and has not broken up the nationalised property and planned economy, so long the state remains proletarian.

Lenin said already fifteen years ago, "Our state is proletarian but with a bureaucratic distortion". The bureaucratic distortion represented at that time a direct inheritance from the bourgeois regime and appeared in this sense a simple survival. Under the influence of unfavourable historical conditions, however, the bureaucratic survival found new sources of nourishment and became a colossal historical factor. Precisely for that reason we speak of the DEGENERATION of the workers' state. This degeneration, as the present bacchanal of bonapartist terror shows, has come very near its critical point. What was only a "bureaucratic distortion" is preparing to swallow up the workers' state, skin, hair and all, and on the ruins of nationalised economy to build up a new possessing class. This possibility has come very close. Yet it is still only a possibility, and we do not intend to be bent down by it in advance.

FOR THE DIALECTIC !

The USSR as a workers' state does not correspond to the "traditional" norm. That still does not mean that it is not a workers' state. But also it does not mean that the norm has shown itself to be incorrect. The 'norm' assumes the complete victory of the international proletarian revolution. The USSR is only the partial and deformed expression of a backward, isolated workers' state.

"Purely" normative, idealistic, ultimatistic thought, wants to create the world after its own image and simply turn away from phenomena that displeases it. Sectarians allow themselves to be lead by ideal norms, ie people who are only revolutionaries in their own imagination. They say: these trade unions displease us, we will not enter them; this workers' state displeases us, we will not defend it. Every time they promise to begin history again from the beginning. They will indeed build an ideal workers' state, when the Lord God presents them with an ideal party and an ideal trade union. And until that happy moment they can do nothing more than make a wry face over reality. Vehement, wry faces are indeed the highest expression of sectarian 'revolutionism'.

Purely 'historical', reformist, menshevist, passive, conservative thought is, according to an expression of Marx, concerned with justifying the swinery of today with the swinery of yesterday. The representatives of this type enter mass organisations in order to get to the top of them. The despicable 'friends' of the USSR settle amicably with the vileness of the bureaucracy by pointing to the historical conditions.

In contradistinction to both these types, dialectic-Marxist bolshevik thought takes phenomena in their objective development and finds in the inner contradiction of this development support for the realisation of its "norms". In this connection it must not be forgotten that the programmatic criteria can only reckon on being realised if they are the general expression of the PROGRESSIVE tendencies of the objective process.

The programmatic definition of a trade union would sound something like this: an organisation of the workers of a progression or industry with these aims: 1) the fight against capitalism in order to improve the standard of living of the workers; 2) the participation in the revolutionary struggle to bring about the downfall of the bourgeoisie; 3) participation in the organisation of the economy on a socialist basis. If we juxtapose this 'normative' definition to actual reality we shall have to say: in the whole world there is no such thing as a trade union. But such a juxtaposition of criterion and fact, ie of the generalised expression of development and of the part-appearance of the same development - this formal, ultimatistic, undialectical juxtaposition of programme and reality is quite meaningless and does not provide the revolutionary party with any way of dealing with the actuality. Meantime the trade unions, today opportunistic, can under the influence of the collapse of capitalism - and, presupposing a correct policy on our part inside them, must - approach our programmatic criteria and play a historically progressive role. That naturally presupposes a complete change of leadership. The workers of the United States, of England, of France, must understand the necessity of removing Green, Citrine, Jouhaux & Co. The workers of the USSR must understand the necessity of removing Stalin and Co. If the proletariat removes the Soviet bureaucracy in time, it will still have after its victory the nationalised means of production and the basic elements of planned economy. That means, that it does not need to start afresh from the beginning. A great advantage. Only radical snobs, used to jumping carelessly from bough to bough, can disregard this possibility. The socialist revolution is far too grandiose and difficult a task for one to renounce all its priceless material achievements and begin again from the beginning.

It is a good thing that comrades B and C, in contradistinction to our French comrade C. and a number of others, do not forget the factor of the productive forces and do not deny the necessity to defend the Soviet Union. But that is not nearly enough. And what if the criminal bureaucracy brings the growth of the economy to a standstill? Will comrades B and C passively allow imperialism to destroy the social basis of the USSR? We are convinced that the contrary is true. But their unmarxist conception of the USSR as of a non-proletarian and non-bourgeois state opens the door to all possible consequent conclusions. For this reason their conception must be categorically rejected.

RULING AND YET OPPRESSED CLASS

"How can our political conscience help being roused to indignation" say the ultra lefts "if people want to make us believe that in the USSR under Stalin's regime the 'ruling' class is the proletariat?" In such an abstract form this assertion can indeed rouse one to indignation. But the fact is that abstract categories, necessary

in the process of the analysis, are of no use for the synthesis, which demands much greater concreteness. The proletariat of the USSR rules in a land that contains only one-twelfth of humanity; imperialism rules the other eleven twelfths. The rule of the proletariat, already isolated by the backwardness and poverty of the country, is two and threefold deformed by the pressure of world imperialism. The organ of the rule of the proletariat - the state - is becoming an organ of imperialist pressure (diplomacy, army, foreign trade, ideas and customs). Viewed historically the fight for supremacy goes on not between proletariat and bureaucracy, but between proletariat and world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmission mechanism of this struggle is not at an end. In spite of all efforts of the Moscow clique to demonstrate their conservative reliability (Stalin's counter-revolutionary policy in Spain!), world imperialism does not spare him degrading raps on the nose, and is ready to bring about his downfall at the first favourable opportunity. Hitler expresses - and therein lies his strength - only more consistently and logically the attitude of the world bourgeoisie to the Soviet bureaucracy. For the fascist, just as for the democratic bourgeoisie, Stalin's single counter-revolutionary deeds are too few; what the bourgeoisie needs is a complete counter-revolution in the property relations and the opening up of the Russian market. As long as that is not the case it will regard the Soviet state as an enemy. And it is right.

The regime in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is bourgeois. Yet the pressure of foreign imperialism alters and deforms the economic and political structure of these countries so greatly that the national bourgeoisie (even in the politically independent countries of South America) only partially find themselves in the position of a ruling class. The pressure of imperialism on other countries certainly alters nothing of their basic social character, for here the oppressor and the object of the oppression only represent different levels of development of one and the same bourgeois society. Nevertheless the difference between England and India, Japan and China, the USA and Mexico is so great that we strictly distinguish between oppressing and oppressed bourgeois lands and hold it to be our duty to defend the latter from the former. The bourgeoisie of the colonial and semi-colonial countries is half ruling, half oppressed class.

The pressure of imperialism on the Soviet Union has as its task to change the nature of Soviet society itself. The struggle - today peaceful, tomorrow military - revolves around the forms of property. In its capacity as transmission-mechanism of this struggle, the bureaucracy supports itself upon the proletariat against imperialism and upon imperialism against the proletariat in order to extend its power. At the same time it heedlessly makes use of its role as distributor of the necessary means of life in order to assure its own well-being and power. In this way the rule of the proletariat takes on a confined, crushed, warped character. With full justification one can say: the ruling proletariat in a backward and isolated country remains still an oppressed class. The source of oppression is world imperialism, the transmission-machinery is the bureaucracy. If there is a contradiction in the words "ruling and yet oppressed class" this arises not from a mistake in reasoning but from a contradiction in the position of the USSR itself. Precisely for this reason we reject the theory of socialism in one country.

The recognition of the USSR as a workers' state, not as its prototype but as a deformation of this prototype, does not in any way signify any theoretical or political amnesty for the Soviet bureaucracy. On the contrary, its reactionary nature only becomes thoroughly apparent in the light of the contradistinction between its anti-proletarian policy and the requirements of the workers' state. Only if the question

is put thus does our exposition of the crimes committed by the Stalin clique attain an effective force. The defence of the USSR includes not only unconditional struggle against imperialism, but also the preparation of the downfall of the bonapartist bureaucracy.

The experience of the USSR proves how great are the possibilities inherent in the workers' state, and how great its power of resistance. Yet this experience shows too how powerful is the pressure of capital and of its bureaucratic agency, how difficult it is for the proletariat to attain its complete emancipation, and how important it is to train and steel the new international in the spirit of this irreconcilable struggle.

COYOACAN November 25th 1937

THE U.S.S.R. IN WAR

THE GERMAN-SOVIET PACT AND THE CHARACTER OF THE USSR

Is it possible after the conclusion of the German-Soviet pact to consider the USSR a workers' state? The future of the Soviet state has again and again aroused discussion in our midst. Small wonder; we have before us the first experiment in the workers' state in history. Never before and nowhere else has this phenomenon been available for analysis. In the question of the social character of the USSR, mistakes commonly flow, as we have previously stated, from replacing the historical fact with the programmatic norm. Concrete fact departs from the norm. This does not signify, however, that it has overthrown the norm; on the contrary, it has reaffirmed it, from the negative side. The degeneration of the first workers' state, ascertained and explained by us, has only the more graphically shown what the workers' state should be, what it could and would be under certain historical conditions. The contradiction between the concrete fact and the norm constrains us not to reject the norm but, on the contrary, to fight for it by means of the revolutionary road. The programme of the approaching revolution in the USSR is determined on the one hand by our appraisal of the USSR as an objective historical fact, and on the other hand, by a norm of the workers' state. We do not say: "Everything is lost, we must begin all over again." We clearly indicate those elements of the workers' state which at the given stage can be salvaged, preserved, and further developed.

Those who seek nowadays to prove that the Soviet-German pact changes our appraisal of the Soviet state take their stand, in essence, on the position of the Comintern - to put it more correctly, on yesterday's position of the Comintern. According to this logic, the historical mission of the workers' state is the struggle for imperialist democracy. The 'betrayal' of the democracies in favour of fascism divests the USSR of its being considered a workers' state. In point of fact, the signing of the treaty with Hitler supplies only an extra gauge with which to measure the degree of degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, and its contempt for the international working class, including the Comintern, but it does not provide any basis whatsoever for a re-evaluation of the sociological appraisal of the USSR.

ARE THE DIFFERENCES POLITICAL OR TERMINOLOGICAL ?

Let us begin by posing the question of the nature of the Soviet state not on the abstract-sociological plane but on the plane of concrete-political tasks. Let us

concede for the moment that the bureaucracy is a new 'class' and that the present regime in the USSR is a special system of class exploitation. What new political conclusions follow for us from these definitions? The Fourth International long ago recognised the necessity of overthrowing the bureaucracy by means of a revolutionary uprising of the toilers. Nothing else is proposed or can be proposed by those who proclaim the bureaucracy to be an exploiting 'class'. The goal to be attained by the overthrow of the bureaucracy is the re-establishment of the rule of the soviets, expelling from them the present bureaucracy. Nothing different can be proposed or is proposed by the leftist critics. * It is the task of the regenerated soviets to collaborate with the world revolution and the building of a socialist society. The overthrow of the bureaucracy therefore presupposes the preservation of state property and of planned economy. Herein is the nub of the whole problem.

Needless to say, the distribution of productive forces among the various branches of economy and generally the entire content of the plan will be drastically changed when this plan is determined by the interests not of the bureaucracy but of the producers themselves. But inasmuch as the question of overthrowing the parasitic oligarchy still remains linked with that of preserving the nationalised (state) property, we called the future revolution political. Certain of our critics (Ciliga, Bruno and others) want, come what may, to call the future revolution social. Let us grant this definition. What does it alter in essence? To those tasks of the revolution which we have enumerated it adds nothing whatsoever.

Our critics as a rule take the facts as we long ago established them. They add absolutely nothing essential to the appraisal either of the position of the bureaucracy and the toilers, or of the role of the Kremlin on the international arena. In all these spheres, not only do they fail to challenge our analysis, but on the contrary they base themselves completely upon it and even restrict themselves entirely to it. The sole accusation they bring against us is that we do not draw the necessary 'conclusions'. Upon analysis it turns out, however, that these conclusions are of a purely terminological character. Our critics refuse to call the degenerated workers' state - a workers' state. They demand that the totalitarian bureaucracy be called a ruling class. The revolution against the bureaucracy they propose to consider not political but social. Were we to make them these terminological concessions, we would place our critics in a very difficult position, inasmuch as they themselves would not know what to do with their purely verbal victory.

LET US CHECK OURSELVES ONCE AGAIN

It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the USSR have an opinion different from ours, insofar as they solidarise with us in regard to the political tasks. But on the other hand, it would be blindness on our part to ignore purely theoretical and even terminological differences, because in the course of further development they may acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite political conclusions. Just as a tidy housewife never permits an accumulation of cobwebs and garbage, just so a revolutionary party cannot tolerate lack of clarity, confusion and equivocation. Our house must be kept clean!

Let me recall for the sake of illustration, the question of Thermidor. For a long time we asserted that Thermidor in the USSR was only being prepared but had not yet been

* We recollect that some of those comrades who are inclined to consider the bureaucracy a new class, at the same time objected strenuously to the exclusion of the bureaucracy from the soviets.

consummated. Later, investing the analogy to Thermidor with a more precise and well-deliberated character, we came to the conclusion that Thermidor had already taken place long ago. This open rectification of our own mistake did not introduce the slightest consternation in our ranks. Why? Because the essence of the processes in the Soviet Union was appraised identically by all of us, as we jointly studied day by day the growth of reaction. For us it was only a question of rendering more precise a historical analogy, nothing more. I hope that still today despite the attempt of some comrades to uncover differences on the question of the 'defence of the USSR' - with which we shall deal presently - we shall succeed by means of simply rendering our own ideas more precise to preserve unanimity on the basis of the programme of the Fourth International.

IS IT A CANCEROUS GROWTH OR A NEW ORGAN ?

Our critics have more than once argued that the present Soviet bureaucracy bears very little resemblance to either the bourgeois or labour bureaucracy in capitalist society; that to a far greater degree than fascist bureaucracy it represents a new and much more powerful social formation. This is quite correct and we have never closed our eyes to it. But if we consider the Soviet bureaucracy a 'class', then we are compelled to state immediately that this class does not at all resemble any of those propertied classes known to us in the past; our gain consequently is not great. We frequently call the Soviet bureaucracy a caste, underscoring thereby its shut-in character, its arbitrary rule, and the haughtiness of the ruling stratum which considers that its progenitors issued from the divine lips of Brahma whereas the popular masses originated from the grosser portions of his anatomy. But even this definition does not of course possess a strictly scientific character. Its relative superiority lies in this, that the make-shift 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. The old sociological terminology did not and could not prepare a name for a new social event which is in process of evolution (degeneration) and which has not assumed stable forms. All of us, however, continue to call the Soviet bureaucracy a bureaucracy, not being unmindful of its historical peculiarities. In our opinion this should suffice for the time being.

Scientifically and politically - and not purely terminologically - the question poses itself as follows: Does the bureaucracy represent a temporary growth on a social organism or has this growth already become transformed into a historically indispensable organ? Social excrescences can be the product of an 'accidental' (ie temporary and extraordinary) enmeshing of historical circumstances. A social organ (and such is every class, including an exploiting class) can take shape only as a result of the deeply rooted inner needs of production itself. If we do not answer this question, then the entire controversy will degenerate into sterile toying with words.

THE EARLY DEGENERATION OF THE BUREAUCRACY

The historical justification for every ruling class consisted in this - that the system of exploitation it headed raised the development of the productive forces to a new level. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Soviet regime gave a mighty impulse to economy. But the source of this impulse was the nationalisation of the means of production and the planned beginnings, and by no means the fact that the bureaucracy usurped command over the economy. On the contrary, bureaucratism as a system became the worst brake on the technical and cultural development of the country. This was veiled for a certain time by the fact that Soviet economy was occupied for two decades with transplanting and assimilating the technology and organisation of production

in advanced capitalist countries, The period of borrowing and imitation still could, for better or for worse, be accommodated to bureaucratic automatism, ie the suffocation of all initiative and all creative urge. But the higher the economy rose, the more complex its requirements became, all the more unbearable became the obstacle of the bureaucratic regime. The constantly sharpening contradiction between them leads to uninterrupted political convulsions, to systematic annihilation of the most outstanding creative elements in all spheres of activity. Thus, before the bureaucracy could succeed in exuding from itself a 'ruling class', it came into irreconcilable contradiction with the demands of development. The explanation for this is to be found precisely in the fact that the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers' state.

THE CONDITIONS FOR THE OMNIPOTENCE AND FALL OF THE BUREAUCRACY

The Soviet oligarchy possesses all the vices of the old ruling classes but lacks their historical mission. In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression but a special, exceptional and temporary refraction of these laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist environment. The scarcity in consumer goods and the universal struggle to obtain them generate a policeman who arrogates to himself the function of distribution. Hostile pressure from without imposes on the policeman the role of 'defender' of the country, endows him with national authority, and permits him doubly to plunder the country.

Both conditions for the omnipotence of the bureaucracy - the backwardness of the country and the imperialist environment - bear, however, a temporary and transitional character and must disappear with the victory of the world revolution. Even bourgeois economists have calculated that with a planned economy it would be possible to raise the national income of the United States rapidly to 200 billion dollars a year and thus assure the entire population not only the satisfaction of its primary needs but real comforts. On the other hand, the world revolution would do away with the danger from without as a supplementary cause of bureaucratisation. The elimination of the need to expend an enormous share of the national income on armaments would raise even higher the living and cultural level of the masses. In these conditions the need for a policeman-distributor would fall away by itself. Administration as a gigantic co-operative would very quickly supplant state power. There would be no room for a new ruling class or for a new exploiting regime, located between capitalism and socialism.

AND WHAT IF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IS NOT ACCOMPLISHED ?

The disintegration of capitalism has reached extreme limits, likewise the disintegration of the old ruling class. The further existence of this system is impossible. The productive forces must be organised in accordance with a plan. But who will accomplish this task - the proletariat or a new ruling class of 'commissars' - politicians, administrators and technicians? Historical experience bears witness, in the opinion of certain rationalisers, that one cannot entertain hope in the proletariat. The proletariat proved 'incapable' of averting the last imperialist war although the material prerequisites for a socialist revolution already existed at that time. The successes of fascism after the war were once again the consequence of the 'incapacity' of the proletariat to lead capitalist society out of the blind alley. The bureaucratisation of the Soviet state was in its turn the consequence of the 'incapacity' of the

proletariat itself to regulate society through the democratic mechanism. The Spanish Revolution was strangled by the fascist and stalinist bureaucracies before the very eyes of the world proletariat. Finally, last link in this chain is the new imperialist war, the preparation for which took place quite openly, with complete impotence on the part of the world proletariat. If this conception is adopted, that is, if it is acknowledged that the proletariat does not have the forces to accomplish the socialist revolution, then the urgent task of the statification of the productive forces will obviously be accomplished by somebody else. By whom? By a new bureaucracy, which will replace the decayed bourgeoisie as a new ruling class on a world scale. That is how the question is beginning to be posed by those 'leftists' who do not rest content with debating over words.

THE PRESENT WAR AND THE FATE OF MODERN SOCIETY

By the very march of events this question is now posed very concretely. The second world war has begun. It attests incontrovertibly to the fact that society can no longer live on the basis of capitalism. Thereby it subjects the proletariat to a new and perhaps decisive test.

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 as to whether the stalinist bureaucracy was a 'class' or a growth on the workers' state will be automatically solved. To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse.

If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the bonapartist fascist bureaucracy. This would be, according to all indications, a regime of decline, signalling the eclipse of civilisation.

An analogous result might occur in the event that the proletariat of advanced capitalist countries, having conquered power, should prove incapable of holding it and surrender it, as in the USSR, to a privileged bureaucracy. Then we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted ^{not} in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. Then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale.

We have diverged very far from the terminological controversy over the nomenclature of the Soviet state. But let our critics not protest; only by taking the necessary historical perspective can one provide himself with a correct judgement upon such a question as the replacement of one social regime by another. The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime 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 only to recognise that the socialist programme, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new 'minimum' programme would be required - for the defence 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.

THE THEORY OF "BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM"

Shortly after the assumption of power by Hitler, a German "left communist", Hugo Urbahns, came to the conclusion that in place of capitalism a new historical era of 'state capitalism' was impending. The first examples of this regime he named as Italy, the USSR, Germany. Urbahns, however, did not draw the political conclusions of his theory. Recently, an Italian "left-communist", Bruno R., who formerly adhered to the Fourth International, came to the conclusion that "bureaucratic collectivism" was about to replace capitalism. (Bruno R. - La Bureaucratization du Monde, Paris, 1939). The new bureaucracy is a class, its relation to the toilers is collective exploitation, the proletarians are transformed into the slaves of totalitarian exploiters.

Bruno R. brackets together the economy in the USSR, fascism, National Socialism and Roosevelt's "New Deal". All these regimes undoubtedly possess common traits, which in the last analysis are determined by the collectivist tendencies of modern economy. Lenin even prior to the October Revolution formulated the main peculiarities of imperialist capitalism as follows: gigantic concentration of productive forces, the heightening fusion of monopoly capitalism and the state, an organic tendency towards naked dictatorship as a result of this fusion. The traits of centralisation and collectivisation determine both the politics of revolution and the politics of counter-revolution; but this by no means signifies that it is possible to equate revolution, Thermidor, fascism and American "reformism". Bruno has caught on to the fact that the tendencies of collectivisation assume, as a result of the political prostration of the working class, the form of "bureaucratic collectivism". The phenomenon in itself is incontestable. But where are its limits, and what is its historical weight? What we accept as the deformity of a transitional period, the result of ^{the} unequal development of multiple factors in the social process, is taken by Bruno R. for an independent social formation in which the bureaucracy is the ruling class. Bruno R. in any case has the merit of seeking to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copybook exercises to the plane of major historical generalisations. This makes it all the easier to disclose his mistake.

Like many ultra-lefts, Bruno R. identifies in essence stalinism with fascism. On the one side the Soviet bureaucracy has adopted the political methods of fascism; on the other side the fascist bureaucracy, which still confines itself to 'partial' measures of state intervention, is heading toward and will soon reach complete statification of economy. The first assertion is absolutely correct. But Bruno's assertion that fascist 'anti-capitalism' is capable of arriving at the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is completely erroneous. 'Partial' measures of state intervention and of nationalisation in reality differ from planned state economy just as reforms differ from revolution. Mussolini and Hitler are only 'coordinating' the interests of the property owners and 'regulating' capitalist economy, and, moreover, primarily for war purposes. The Kremlin oligarchy is something else again: it has the opportunity of directing economy as a body only owing to the fact that the working class of Russia accomplished

the greatest overturn of property relations in history. This difference must not be lost sight of.

But even if we grant that Stalinism and fascism from opposite poles will some day arrive at one and the same type of exploitive society ("bureaucratic collectivism" according to Bruno R.'s terminology) this still will not lead humanity out of the blind alley. The crisis of the capitalist system is produced not only by the reactionary role of private property but also by the no less reactionary role of the national state. Even if the various fascist governments did succeed in establishing a system of planned economy at home then, aside from the, in the long run, inevitable revolutionary movements of the proletariat unforeseen by any plan, the struggle between the totalitarian states for world domination would be continued and even intensified. Wars would devour the fruits of planned economy and destroy the bases of civilisation. Bertrand Russel thinks, it is true, that some victorious state may, as a result of the war, unify the entire world in a totalitarian vice. But even if such a hypothesis should be realised, which is highly doubtful, military 'unification' would have no greater stability than the Versailles treaty. National uprisings and pacifications would culminate in a new world war, which would be the grave of civilisation. Not our subjective wishes but the objective reality speaks for it, that the only way out for humanity is the world socialist revolution. The alternative to it is the relapse into barbarism.

THE PROLETARIAT AND ITS LEADERSHIP

We shall very soon devote a separate article to the question of the relation between the class and its leadership. We shall confine ourselves here to the most indispensable. Only vulgar 'Marxists' who take it that politics is a mere and direct 'reflection' of economics, are capable of thinking that leadership reflects the class directly and simply. In reality leadership, having risen above the oppressed class, inevitably succumbs to the pressure of the ruling class. The leadership of the American trade unions, for instance, 'reflects' not so much the proletariat, as the bourgeoisie. The selection and education of a truly revolutionary leadership, capable of withstanding the pressure of the bourgeoisie, is an extraordinary difficult task. The dialectic of the historic process expressed itself most brilliantly in the fact that the proletariat of the most backward country, Russia, under certain historic conditions, has put forward the most farsighted and courageous leadership. On the contrary, the proletariat in the country of the oldest capitalist culture, Great Britain, has even today the most dull-witted and servile leadership.

The crisis of capitalist society which assumed an open character in July 1914, from the very first day of the war produced a sharp crisis in the proletarian leadership. During the 25 years that have elapsed since that time, the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries has not yet created a leadership that could rise to the level of the tasks of our epoch. The experience of Russia testifies, however, that such a leadership can be created. (This does not mean, of course, that it will be immune to degeneration). The question consequently stands as follows: will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class; that is, in the process of this war and those profound shocks which it must engender, will a genuine revolutionary leadership be formed capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power?

The Fourth International has replied in the affirmative to this question, not only through the text of its programme, but also through the very fact of its existence. All the various types of disillusioned and frightened representatives of pseudo-Marxism proceed on the contrary from the assumption that the bankruptcy of the leader-

ship only 'reflects' the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfill its revolutionary mission. Not all our opponents express this thought clearly, but all of them - ultra-lefts, centrists, anarchists, not to mention Stalinists and social democrats - shift the responsibility for the defeats from themselves to the shoulders of the proletariat. None of them indicate under precisely what conditions the proletariat will be capable of accomplishing the socialist overturn.

If we grant as true that the cause of the defeats is rooted in the social qualities of the proletariat itself then the position of modern society will have to be acknowledged as hopeless. Under conditions of decaying capitalism the proletariat grows neither numerically nor culturally. There are no grounds, therefore, for expecting that it will sometime rise to the level of the revolutionary tasks. Altogether differently does the case present itself to him who has clarified in his mind the profound antagonism between the organic, deep-going, insurmountable urge of the toiling masses to tear themselves free from the bloody capitalist chaos, and the conservative, patriotic utterly bourgeois character of the outlived labour leadership. We must choose one of these two irreconcilable conceptions.

TOTALITARIAN DICTATORSHIP - A CONDITION OF ACUTE CRISIS AND NOT A STABLE REGIME

The October Revolution was not an accident. It was forecast long in advance. Events confirmed this forecast. The degeneration does not refute the forecast, because Marxists never believed that an isolated workers' state in Russia could maintain itself indefinitely. True enough, we expected the wrecking of the Soviet state, rather than its degeneration; to put it more correctly, we did not sharply differentiate between those two possibilities. But they do not at all contradict each other. Degeneration must inescapably end at a certain stage in downfall.

A totalitarian regime, whether of stalinist or fascist type, by its very essence can be only a temporary transitional regime. Naked dictatorship in history has generally been the product and the symptom of an especially severe social crisis, and not at all of a stable regime. Severe crisis cannot be a permanent condition of society. A totalitarian state is capable of suppressing social contradictions during a certain period, but it is incapable of perpetuating itself. The monstrous purges in the USSR are most convincing testimony of the fact that Soviet society organically tends towards ejection of the bureaucracy.

It is an astonishing thing that Bruno R. sees precisely in the Stalinist purges proof of the fact that the bureaucracy has become a ruling class, for in his opinion only a ruling class is capable of measures on so large a scale. * He forgets however that Tsarism, which was not a 'class', also permitted itself rather large-scale measures in purges and moreover precisely in the period when it was nearing its doom. Symptomatic of his oncoming death agony, by the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class. 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 even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? Posing this question clearly should alone in our opinion restrain the comrades from terminological experimentation and over-hasty generalisations.

* See end of article.

THE ORIENTATION TOWARD WORLD REVOLUTION AND THE REGENERATION OF THE USSR

A quarter of a century proved too brief a span for the revolutionary re-arming of the world proletarian vanguard, and too long a period for preserving the soviet system intact in an isolated backward country. Mankind is now paying for this with a new imperialist war; but the basic task of our epoch has not changed, for the simple reason that it has not been solved. A colossal asset in the last quarter of a century and a priceless pledge for the future is constituted by the fact that one of the detachments of the world proletariat was able to demonstrate in action how the task must be solved.

The second imperialist war poses the unsolved task on a higher historical stage. It tests anew not only the stability of the existing regimes but also the ability of the proletariat to replace them. The results of this test will undoubtedly have a decisive significance for our appraisal of the modern epoch as the epoch of proletarian revolution. 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 doubtlessly 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 copybook label on the USSR or the stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective 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?

The two error of schematists like Hugo Urbahns and Bruno R. consists, first, in that they declare it a prolonged transitional state of society between capitalism and socialism. Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current new war, proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any more favourable conditions for it; in any case no one foresees them now, or is able to characterise them. Marxists do not have the slightest right (if disillusionment and fatigue are not considered 'rights') to draw the conclusion that the proletariat has forfeited its revolutionary possibilities and must renounce all aspirations to hegemony in an era immediately ahead. Twenty five years in the scales of history, when it is a question of profoundest changes in economic and cultural systems, weigh less than an hour in the life of man. What good is the individual who, because of empirical failures in the course of an hour or day, renounces a goal that he set for himself on the basis of the experience and analysis of his entire previous lifetime? In the years of darkest Russian reaction (1907-1917) we took as our starting point those revolutionary possibilities which were revealed by the Russian proletariat in 1905. In the years of world reaction we must proceed from those possibilities which the Russian proletariat revealed in 1917. The Fourth International did not by accident call itself the world party of the socialist revolution. Our road is not to be changed. We steer our course toward the world revolution and by virtue of this very fact toward the regeneration of the USSR as a workers' state.

FOREIGN POLICY IS THE CONTINUATION OF DOMESTIC POLICY

What do we defend in the USSR? Not that in which it resembles capitalist countries but precisely that in which it differs from them. In Germany also we advocate an uprising against the ruling bureaucracy, but only in order immediately to overthrow capitalist property. In the USSR the overthrow of the bureaucracy is indispensable for the preservation of state property. Only in this sense do we stand for the defense of the USSR.

There is not one among us who doubts that the Soviet workers should defend the state property, not only against the parasitism of the bureaucracy, but also against the tendencies toward private ownership, for example, on the part of the Kolkhoz aristocracy. But after all, foreign policy is the continuation of policy at home. If in domestic policy we correlate defense of the interests of the conquests of the October Revolution with irreconcilable struggle against the bureaucracy, then we must do the same thing in foreign policy as well. To be sure, Bruno R., proceeding from the fact that 'bureaucratic collectivism' has already been victorious all along the line, assures us that no one threatens state property, because Hitler (and Chamberlain?) is as much interested, you see, in preserving it as Stalin. Sad to say, Bruno R.'s assurances are frivolous. In even of victory Hitler will in all probability begin by demanding the return to German capitalists of all the property expropriated from them; then he will secure a similar restoration of property for the English, the French and the Belgians so as to reach an agreement with them at the expense of the USSR; finally he will make Germany the contractor of the most important state enterprises in the USSR in the interests of the German military machine. Right now Hitler is the ally and friend of Stalin; but should Hitler, with the aid of Stalin, come out victorious on the Western Front, he would on the morrow turn his guns against the USSR. Finally Chamberlain, too, in similar circumstances, would act no differently from Hitler.

THE DEFENSE OF THE USSR AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Mistakes on the question of defense of the USSR most frequently flow from an incorrect understanding of the methods of 'defense'. Defense of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle.

In the tiny French periodical QUE FAIRE, it was recently stated that inasmuch as the 'Trotskyites' are defeatists in relation to France and England they are therefore defeatists also in relation to the USSR. In other words: if you want to defend the USSR you must stop being defeatists in relation to her imperialist allies. QUE FAIRE calculated that the 'democracies' would be the allies of the USSR. What these sages will say now we don't know. But that is hardly important, for their very method is rotten. To renounce defeatism in relation to that imperialist camp to which the USSR adheres today or might adhere tomorrow is to push the workers of the enemy camp to the side of their government; it means to renounce defeatism in general. The renunciation of defeatism under the conditions of imperialist war which is tantamount to the rejection of the socialist revolution - rejection of revolution in the name of 'defense of the USSR' - would sentence the USSR to final decomposition and doom.

'Defense of the USSR', as interpreted by the Comintern, like yesterday's 'struggle against fascism', is based on renunciation of independent class politics. The proletariat is transformed - for various reasons in varying circumstances, but always and invariably - into an auxiliary force of one bourgeois camp against another. In contradistinction to this, some of our comrades say: Since we do not want to become tools of Stalin and his allies we therefore renounce the defense of the USSR. But by this they only demonstrate that their understanding of 'defense' coincides with the understanding of the opportunists; they do not think in terms of the independent politics of the proletariat. As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan areas.

We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but also in the USSR. Our tasks, among them the 'defense of the USSR', we realise not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the USSR, but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow. Such a 'defense' cannot give immediate miraculous results. But we do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks confronting us.

The defense of the USSR coincides for us with the preparation of world revolution. Only those methods are permissible which do not conflict with the interests of the revolution. The defense of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter.

THE QUESTION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

As I am writing these lines the question of the territories occupied by the Red Army still remains obscure. The cable dispatches contradict each other, since both sides lies a great deal; but the actual relationships on the scene are no doubt still extremely unsettled. Most of the occupied territories will doubtlessly become part of the USSR. In what form?

Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime; and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state.

It is more likely, however, that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land-owners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist programme but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree: "Serfdom is abolished". This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathy for the peasants, nor by democratic principles, but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR.

This measure, revolutionary in character - "the expropriation of the expropriators" - is in this case achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories - and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution, it is impossible to constitute a new regime - will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures

in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses. This is one side of the matter. But there is another. In order to gain the possibility of occupying Poland through a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the USSR and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganisation of the ranks of its own Communist International. The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

Our general appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the particular fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure. We must recognise this openly. Were Hitler on the morrow to throw his armies against the east to restore 'law and order' in eastern Poland, the advanced workers would defend against Hitler these new property forms established by the Bonapartist Soviet bureaucracy.

WE DO NOT CHANGE OUR COURSE!

The statification of the means of production is, as we said, a progressive measure, But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by "socialist" measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic manoeuvres, and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalised property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say, socialist, development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy. Our programme retains, consequently, all its validity. The events did not catch us unawares. It is necessary only to interpret them correctly. It is necessary to understand clearly that sharp contradictions are contained in the character of the USSR and in her international position. It is impossible to free oneself from those contradictions with the help of terminological sleight-of-hand ("workers' state" - "not workers' state"). We must take the fact as they are. We must build our policy by taking as our starting point the real relations and contradictions.

We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if Byelo Russians themselves wish - of Soviet Byelo Russia. At the same time in the sections of Poland occupied by the Red Army, partisans of the Fourth International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land among the peasants, in creating soviets and workers' committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections to the soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust toward the Kremlin and its local agencies.

But let us suppose that Hitler turns his weapons against the east and invades territories occupied by the Red Army. Under these conditions, partisans of the Fourth International, without changing in any way their attitude toward the Kremlin oligarchy,

will advance to the forefront, as the most urgent task of the hour, the military resistance against Hitler. The workers will say: "We cannot cede to Hitler the overthrowing of Stalin; that is our own task." During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank-and-file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

This kind of 'defense of the USSR' will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defense which is now being conducted under the slogan: "For the Fatherland! For Stalin!" Our defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: "For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!" In order that these two varieties of "defense of the USSR" do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation. But above all it is necessary to establish clearly just what we are defending, just how we are defending it, against whom we are defending it. Our slogans will create confusion among the masses only if we ourselves do not have a clear conception of our tasks.

CONCLUSIONS

We have no reasons whatsoever at the present time for changing our principled position in relation to the USSR.

War accelerates the various political processes. It may accelerate the process of the revolutionary regeneration of the USSR. But it may also accelerate the process of its final degeneration. For this reason it is indispensable that we follow painstakingly and without prejudice these modifications which war introduces into the internal life of the USSR so that we may give ourselves a timely accounting of them.

Our tasks in the occupied territories remain basically the same as in the USSR itself; but inasmuch as they are posed by events in an extremely sharp form, they enable us all the better to clarify our general tasks in relation to the USSR.

We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.

September 25th 1939

* Footnote to p.28: True enough, in the last section of his book, which consists of fantastic contradictions, Bruno R. quite consciously and articulately refutes his own theory of 'bureaucratic collectivism' unfolded in the first section of the book and declares that stalinism, fascism and nazism are transitory and parasitic formations, historic penalties for the impotence of the proletariat. In other words, after having subjected the views of the F.I. to the sharpest kind of criticism, Bruno R. unexpectedly returns to those views, but only in order to launch a new series of blind fumbblings. We see no grounds for following in the footsteps of a writer who has obviously lost his balance. We are interested in those of his arguments by means of which he seeks to substantiate his views that the bureaucracy is a class.

'The Dictatorship Over the Proletariat'

The most widespread, popular and at first sight irrefutable argument in favour of the non-proletarian character of the present Soviet state is based upon the reference to the strangulation of the liberties of proletarian organisations and to the almightiness of the bureaucracy. Is it really possible to identify the dictatorship of an apparatus, which has led to the dictatorship of a single person, with the dictatorship of the proletariat as a class? Isn't it clear that the dictatorship of the proletariat is excluded by the dictatorship over the proletariat?

Such enticing reasoning is constructed not upon a materialistic analysis of the process as it develops in reality but upon pure idealistic schemas, upon the Kantian norms. Certain noble 'friends' of the revolution have provided themselves with a very radiant conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and they are completely prostrated in the face of the fact that the real dictatorship with all its heritage of class barbarism, with all its internal contradictions, with the mistakes and crimes of the leadership fails entirely to resemble that sleek image which they have provided. Disillusioned in their most beautiful emotions they turn their backs to the Soviet Union.

Where and in what books can one find a faultless prescription for a proletarian dictatorship? The dictatorship of a class does not mean by a long shot that its entire mass always participates in the management of the state. This we have seen, first of all, in the case of the propertied classes. The nobility ruled through the monarchy before which the noble stood on his knees. The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie took on comparatively developed democratic forms only under the conditions of capitalist upswing when the ruling class had nothing to fear. Before our own eyes, democracy has been supplanted in Germany by Hitler's autocracy, with all the traditional bourgeois parties smashed to smithereens. Today, the German bourgeoisie does not rule directly, politically it is placed under complete subjection to Hitler and his bands. Nevertheless, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie remains inviolate in Germany, because all the conditions of its special hegemony have been preserved and strengthened. By expropriating the bourgeoisie politically Hitler saved it, even if temporarily, from economic expropriation. The fact that the bourgeoisie was compelled to resort to the fascist regime testifies to the fact that its hegemony was endangered but not at all that it had fallen.

Anticipating our subsequent arguments, our opponents will hasten to refute: although the bourgeoisie, as an exploiting minority, can also preserve its hegemony by means of a fascist dictatorship, the proletariat building a socialist society must manage its government itself, directly drawing ever wider masses into the task of government. In its general form, this argument is undebatable, but in the given case it merely means that the present Soviet dictatorship is a sick dictatorship. The frightful difficulties of Socialist construction in an isolated and backward country coupled with the false policies of the leadership - which in the last analysis also reflects the pressure of backwardness and isolation - have led to the result that the bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order to guard its social conquests with its own methods. The anatomy of society is determined by its economic relations. So long as the forms of property that have been created by the October revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the ruling class.

Dissertations upon 'the dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the proletariat' without a much deeper analysis, that is, without a clear explanation of the social roots and

the class limits of bureaucratic domination, boil down merely to high-faluting democratic phrases so extremely popular among the Mensheviks. One need not doubt that the overwhelming majority of Soviet workers are dissatisfied with the bureaucracy and that a considerable section, by no means the worst, hates it. However, it is not due to repressions that this dissatisfaction does not assume violent mass forms: the workers fear that they will clear the field for the class enemy, if they overthrow the bureaucracy. The inter-relations between the bureaucracy and the class are really much more complex than they appear to be to the frothy 'democrats'. The Soviet workers would have settled accounts with the despotism of the apparatus had other perspectives opened before them, had the Western horizon flamed not with the brown colour of fascism but with the red of revolution. So long as this does not happen, the proletariat with clenched teeth bears ('tolerates') the bureaucracy, and in this sense recognises it as the bearer of the proletarian dictatorship. In a heart to heart conversation, no Soviet worker would be sparing of strong words addressed to the Stalinist bureaucracy. But not a single one of them would allow that the counter-revolution has already taken place. The proletariat is the spine of the Soviet state. But insofar as the function of governing is concentrated in the hands of ^{an} irresponsible bureaucracy we have before us an obviously sick state. Can it be cured? Will not further attempts at cures mean a fruitless expenditure of precious time? The question is badly put. By cures we understand not all sorts of artificial measures separate and apart from the world revolutionary movement but a further struggle under the banner of Marxism. Merciless criticism of the stalinist bureaucracy, training the cadres of the New International, resurrecting the fighting capacity of the world proletarian vanguard - this is the essence of the 'cure'. It coincides with the fundamental direction of historical progress.

During the last few years - appropriately enough - our opponents have told us more than once that we 'are losing time in vain' by occupying ourselves with curing the Comintern. We never promised anybody that we would cure the Comintern. We only refused until the decisive test, to pronounce the sick as dead, or hopelessly ill. In any case, we did not waste a single day 'curing'. We formed revolutionary cadres, and, what is no less important, we prepared the fundamental theoretical and programmatic positions of the New International.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as an Idealistic Norm

Messrs. 'Kantian' sociologists (we apologise to the shade of Kant) often reach the conclusion that a 'real' dictatorship, that is, one which conforms to their ideal norms, existed only in the days of the Paris Commune, or during the first period of the October Revolution up to the Brest Litovsk peace, or, at best, up to the N.E.P. This is indeed sharpshooting: aim a finger at the sky, and hit the bull's eye! If Marx and Engels called the Paris Commune 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' it was only because of the force of the possibilities lodged in it. But by itself the Commune was not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat. Having seized power, it hardly knew how to use it; instead of assuming the offensive, it waited; it remained isolated within the circle of Paris; it dared not touch the state bank; it dared not, and indeed could not, put through the overturn in property relations because it did not wield power on a national scale. To this must be added Blanquist one-sidedness and Proudhonist prejudices which prevented even the leaders of the movement from completely understanding the Commune as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest Litovsk peace, but even up to Autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty bourgeois agrarian overturn and

workers' control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers' soviets ruled side by side with workers' soviets, and often elbowed them aside. Only toward the Autumn of 1918, did the petty bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalisation of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. But even here it is necessary to make certain large reservations. During those initial years, the dictatorship was geographically ^{confined} to the old Moscow principality, and was compelled to wage a three years' war along all the radii from Moscow to the periphery. This means that up to 1921, precisely up to the N.E.P., that is, what went on was still the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat upon the national scale. And since, in the opinion of the pseudo-marxist philistines, the dictatorship had disappeared with the beginning of the N.E.P., then it means that, in general, it had never existed. To these gentlemen the dictatorship of the proletariat is simply an imponderable concept, an ideal norm not to be realised upon our sinful planet. Small wonder that 'theoreticians' of this stripe, insofar as they do not denounce altogether the very word dictatorship, strive to smear over the irreconcilable contradiction between the latter and bourgeois democracy.

October 1st, 1933.

FROM: THE WORKERS' STATE AND THE QUESTION
OF THERMIDOR AND BONAPARTISM

The Marxian Evaluation of the USSR

There is no doubt the USSR today bears very little resemblance to that type of the Soviet republic which Lenin depicted in 1917 (no permanent bureaucracy or permanent army; the right of recalling all elected officials at any time and the active control over them by the masses 'regardless who the individual may be', etc.). The domination of the bureaucracy over the country, as well as Stalin's domination over the bureaucracy, have well-nigh attained their absolute consummation. But what conclusions would follow from this? There are some who say that since the actual state which has emerged from the proletarian revolution does not correspond to ideal a priori norms, therefore they turn their backs on it. This is political snobbery, common to pacifist-democratic, libertarian, anarcho-syndicalist, and generally ultra-left circles of petty bourgeois intelligentsia. There are others who say that since this state has emerged from the proletarian revolution therefore every criticism of it is sacrilege and counter-revolution. That is the voice of hypocrisy behind which lurk most often the immediate material interests of certain groups among this very same petty bourgeois intelligentsia, or among the workers' bureaucracy. These two types - the political snob and the political hypocrite - are readily interchangeable, depending upon personal circumstances. Let us pass them both by.

A Marxist would say that the present-day USSR obviously does not approximate to the a priori norms of a Soviet state; let us discover, however, what we failed to foresee when working out the programmatic norms; let us furthermore analyse what social factors have distorted the workers' state; let us check once again if these distortions have

extended to the economic foundations of the state, that is to say, if the basic social conquests of the proletarian revolution have been preserved; if these have been preserved, then in what direction are they changing; and if there obtain in the USSR and on the world arena such factors as may facilitate and hasten the preponderance of progressive trends of development over those of reaction. Such an approach is complex. It brings with it no ready-made key for lazy minds, which the latter love so much. In return, however, not only does it preserve one from the two plagues, snobbery and hypocrisy, but it also presents the possibility of exerting an active influence on the fate of the USSR.

When the group of 'Democratic Centralism' declared in 1926 that the workers' state was liquidated, it was obviously burying the revolution while it was still alive. In contradistinction to this, the Left Opposition worked out a programme of reforms for the Soviet regime. The stalinist bureaucracy smashed the Left Opposition in order to safeguard and entrench itself as a privileged caste. But in the struggle for its own positions it found itself compelled to take from the programme of the Left Opposition all those measures which alone made it possible to save the social basis of the Soviet state. That is a priceless political lesson! It shows how specific historical conditions, the backwardness of the peasantry, the weariness of the proletariat, the lack of decisive support from the West, prepare for a 'second chapter' in the revolution, which is characterised by the suppression of the proletarian vanguard and the smashing of revolutionary internationalists by the conservative national bureaucracy. But this very same example shows how a correct political line enables a Marxian grouping to fructify developments even when the victors of the 'second chapter' run roughshod over the revolutionists of the 'first chapter'.

A superficial idealistic mode of thinking which operates with ready-made norms, mechanically fitting living processes of development to them, easily leads one from enthusiasm to prostration. Only dialectical materialism, which teaches us to view all existence in its process of development, and in the conflict of internal forces, can impart the necessary stability to thought and action.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy

In a number of previous writings, we established the fact that despite its economic successes, which were determined by the nationalisation of the means of production, Soviet society completely preserves a contradictory transitional character, and, measured by the inequality of living conditions, and the privileges of the bureaucracy, it still stands much closer to the regime of capitalism than to future communism.

At the same time, we established the fact that despite monstrous bureaucratic degeneration, the soviet state still remains the historical instrument of the working class insofar as it assures the development of economy and culture on the basis of nationalised means of production, and by virtue of this, prepares the conditions for a genuine emancipation of the toilers through the liquidation of the bureaucracy and of social inequality.

Whoever has not seriously pondered and accepted these two fundamental propositions; whoever, in general has not studied the literature of the Bolshevik-Leninists on the question of the USSR from 1923 on, runs the risk of losing the leading thread with every new event, and of foresaking Marxist analysis for abject lamentations.

The Soviet (it would be more correct to say, the anti-Soviet) bureaucratism, is the product of social contradictions between the city and the village; between the prolet-

ariat and the peasantry (these two kinds of contradictions are not identical); between the national Republics and districts; between the different groups of peasantry; between the different layers of the working class; between the different groups of consumers; and finally, between the soviet state as a whole and its capitalist environment. Today, when all relationships are being translated into the language of monetary calculation, the economic contradictions come to the forefront with exceptional sharpness.

Raising itself above the toiling masses, the bureaucracy regulates these contradictions. It uses this function in order to strengthen its own domination. By its uncontrolled and self-willed rule, subject to no appeal, the bureaucracy accumulates new contradictions. Exploiting the latter, it creates the regime of bureaucratic absolutism.

The contradictions within the bureaucracy itself have led to a system of hand-picking the main commanding staff; the need for discipline within the select order has led to the rule of a single ^{person} ~~and~~ to the cult of the infallible leader. One and the same system prevails in factory, kolkhoz (collective farm), university, and the government: a leader stands at the head of his faithful troop; the rest follow the leader. Stalin never was and, by his nature, could never be a leader of masses; he is the leader of bureaucratic 'leaders', their consummation, their personification.

The more complex the economic tasks become, the greater the demands and the interests of the population become, all the more sharp becomes ^{becomes the} contradiction between the bureaucratic regime and the demands of socialist development; All the more coarsely does the bureaucracy struggle to preserve its positions; all the more cynically does it resort to violence, fraud and bribery.

The constant worsening of the political regime in face of the growth of economy and culture - this crying fact finds its explanation in this, and this alone; that oppression, persecution and suppression serve today in a large measure not for the defence of the state, but for the defence of the rule and privileges of the bureaucracy. This is also the source of the ever-increasing need to mask repressions by means of frauds and amalgams.

'But can such a state be called a workers' state?' - thus speak the indignant voices of moralists, idealists and 'revolutionary' snobs. Others, a bit more cautious, express themselves as follows, 'perhaps this is a workers' state, in the last analysis, but there has not been left in it a vestige of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We have here a degenerated workers' state, under the dictatorship of the bureaucracy'.

We see no reason whatever to resume this argumentation as a whole. All that has to be said on this score has been said in the literature and in the official documents of our tendency. No-one has attempted to refute, correct, or supplement the position of the Bolshevik-Leninists on this important question.

We shall here limit ourselves solely to the question whether the factual dictatorship of the bureaucracy may be called the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The terminological difficulty here arises from the fact that the term dictatorship is now used in a restricted political sense, and again, in a more profound, sociological sense. We speak of the 'dictatorship of Mussolini' and at the same time declare that Fascism is only the instrument of finance capital. Which is correct? Both are correct, but on different planes. It is incontestable that the entire executive power is concentrated in Mussolini's hands. But it is no less true that the entire actual content

of the state activity is dictated by the interests of finance capital. The social domination of a class (its dictatorship) may find extremely diverse political forms. This is attested by the entire history of the bourgeoisie, from the Middle Ages to the present day.

The experience of the Soviet Union is already adequate for the extension of this very same sociological law - with all the necessary changes - to the dictatorship of the proletariat as well. In the interim between the conquest of power and the dissolution of the workers' state within the socialist society, the forms and methods of proletarian rule may change sharply, depending upon the course of the class struggle, internally and externally.

Thus, the present-day domination of Stalin in no way resembles the soviet rule during the initial years of the revolution. The substitution of one regime for the other did not occur at a single stroke, but through a series of measures, by means of a number of minor civil wars, waged by the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard. In the last historical analysis, the Soviet democracy was blown up by pressure of social contradictions. Exploiting the latter, the bureaucracy wrested the power from the hands of mass organisations. In this sense we may speak about the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and even about the personal dictatorship of Stalin. But this usurpation was made possible and can maintain itself only because the social content of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy is determined by those productive relations which were created by the proletarian revolution. In this sense we may say with complete justification that the dictatorship of the proletariat found its distorted but indubitable expression in the dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

February 1st 1935