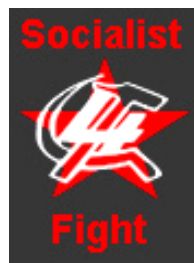




In Defence of Trotskyism No. 10

£1 waged, 50p unwaged/low waged, €1.50



Revolutionary Communism: Lenin and Trotsky or Stalin and Mao?



The general historic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and their Comintern is counter-revolutionary. But through their military and other interests they can be forced to support progressive movements. Even Ludendorff felt himself forced to give Lenin a train – a very progressive action – and Lenin accepted. We must keep our eyes open to discern the progressive acts of the Stalinists, support them independently, foresee in time the danger, the betrayals, warn the masses and gain their confidence. Trotsky, *Writings, Letter on India, 1939/40*, pp 108-9.



Where We Stand

1. WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule' (The International Workingmen's Association 1864, General Rules).

2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis, of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil

society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state based on democratic soviets/workers' councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers' parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers' power.

4. We are fully in support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle

we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions

5. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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From facing page **Lies and Confusion**

That is all the 'Communist' Party has to offer the British workers, When Stalin has a pact with Hitler they SUPPORT HITLER and oppose Churchill.

When Stalin has a pact with Churchill they SUPPORT CHURCHILL and oppose Hitler.

Their policy is completely dependent upon the pacts that Stalin signs and not upon the needs of the British or International Working Class.

The "Socialist Appeal" continues LENIN's policy and OPPOSES BOTH CHURCHILL and HITLER. It fights for working class power as the only real answer to Fascism.

Fellow Workers — Do not be Deceived by the lies and slanders of the Communist Party. Urge a debate in your Trade Union branch between a representative of the "Socialist Appeal" and the "Daily Worker"; between Workers' International League and the

Communist Party. This is the best way to expose the false political position of these people. Like Hitler their policy is the bigger the lie the more people will believe it, but once brought face to face with the truth they have no answer.

£10 Reward: To any Member of the Communist Party who can prove that the so-called Quotations from Trotskyist Publications in their Pamphlet "Clear Out Hitler's Agents!" are not Forgeries.

- OR -

To any Member of the CP who can show any page of this Pamphlet which does not contain a minimum of five lies.

SOCIALIST APPEAL.

Read SOCIALIST APPEAL

The Militant Workers' Paper. 2d.

Published by Workers International League, 61, North-down Street, N.1.

Printed by C. A. Brock & Co., Ltd. (T.U), 79 Southern Row, Kensal Road, W.10

Following the invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941 and the ignominious end of the Hitler-Stalin pact the CPGB became the most loyal of British patriots, launching a vicious witch hunt against the Trotskyists of the Workers International League, and assisting the jailing of their members in Britain as the CPUSA did in the USA. Here the WIL replies to the Daily Worker pamphlet, "Clear Out Hitler's Agents" in 1942.

Factory Workers, BE ON YOUR GUARD, Clear Out the Bosses' Agents!!

UNDER the guise of a struggle against "Trotskyism" the leadership of the so-called "Communist" Party have instructed their members in the factories to launch a campaign of lies and slander against leading shop stewards and prominent trade unionists.

THE object of this campaign is twofold:

1. It seeks to undermine the strong rank and file trade union movement which has been built up in the factories during the last few years.
2. It is the "all clear" signal to reactionary employers to victimise and frame-up active trade unionists.

You must know the Truth

"COMMUNIST" Party Policy today fully supports the handful of profiteers who run this war in their own interests. Those who carry out THAT policy in the factories are doing the bosses' dirty work. They are BOSSES' MEN who must be exposed and cleared out.

WHEN our brothers in the mining industry were on strike for better conditions against the tight-fisted tyranny of the coal-owners it — was the "Communist" Party which urged its members to blackleg and scab.

THE "Communist" Party alleges that supporters of the "Socialist Appeal" are agents of Hitler. THIS IS A LIE. We defy any member of the Communist Party to defend this lying statement in open debate. The "Socialist Appeal" stands for the complete destruction of Fascism whether it be of the Nazi, Mosley or any other variety. It advocates as the first step towards a genuine struggle against Hitlerism the expropriation of the millionaire armament kings and the nationalisation of the war industries under WORKERS' CONTROL.

Here are the Real Facts:

Fact No 1 COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY HELPED HITLER CONQUER EUROPE

WHEN Hitler rode roughshod over the Continent, the "Communist" Party accused Britain and France of starting the war.

"The war did not develop out of the British and French desire to liberate humanity from Fascism, but to protect their Empires against German claims, and further was started by Great Britain and France and not by Germany. Therefore the Soviet Union considers itself justified in the first place in making an agreement with Germany to

prevent itself being involved in an imperialist war." — Moscow paper "Trud," 21st Jan. 1941.

"Above all the conclusion must be drawn that Germany's actions in the present instance were forced on it Britain and France wanted to undermine Germany's military positions and fundamentally to improve their own positions. Germany was not desirous of falling into a worse position and was compelled to adopt counter measures." "Daily Worker," 12th April, 1940.

Fact No. 2 THE COMMUNIST PARTY WANTED PEACE WITH HITLER

ON October 4th, 1939, Hitler was offering peace.

"We are against the continuance of this war. We demand that negotiations be immediately opened for the establishment of peace in Europe. — "Communist Party Special Statement," "Daily Worker," October 4th, 1939.

Fact No. 3 THE COMMUNIST PARTY POLICY HELPED HITLER INVADE THE SOVIET UNION BY CONFUSING BRITISH WORKERS

WHEN Hitler massed his Panzer divisions on the Eastern Front, this is what the "Communist" Party told the British worker THE DAY BEFORE HE MARCHED:

"Even before the arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in USSR and particularly after his arrival, British and in general the foreign press, began an intense dissemination of rumours on the 'Proximity of war between USSR and Germany' . . . Despite the obvious nonsensical character of these rumours, responsible Moscow quarters have still found it necessary, in view of these rumours, to authorise 'Tass' to state that these rumours constitute clumsily concocted propaganda by forces hostile to USSR and to Germany and interested in the further extension and unleashing of war." "Worlds News & Views." June 21st, 1941.

Fact No. 4 BEFORE JUNE 22nd, 1941, THE COMMUNIST PARTY CARRIED OUT HITLER'S DIRTY WORK IN BRITAIN — TODAY THEY DO CHURCHILL'S DIRTY WORK

THEY tell you that Churchill is a great statesman but this is what they said on October 11th, 1940:

"Churchill is chiefly known to the workers as the breaker of the General Strike, the Home Secretary who sent troops against striking miners and railwaymen, and the fomentation of intervention against the struggling Soviet Republic.

"Let the Labour leaders fawn on him as they will. The rank and file of the labour movement do not trust this man. No new world or reconstruction will come from him. His words long ago lost their charm. There are perhaps many Tories who already realise that they have not only chosen a leader, but also a liability."

- "Daily Worker," Editorial. 11th October, 1940.

Opposite page

Stalinism: Its Origin and the Isolation of the Revolution

By Andy Blunden 1993

1924 - "Socialism in One Country"

The Fifth Congress of Comintern in June 1924, was dedicated to a sustained attack on Trotsky. On the one hand, this campaign reflected the desperation of the bureaucracy in the Party to rid itself of the representatives of the Revolution, in order to consolidate their positions of privilege. On the other hand, it reflected the contempt in which the bureaucracy held the perspective of world revolution. Far from wanting to make an objective evaluation of its errors in Germany, the Stalin group was already drawing conclusions of a quite different kind.

In April 1924 the first edition of Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* had included the lines:

'Is it possible to attain the final victory of socialism in one country, without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries? No, it is not. The efforts of one country are enough for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. This is what the history of our revolution tells us. For the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, especially a peasant country like ours, are not enough. For this we must have the efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries'. ^[34]

In August 1924, a second edition was published, in which the above paragraph had been replaced by: 'Having consolidated its power, and taking the lead of the peasantry, the proletariat of the victorious country can and must build a socialist society. ...in order to fully guarantee the country against intervention ... is the victory of the revolution necessary ... at least in several countries' .. ^[35]

The very foundation of Communism was turned on its head and not so much as an acknowledgment! What could be meant by 'a socialist society' built within the borders of an isolated backward country surrounded by capitalism? This humble 'correction' marked a fundamental reversal of the perspectives of the Russian Revolution.

As a result of this new perspective, the role of the Comintern was reduced to opposing foreign intervention against the USSR, rather than fighting for revolution in the capitalist countries. Ultimately the Comintern was to act simply as an instrument of Soviet diplomacy. This meant that the Com-



Andy Blunden

unist Parties in various countries had to seek friendly relations with whatever influential sections of society they could, in the interests of 'friendship with the Soviet Union', irrespective of the interests or perceptions of the workers.

This change in the line of the Comintern was demonstrated in two events in the mid-1920s - the British General Strike in 1926, and the defeat of the upsurge of the workers in China in 1926-7.

In **Britain**, Stalin placed great store in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee, set up in April 1925 after a visit to the USSR by British trade union leaders. In order to curry favour with the right-wing leaders of the British TUC, the Communist Party put forward as its slogan for the General strike of May 1926, the call 'All Power to the General Council of the TUC'. This slogan had the effect of leaving the TUC General Council in control of the strike. After 10 days, Prime Minister Baldwin told the trade union leaders "either take the power or call off the strike". The TUC, of course, called off the strike. The Communist Party

was caught completely off balance by this sudden betrayal as a result of its subordination to the leadership of the General Council. Its members had not been prepared to take the leadership. An historic defeat resulted from which the British working class did not recover for 20 years.

'All Power to the Soviets' was the slogan with which the October Revolution was made. In 1917 this was the means by which the Bolsheviks won the leadership of the Soviets, even though they had been in a minority when they raised the call. The slogan of 'All Power to the General Council' was a cruel parody of this slogan, for the British Communist Party had no perspective whatsoever of taking control of the General Council! On the contrary, the slogan was aimed at **supporting** the leaders of the TUC.

In **China**, Stalin's diplomatic policy was to win over the bourgeois-nationalist movement, the Kuomintang, as 'friends of the Soviet Union'. Consequently, the Comintern instructed the Chinese Communist Party to seek an alliance with the Kuomintang. Thus, the Chinese Communist Party's policy was for a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' in which the Kuomintang was to be an ally of the proletariat. But, after the death of Sun Yat Sen, the reactionary Chiang Kai-Shek assumed leadership of the Kuomintang. The Chinese workers came more and more into conflict with the Kuomintang. Throughout 1926, Chiang Kai-Shek's forces had brutally suppressed workers' strikes in Canton and attacked the peasants' movement.

Despite this, the Comintern Resolution of November 1926 urged the Chinese Communists to enter the Kuomintang and said:

'The apparatus of the National Revolutionary Government [i.e. the Kuomintang] offers a very real road to solidarity with the peasants ... and even certain strata of the big bourgeoisie may still march for a certain time with the Revolution'. [\[36\]](#)

In 1927, the Shanghai trade unions took control of the city, with the active support of Comintern representatives. Chiang Kai-Shek marched on Shanghai, and Stalin ordered that the workers of Shanghai should welcome Chiang's forces and not resist. Zinoviev, Trotsky, Radek and others demanded that the Shanghai workers be warned that Chiang Kai-Shek would not tolerate workers power. But this was to not avail. As a result of Stalin's

policy, the workers of Shanghai were crushed and their leaders slaughtered - with arms supplied by the USSR!

Then, believing in a mythical 'Left Kuomintang' Stalin characterised the situation as 'revolutionary' throughout the whole of China, despite the demonstrable ebbing of the revolutionary tide following the defeat in Shanghai.

Under this policy, the Comintern encouraged an adventurist uprising in Canton which was brutally crushed at enormous cost. This uprising, according to Stalin, was to institute not workers' power, but a 'democratic dictatorship' preserving capitalist property. This analysis flew in the face of the fact that the Canton workers were rising up **against** capitalist property!

Following this defeat, the Chinese Communist Party increasingly moved its attention to the countryside and abandoned its base in the urban working class.

The "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry"

Stalin's policy of collaboration during this period ran completely counter to the Bolsheviks' own experience in making the Russian Revolution. How is it possible that the lessons of the Russian Revolution could be forgotten so quickly? It was possible because Stalin was driven **not** by the needs of the workers in China or Britain to learn from the Russian Revolution, and make their own revolution, but by the narrowly conceived diplomatic needs of the USSR.

Further, Stalin was more concerned with defeating the Left Opposition than in making a truthful assessment of the lessons of the Russian Revolution. In the service of his factional battle against Trotsky, the history of the Russian Revolution was falsified.

The false policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie was accepted by the workers of China because of the authority that the leaders of the successful Russian Revolution held in the eyes of workers in all other countries.

The falsification perpetrated by Stalin was based on a misrepresentation of Lenin's policy on the relation between the proletariat and the peasantry. Before the War, Lenin had advocated the slogan of 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and

peasantry', while Trotsky had advocated 'dictatorship of the proletariat which leads the peasant masses behind it'. This old dispute, long since resolved by the October revolution, was used as a means of attacking Trotsky. Since in this case it was Lenin who came over to Trotsky's position, and not vice versa, the history of the revolution itself had to be rewritten for the purpose of this factional struggle. The Chinese workers had to pay the price for this deception.. ¹³⁷

The argument between Trotsky and Stalin over the policy in China was a major issue in the International, though Trotsky's argument was rarely heard. Despite the suppression of Trotsky's views, almost the whole of the delegation of the Chinese section in the USSR was won to Trotsky's position. When Stalin clamped down on Oppositionists in 1929 most of the Chinese section were liquidated. The few who made it back to China found the conditions for political discussion even more difficult at home, with Stalin's hacks firmly in control of the Party.

To the Brink of Counter-Revolution, 1926 - 1929

Trotsky's unrelenting criticism of the Stalin line was not in vain. In December 1925, Zinoviev broke with Stalin over the policy of supporting the kulaks against poor peasants and wage-cutting and speed-up recently imposed on the factory workers. Trotsky defended Zinoviev on these issues, and defended Zinoviev's right to defend his position in the Party.

Early in 1926, Zinoviev and Kamenev broke from Stalin and joined the Left Opposition, supporting Trotsky's call for rapid industrialisation. Only by the provision of good, cheap industrial products could the workers win the support of the peasantry. Otherwise, once the pre-war stock of machinery was exhausted, the slow pace of industrialisation would lead to crippling shortages of industrial products. However, Stalin and Bukharin continued to advocate 'socialism at a snail's pace' and collectivisation of agriculture was halted by the end of 1927.

'Captive to its own policy, the government was compelled to retreat step by step before the demands of a rural petit-bourgeoisie. In 1925, the hiring of labour power and the renting of land were legalised, ... The rising tide of capitalism was visible everywhere. ... Re-

tarding industrialisation and striking a blow at the general mass of the peasants, this policy of banking on the well-to-do farmer revealed unequivocally inside of two years, 1924 - 1926, its political consequences. It brought about an extraordinary increase of self-consciousness in the petit-bourgeoisie of both city and village, a capture by them of the lower soviets, an increase of the power and self-confidence of the bureaucracy, a growing pressure upon the workers, and the complete suppression of party and Soviet democracy'.

As a result of the policy of conciliation of the rich peasants:

'in January 1928 the working class stood face to face with the shadow of an advancing famine. ... In that very



Behheading a communist during the massacre of the Shanghai Soviet, the consequence of Stalin's opportunist policies.

month, the representatives of the Left Opposition were thrown into prison ... for their "panic" before the spectre of the *kulak*.. ¹³⁸

Owing to its numbers and its predominance in the economy, the support of the peasantry was essential to the success of the Revolution. Only by virtue of its control of industry, finance and trade could the workers deliver a solution to the problems facing the peasantry. Only by this means could the workers retain the support of the peasantry.

By allowing industry to stagnate and supporting the rich peasants, Stalin prepared the way for counter-revolution. The NEP encouraged social forces fundamentally hostile to the Revolution to grow and strengthen themselves. The influence of the NEP-men, civil servants and better-off peasants easily penetrated into the lower and middle-ranks of the Party and the Soviets.

Stalin's blindness to the rising dangers resulting from his wrong policy brought the Soviet Union to the brink of counter-revolution. This imminent danger at last made it possible for the Left Opposition to have some success in their struggle within the Party.

By the end of 1927, the Left Opposition had secured the support of a significant section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, including Kamenev and Zinoviev and many Old Bolsheviks.. ^[43] Two-hundred Party members had participated in the drafting of the Platform of the Left Opposition published in September 1927.

But such was the change that had taken place in the Party that Stalin was able to defeat the Opposition of this formidable line-up of Old Bolsheviks, and at the Fifteenth Congress of the Party in 1927, all the Oppositionists were all expelled and exiled to far-flung corners of the country.

The struggle of the Left Opposition had put a brake on Stalin's disastrous policy. But instead of the Party gaining clarification through correction of its errors, an atmosphere of fear reigned in a party bereft of any theoretical understanding of the crisis in which it was gripped.. ^[40]

II: The 'Third Period', 1929 - 1933

1929 saw the next in the series of abrupt turns which characterise this period in the history of the Soviet Union.

Stalin had brought the Soviet Union once again to the edge of an abyss through the threat of a counter-revolution led by the rich peasants and the petit-bourgeoisie. The failure to rebuild Soviet industry left the working class helpless before this danger. From late 1928, the NEP was abandoned and Stalin made an abrupt left turn.

Stalin launched an attack on the Right (Bukharin and others), borrowing his rhetoric from the platform of the Left Opposition. The target for the rate of growth of industry was upped to 20 and then 30 per cent, without any systematic plan or any regard to the relations between the different branches of industry. The problems resulting from this chaotic growth were solved by printing money, with the predictable runaway inflation. Forced grain seizures were instituted again, since the cities lacked industrial products to sell to the countryside. This only led to sowing strikes by the farmers.

Having lost the capacity to deal with crises by proletarian political means, Stalin answered with the policy of "liquidating the *kulaks* as a class". The abolition of individual farming was announced in November 1929. A crash program of forced collectivisation brought two-thirds of agriculture under collectivisation by 1932. Ration cards were introduced instead of money, of which Stalin declared "socialism" had no need. Farm machinery and animals were destroyed by the farmers rather than hand them over to the state. The collective farms were placed under the control of party hacks lacking knowledge of agronomy, or any of the necessary materials or equipment, and facing the hostility of the peasants.

Under the policy of "liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class" and forced collectivisation, agricultural production fell drastically. Famine gripped the land. Only slowly, after several years did agricultural production begin to slowly improve, but it still remained at near-famine level.

Outside of Russia this period corresponds to a period of unparalleled crisis for capitalism. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 was followed by the Depression and widespread paralysis. Europe was racked by crisis with revolutionary upsurges in Spain, France and Germany.

The Soviet regime survived Stalin's disastrous policies largely due to the paralysis gripping the capitalist world, preventing it from utilising the opportunity to attack the Soviet Union at its moment of greatest weakness.

This period was called the "third period", which was supposed to be the "final" period. ^[41] for capitalism. Stalin decreed that the world situation was again ripe for revolutionary offensive.

Just as Stalin's policy of collaboration during the period 1923-27 was driven by the demands of domestic policy, the characterisation of the "third period" also reflected the requirements of domestic politics - an attack on the Right and war against the *kulaks* .. ^[42]

Catastrophe in Germany

In Europe, the Comintern adopted ultra-left positions. The reformist parties were branded by the Communist Party as 'social fascists'. 'Red unions' were set up outside and in opposition to the mass trade unions. Under the slogan of 'class against class', the Communist Parties engaged in all kinds

of adventurist activities which only served to sow further confusion. The revolutionary tide had risen in the late twenties and revolutionary opportunities were lost as a result of the inability of the Comintern to operate a united front tactic. Just as the tide began to ebb under the impact of the Depression, this adventurist policy led to disastrous defeats.

With its long tradition of Social-Democracy and militant working class organisation and the advanced economy, the German working class was still regarded as the most powerful in the world. The chronic economic and social crisis which had gripped Germany since 1918 was again preparing to pass from a pre-revolutionary situation to a revolutionary situation. Both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party had about two million members. And Germany was, in 1931, the key to the whole international situation: would Fascism or Communism triumph in Germany?

In Germany, the Comintern's policy of 'united front from below' - "we invite you to join our united front, on condition that you accept that your leaders are social fascists" split the German working class, and paralysed it before Hitler's onslaught.

The divisive policy of the Comintern was justified by ultra-left logic like the following 1931 statement of *Rote Fabne*, the paper of the German Communist Party:

'Fascism is the military organisation of the bourgeoisie which leans upon Social Democracy for active support. Social Democracy, objectively speaking, is the moderate wing of Fascism'.

The Left Opposition strived to deflect the German Communist Party from this disastrous course:

'For us, the Communist Party represents the subjective factor, for Social Democracy is an objective obstacle that must be swept away. Fascism would in reality fall to pieces if the Communist Party were able to unite the working class and by that alone, transform it into a powerful revolutionary magnet for all the oppressed masses of the people.

'But the policy of the Communist Party since the September elections has only made its inconsistencies more profound: the empty talk of "social fascism", the flirtations with chauvinism, the imitation of genuine fascism for the purpose of petty market

competition with the latter, the criminal adventurism of the "Red Referendum" [instigated by Hitler to overthrow the Social-Democratic government, and supported by the Communist Party] - all this prevents the Communist Party from becoming the leader of the proletariat and the people. .. [what is required is] 'a practical system of measures - not with the aim of merely "exposing" Social Democracy (before the Communists), but with the aim of actual struggle against Fascism'.. [43]

But the Comintern line of **equating** the Social-Democrats with the Nazis, even to the extent of encouraging physical attacks on Social-Democrat meetings by Communists, opened the way for Hitler to come to power in January 1933. An explanation of Trotsky's policy of United Front is contained in the excerpt from *Germany, What Next?*, reproduced below.

In October 1931, the Communist Party spokesperson in the Reichstag had stated: 'Once they [the fascists] are in power, the united front of the proletariat will be established and it will make a clean sweep of everything!'. In the event, the Stalinists learnt the hard way the difference between fascism and social-



Zinoviev shortly before his murder by Stalin. On August 14, 1936, the first of the Moscow show trials began with "The Trial of the Sixteen," among them leading Old Bolsheviks including Lenin's pre-1917 collaborators Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. The 16 faced fantastic and completely concocted charges of collaborating with the Nazi Gestapo and Leon Trotsky, then in exile in Norway, in a plot to assassinate Joseph Stalin and other leading figures in order to establish fascism in the Soviet Union. All were shot within one day of the speedy trial's conclusion, on August 25, 1936. (WSWS)

democracy. Very soon all the working class organisations in Germany were smashed, including both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.. ^[44]

1933 marked, in Trotsky's view, a turning point in the life of the world Communist movement. To have brought about the defeat and smashing of the German working class would be crime enough. But for Trotsky this was not the final straw. After having brought about this disaster with its mistaken policies, the Comintern did not seek to explain how it had made such an error, but declared that its policy had been correct! Despite the efforts of the International Left Opposition, no section of the Comintern challenged this assessment. Under these circumstances, Trotsky drew the conclusion that there was now no longer any possibility of winning the Comintern back to a Marxist, revolutionary perspective. It was lost forever for the purposes of revolution. As a result, for the remainder of his life Trotsky devoted his efforts to the building of a new, Fourth International.

Although denying that it bore any responsibility for the German defeat or making any analysis of that defeat, the Comintern did change its policy. By 1935 the Comintern had changed its international line from the ultra-left "social fascism" line to the right-wing "popular front" line.

Whereas, up until 1933 it could be said that the Comintern **attempted** to make revolutions, but **ineptly**; after the defeat in Germany it adopted a policy of **opposing** workers' revolution.

III: The Years of Retreat, 1933 - 1936

Inflation which reached a run-away peak at the beginning of 1933, was halted from 1934 and bread-cards were abolished in 1935. In production of electrical energy, the USSR now ranked third in the world behind Germany and the US. It was fourth in coal production, and the third biggest steel producer, and was the largest producer of tractors in the world.

These monumental achievements of the planned economy were made at great cost. Life for ordinary workers remained extremely grim. Piece-work payment was introduced. Then came the Stakhanovite movement, an extreme form of piece work payment in which individual 'star' workers were encouraged to perform superhuman feats, which other workers were then obliged to emulate.

On 20 August 1935, Stalin declared the "final and

irrevocable triumph of socialism" in the Soviet Union. The cynicism of this deception perfectly complements that of the capitalists when they tell the workers that after all they already live in the best of all possible worlds under capitalism. And what a feat of imagination was required of the VIPs who visited the USSR, and would return to the West and praise the joys of life under "existing socialism"! The American author, Lincoln Steffens penned on his return from the USSR, the famous words: "I have seen the future, and it works"..^[45] The defeat of the German workers had shocked workers across the whole world. The smashing of their strongest section in Europe had also been a huge blow to the Comintern. But the Comintern had not seen the catastrophe in Germany as a result of their own misleadership. Instead it began to despair of the capacity of the working class as a revolutionary force.

Comintern policy was based on the thesis that it was above all necessary to ensure the defeat of fascism in order to avoid the danger of a fascist attack on the Soviet Union. Similarly, a revolution in Europe, or at least the support of the Soviet Union for such a revolution, would place the Soviet Union in danger of an imperialist attack. Consequently, following the victory of Hitler in 1933, the Comintern went from advocating revolution, but **incompetently**, to actively **opposing** revolution, in the interests of 'peace and stability'.

In October 1934 the **Chinese** Communist Party abandoned the Soviet in Kiangsi, and began the Long March, marking its decisive and irreversible turn away from the urban workers to the peasantry. It was during this period that **Mao Zedong** won the leadership of the CCP. Mao was trained in the Stalinist school, but he never visited Moscow before 1949. Whilst he never criticised Stalin to the day he died, the victory of the Chinese Revolution under Mao was possible only by means of pragmatic 'interpretation' of Stalin's directives from time to time. Under Mao's leadership, the CCP never again implemented Stalin's policy of alliance with the Kuomintang, despite a united front against the Japanese during the War. The USSR was still providing the Kuomintang with arms when civil war broke out between the Kuomintang and the Communists in 1945. Mao represented to a certain extent the independent nation-

alist aspirations of the Chinese people. However, in his orientation towards the peasantry, rather than the urban working class, Mao transformed Stalin's orientation from a tactic to a strategy.

In **France** . [461](#), the social crisis was heightened by Hitler's triumph. The historic change of the Comintern line began in July 1934 with a proposal to the French Socialist Party to form a 'united front'. Not only did the two parties resolve to jointly oppose the fascists, but they also resolved to abstain from attacks and criticism of each other.

In October 1934 the petit-bourgeois Radical Party was invited to join the Front, which became a reality in July 1935. From now on "popular front" was to be the centrepiece of Stalinist tactics. The "red unions" were abandoned, and thereafter Communist Party members participated in the mainstream trade unions.

The popular front. [471](#) meant forming a bloc between the working class and the "progressive bourgeoisie". This bloc was based on agreements and diplomatic pacts between the leaders, behind the backs of the masses. The basis of the pact was supposed to be mutual support in the face of the 'common enemy', fascism. Individual bourgeois politicians were lauded in exchange for their support for 'progressive' policies; but in exchange the working class had to abandon all socialist demands - no seizure of factories, no Soviets, no public attacks on capitalism, no socialist policies. This policy of the "People's Front". [481](#) had the effect of disarming the French working class in the face of a revolutionary crisis which could have turned the tide against fascism had a correct, revolutionary policy been followed.

In **Spain**, the Comintern acted purely and simply as executioners of the Spanish revolution. Factory committees and soviets were disbanded and occupied property handed back to its capitalist owners. Those who opposed this policy such as the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista) and the anarchists, were gunned down by GPU assassins. Indeed, the Stalinist agents never fought Franco, spending all their energies murdering opponents of the Comintern line. Reduced to the role of supporters of a powerless "progressive bourgeoisie", the Spanish working class was paralysed in the face of Franco.

The defeat of the Republicans in Spain was a tragedy, despite the self-sacrificing support of thou-

sands of workers (generally members of the Communist Party) who came to Spain to fight in the International Brigades. Fascism now ruled in Italy, Germany, Spain and Portugal and openly proclaimed its intention to conquer the world.

The popular front policy followed by Stalin after 1934 has since become a permanent feature of Stalinist politics. This policy ignores the fact that the working class has interests fundamentally antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie. Even a temporary pact or alliance formed with a section of the bourgeoisie should be made openly and clearly. Any compromise to the independence of the working class, let alone a secret pact, sets a lethal trap for the workers.

The Moscow Trials, 1936 - 1938

By 1936, all Stalin's real opponents had been isolated or deported, and he was firmly in charge. Despite everything, the economy had at least reached a level of stability and steady growth. But rather than easing political restrictions, Stalin launched a frenzy of political witch-hunting that was unprecedented in history.

The assassination of Sergei Kirov in December 1934, formed the pretext for a series of trials in which all the surviving leaders of the October Revolution were accused of preposterous crimes. All the accused were executed. Many confessed 'for the good of the Party'. Otherwise confessions were extracted under torture. Those who did not confess were shot anyway.

In the First Moscow Trial, in August 1936, the principal accused were Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had supported Stalin against Trotsky in 1923 - 1927, then joined the Left Opposition, later returning to Stalin during the "third period" When Kamenev's 'interrogator' told Stalin that Kamenev had refused to confess, Stalin let him know that torture was to be used, and not to come back without Kamenev's confession. Mikhail Tomsky, the leader of the trade unions since before the Revolution, committed suicide while awaiting trial. Zinoviev and Kamenev were shot.

In the Second Trial, January 1937, the principal accused were Pyatakov (a member since 1912, and a Central Committee member since the Civil War), and Radek (a leading Bolshevik since 1904). They were executed, as were Sokolnikov, Bubnov and Smilga (Central Committee members in October

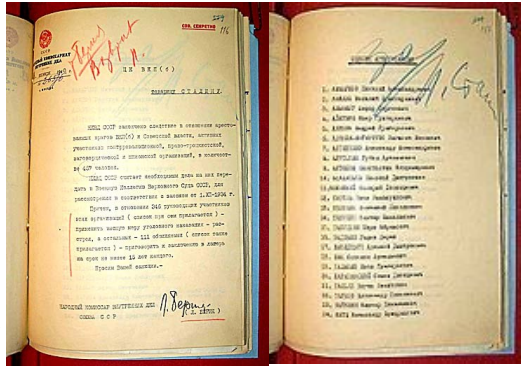
1917), and Serebryakov (a Central Committee member since the Civil War).

In the Third Trial, in March 1938, the accused were the leaders of the Red Army and Bukharin, as well as Rykov, Yakovleva and Rakovsky, all leading Bolsheviks and Central Committee members since the Revolution.

The top Army leaders were not put on trial, they were simply shot. The first victims were Marshals Tukhachevsky, and Putna, the two leaders capable of leading the Army in War, and Gamarnik, Feldman, Yakir, Kork, Eideman and Primakov - together the entire top leadership of the Soviet Armed Forces. According to the official Soviet history, between May 1937 and September 1938 victims of the Trials included: 'nearly half the regimental commanders, nearly all brigade commanders, all commanders of army corps and military districts, members of military councils, heads of political directorates, the majority of political commissars in army corps, divisions and brigades, almost one-third of regimental commissars and many military instructors'.

According to Khrushchev, of the 139 members and candidates of the Central Committee elected at the 17th Congress in January 1934, 98 were arrested and shot. Of the 1,966 delegates to the Congress 1,108 were arrested. 80% of these delegates had been members of the party since before the Revolution.

Of the 21 Central Committee members at the time of the October 1917 Revolution, six had died in the course of the struggle.. [49] Alexandr Kollontai had been abroad as an ambassador since 1923. Trotsky, in exile since 1927, was among the accused in each case. While volunteering to appear and defend himself, he was condemned in his absence and was assassinated in Mexico in 1940. The rest had been exposed as 'saboteurs' and 'traitors' and executed. **Only Stalin remained.** Not only had Stalin murdered the entire leadership of the Revolution, but in order to protect himself against the last remaining threat to his power, he had destroyed the Red Army - the army that had defeated the armies of 14 imperialist powers, the army built by Trotsky, the only force capable of stopping the advance of Fascism.. [50] Estimates of the total number of Soviet citizens killed during the Stalin's terror are unreliable but vary from one to two million, and the population



Left: Beria's January 1940 letter to Stalin asking permission to execute 346 "enemies of the CPSU and of the Soviet authorities" who conducted "counter-revolutionary, right-Trotskyite plotting and spying activities" Left: Stalin's handwriting: "za" (support).

of the labour camps is estimated variously from 7 to 12 million.

This period of frenzied witch-hunting in the CPSU was matched by equally frenetic purging of all the sections of the Communist International. All remnants of independent working leadership in the Comintern sections were expunged.

The Polish Communist Party (KPP), for instance, which had originated from Rosa Luxemburg's SDKPIL, and which had supported Trotsky against Stalin in the 1920s:

'Stalin, for his part, came to regard the KPP as the most dangerous surviving centre of Trotskyism and opposition to his own authority in the international communist movement. In the late 1930s, he summoned its leaders to Moscow, arrested them, and put several of them to death, together with hundreds of lesser members of the Party who simply disappeared. The KPP was abolished by the Comintern, on Stalin's instructions, in 1938'.. [51]

While all the best revolutionary leaders of the Communist International were falling victim to Stalin's terror, Stalin was pursuing a policy of appeasement with the capitalists. This policy of appeasement included an attempt to conclude a military pact with Britain. In order to assist Stalin in securing this pact, Communist Parties in the British Empire were instructed to follow a conciliatory line. The Communist Party of Australia ran a campaign in support of the "Anglo-Soviet" pact,

with the line that Britain was 'sated for the present with colonies'.

Because of Stalin's support for the Popular Front government in France, the Communist Party in Vietnam was instructed to withdraw from the Indochinese Congress formed to press demands for national independence. Implementation of this treacherous policy entailed further purging of the Vietnamese Party's ranks and by 1941, the only member of the Vietnamese Communist Party who had been active since the 1920s was Ho Chi Minh.

The Stalin-Hitler Pact, 1939 - 1941

Following the defeat of the Spanish revolution in March 1939, Stalin changed from seeking a pact with "democratic imperialism" against the fascist powers, to seeking an agreement with fascism. On August 23 1939, Stalin and Hitler signed a non-aggression pact, and within a week carved up Poland between them. Over a million Poles were deported to Siberia and the Asian Republics and the Baltic States, which had tasted national independence for but 20 years, were annexed.

On February 10, the Pact was sealed with a trade agreement under which the USSR supplied Hitler with 900,000 tons of oil, 100,000 tons of cotton, 500,000 tons of iron ore, 300,000 tons of scrap iron and other essential materials. In a speech on November 25, 1939 Hitler said:

'As long as Stalin is in power, it is certain that [the USSR] will adhere to the Pact made. Her political attitude may change after years of building up her internal strength, particularly if Stalin is overthrown or dies', [adding that his only fear was that Stalin] 'might be replaced by some extremists'.. [\[52\]](#)

After Germany invaded France and Holland, Molotov assured Soviet citizens that "the friendly relations between Germany and the USSR were based on the fundamental interests of both countries".. [\[53\]](#)

Between December 1939 and April 1941, the ambassadors of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Norway and Greece, were expelled from Soviet territory as their countries were overrun by Germany, and on April 24, 1941, the USSR gave full diplomatic recognition to the Vichy collaborationist government of Nazi-occupied France!

All the Communist Parties in the West by now mindlessly and cynically followed every twist and turn of the Comintern line. The Communist Party

of **Australia** was no different.

The CPA had gained considerable prestige as the most militant opponent of fascism. The CPA's attacks on the ALP for being too soft on the ultra-right, for instance, and their support for the Spanish Republicans and the International Brigades had won the respect of a very wide spectrum of people.

How did the loyal cadre of the CPA now sell the Stalin-Hitler Pact to their supporters? They sold the pact as part of a campaign against the imperialist war. By this means they actually gained consid-



Photo from 1943 exhumation of mass grave of Polish officers killed by NKVD in Katyń Forest in 1940.

erable support from the most militant sections of the working class.

On November 7 1939 the CPA proclaimed:

'The declaration [of the Comintern] defines the War in Europe as an unjust, reactionary imperialist war. It calls upon the workers of the world to struggle against the war. ...The ruling circles of England, France and Germany are waging war for world supremacy. This war is the continuation of the many years of imperialistic strife in the camp of capitalism. ...They want to divide anew, for their own advantage, the sources of raw materials, food, gold reserves and the huge masses of people in the colonies ...'

This anti-war line of the CPA, as it happened, coincided with a resurgence of struggle by the working class as it recovered from the Depression. The Menzies government was divided and discred-

ited over its support for Japanese imperialism. Opposition to conscription and the introduction of war-time regulations was growing.

Under these conditions, the CPA's policy of opposition to the war as an 'imperialist war' found a response in the working class. In June 1940, the Party was declared illegal and its leaders driven underground. When two CPA members were interned in May 1941, 50,000 workers struck in their defence.

Meanwhile, KGB agents all over the world conducted a campaign of assassination against the Left Opposition; Trotsky's son, [Leon Sedov](#) was murdered, as were a number of his closest collaborators, such as [Rudolf Klement](#). On 20 August 1940 Trotsky was assassinated by the Stalinist agent Ramon Mercador in Mexico. ^[54]

IV: The 'Great Patriotic War'

On 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Stalin was totally unprepared for this invasion, and ordered the border units not to return fire! Having beheaded the Red Army, Stalin now took the USSR to war against the most powerful industrialised country in the world. The 'Second Front' was not opened until the Normandy landing on June 6 1944. For three years the USSR bore the brunt of the War with fascist Germany. The defeat of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad in January 1943 marked the beginning of the end for Hitler. But 21.3 million Soviet citizens, [55] including 3/4 of the pre-War Party members, died in the war against fascist Germany! As soon as the USSR entered the war, the sections of the Comintern abruptly changed course and supported the 'war against fascism'. How did the loyal members of the Communist Party of Australia sell this new abrupt change of line to the working class?

Extracts from Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 1956

These are extracts on Repression, the great Purges and The Great Patriotic War from Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956. Note he does not criticise the politics of the popular front practiced by Stalin, nor the abject capitulation to Churchill and Roosevelt not the brutal suppression of revolutions in Warsaw, Czechoslovakia, northern Italy

and Greece. And of course the theory of the 'cult of the personality' explains nothing, and does not seek the social and political basis for the Stalinist degeneration, as Andy Blunden has explained above. Nonetheless it does lay bare that degeneration in appalling detail. This is what happened to the 17th Party Congress, the last to voice opposition to Stalin:

"The commission has presented to the Central Committee's Presidium lengthy and documented materials pertaining to mass repressions against the delegates to the 17th Party Congress and against members of the Central Committee elected at that Congress. These materials have been studied by the Presidium.

It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the Central Committee who were elected at the 17th Congress, 98 persons, i.e., 70 per cent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937-1938). (Indignation in the hall.) What was the composition of the delegates to the 17th Congress? It is known that 80 per cent of the voting participants of the 17th Congress joined the Party during the years of conspiracy before the Revolution and during the Civil War, i.e. meaning before 1921. By social origin the basic mass of the delegates to the Congress were workers (60 per cent of the voting members).

For this reason, it is inconceivable that a Congress so composed could have elected a Central Committee in which a majority [of the members] would prove to be enemies of the Party. The only reasons why 70 per cent of the Central Committee members and candidates elected at the 17th Congress were branded as enemies of the Party and of the people were because honest Communists were slandered, accusations against them were fabricated, and revolutionary legality was gravely undermined.

The same fate met not only Central Committee members but also the majority of the delegates to the 17th Party Congress. Of 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory rights, 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, i.e., decidedly more than a majority. This very fact shows how absurd, wild and contrary to common sense were the charges of counterrevolutionary crimes made out, as we now see, against a majority of participants at the 17th Party Con-

gress.”

(Indignation in the hall.)

Stalin deviated from these clear and plain precepts of Lenin. Stalin put the Party and the NKVD up to the use of mass terror when the exploiting classes had been liquidated in our country and when there were no serious reasons for the use of extraordinary mass terror.

This terror was actually directed not at the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes but against the honest workers of the Party and of the Soviet state; against them were made lying, slanderous and absurd accusations concerning “two-facedness,” “espionage,” “sabotage,” preparation of fictitious “plots,” etc.

... Now, when the cases of some of these so-called “spies” and “saboteurs” were examined, it was found that all their cases were fabricated. The confessions of guilt of many of those arrested and charged with enemy activity were gained with the help of cruel and inhuman tortures.

At the same time, Stalin, as we have been informed by members of the Politburo of that time, did not show them the statements of many accused political activists when they retracted their confessions before the military tribunal and asked for an objective examination of their cases. There were many such declarations, and Stalin doubtless knew of them.

The Central Committee considers it absolutely necessary to inform the Congress of many such fabricated “cases” against the members of the Party’s Central Committee elected at the 17th Party Congress.

An example of vile provocation, of odious falsification and of criminal violation of revolutionary legality is the case of the former candidate for the Central Committee Politburo, one of the most eminent workers of the Party and of the Soviet Government, comrade [Robert] Eikhe, who had been a Party member since 1905.

(Commotion in the hall.)

Comrade Eikhe was arrested on April 29, 1938 on the basis of slanderous materials, without the sanction of the [State] Prosecutor of the USSR. This was finally received 15 months after the arrest.

On February 2, 1940, Eikhe was brought before the court. Here he did not confess any guilt and

said as follows:

“In all the so-called confessions of mine there is not one letter written by me with the exception of my signatures under the protocols, which were forced from me. I have made my confession under pressure from the investigative judge, who from the time of my arrest tormented me. After that I began to write all this nonsense.... The most important thing for me is to tell the court, the Party and Stalin that I am not guilty. I have never been guilty of any conspiracy. I will die believing in the truth of Party policy as I have believed in it during my whole life.”

On February 4, Eikhe was shot.

(Indignation in the hall.)

It has been definitely established now that Eikhe’s case was fabricated. He has been rehabilitated posthumously.

... Many thousands of honest and innocent Communists have died as a result of this monstrous falsification of such “cases,” as a result of the fact that all kinds of slanderous “confessions” were accepted, and as a result of the practice of forcing accusations against oneself and others. In the same manner were fabricated the “cases” against eminent Party and state workers – [Stanislav] Kosior, [Vlas] Chubar, [Pavel] Postyshev, [Alexander] Kosarev, and others.

In those years repressions on a mass scale were applied which were based on nothing tangible and which resulted in heavy cadre losses to the Party. The vicious practice was condoned of having the NKVD prepare lists of persons whose cases were under the jurisdiction of the Military Collegium and whose sentences were prepared in advance. Yezhov would send these [execution] lists to Stalin personally for his approval of the proposed punishment. In 1937-1938, 383 such lists containing the names of many thousands of Party, Soviet, Komsomol, Army, and economic workers were sent to Stalin. He approved these lists.

During the war and after the war, Stalin advanced the thesis that the tragedy our nation experienced in the first part of the war was the result of an “unexpected” attack by the Germans against the Soviet Union. But, comrades, this is completely untrue. As soon as Hitler came to power in Germany he assigned to himself the task of liquidating Communism. The fascists were saying this openly.

They did not hide their plans.

In order to attain this aggressive end, all sorts of pacts and blocs were created, such as the famous Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Many facts from the prewar period clearly showed that Hitler was going all out to begin a war against the Soviet state, and that he had concentrated large armies, together with armored units, near the Soviet borders. Documents which have now been published show that [as early as] April 3, 1941 Churchill, through his ambassador to the USSR, [Sir Stafford] Cripps, personally warned Stalin that the Germans had begun regrouping their armed units with the intent of attacking the Soviet Union.

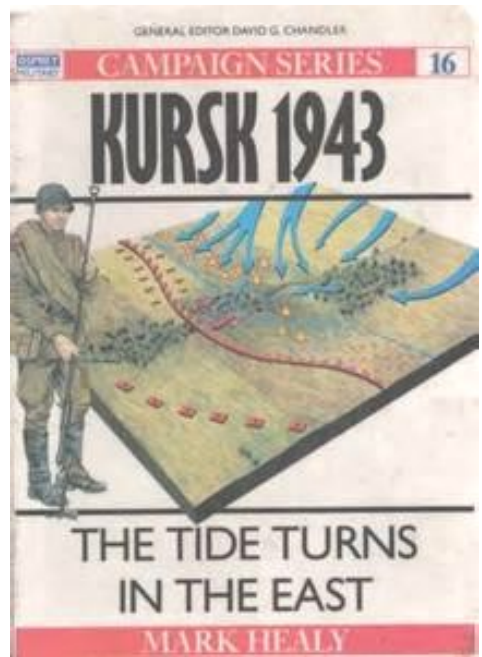
It is self-evident that Churchill did not do this at all because of his friendly feeling toward the Soviet nation. He had in this his own imperialistic goals – to bring Germany and the USSR into a bloody war and thereby to strengthen the position of the British Empire.

Very grievous consequences, especially with regard to the beginning of the war, followed Stalin's annihilation of many military commanders and political workers during 1937-1941 because of his suspiciousness and through slanderous accusations. During these years repressions were instituted against certain parts of our military cadres beginning literally at the company- and battalion-commander levels and extending to higher military centers. During this time, the cadre of leaders who had gained military experience in Spain and in the Far East was almost completely liquidated. The policy of large-scale repression against military cadres led also to undermined military discipline, because for several years officers of all ranks and even soldiers in Party and Komsomol cells were taught to "unmask" their superiors as hidden enemies.

(Movement in the hall.)

It is natural that this caused a negative influence on the state of military discipline in the initial stage of the war.

... After this Stalin for a long time actually did not direct military operations and ceased to do anything whatsoever. He returned to active leadership only when a Politbiuro delegation visited him and told him that steps needed to be taken immediately so as to improve the situation at the front. Therefore, the threatening danger which hung



over our Fatherland in the initial period of the war was largely due to Stalin's very own faulty methods of directing the nation and the Party.

Comrades: The cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person. This is supported by numerous facts. One of the most characteristic examples of Stalin's self-glorification and of his lack of even elementary modesty is the edition of his Short Biography, which was published in 1948 (sic).

This book is an expression of the most dissolute flattery, an example of making a man into a god-head, of transforming him into an infallible sage, "the greatest leader, sublime strategist of all times and nations." Finally, no other words could be found with which to lift Stalin up to the heavens. We need not give here examples of the loathsome adulation filling this book. All we need to add is that they all were approved and edited by Stalin personally. Some of them were added in his own handwriting to the draft text of the book. What did Stalin consider essential to write into



following sentence: “Stalin is the Lenin of today.” This sentence appeared to Stalin to be too weak. Thus, in his own handwriting, he changed it to read: “Stalin is the worthy continuer of Lenin’s work, or, as it is said in our Party, Stalin is the Lenin of today.” You see how well it is said, not by the nation but by Stalin himself.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>

Volume I: Conclusion (Andy Blunden)

Thus it came about that at the time of the Nazi invasion of the USSR, Stalin stood at the head of a powerful army and a world-wide political organisation, enjoying the support of millions of the oppressed people across the world. Moreover, as one of the Allies against Hitler, Stalin enjoyed the support of great and powerful imperialist leaders. All his enemies, both within the USSR and in the workers movement in every country across the world, had been eliminated.

This triumph had been achieved by the most unspeakable brutality practised on a scale hitherto unknown in history. All the leaders of the Russian Revolution were dead or exiled. The most abject defeats of the workers movement were acclaimed as victories. And many of the best representatives of the workers’ movement internationally agreed. The most absurd caricatures of science, philosophy and art were repeated as gems of undeniable wisdom. And many of the finest minds of the time testified to the validity of this dogma. Vulgar socialism, anti-Semitism, misogyny and outright double-talk were passed off as Scientific Socialism.

This tragedy arose on the basis of the Russian Revolution and its subsequent isolation. It affected not just Russia, but the workers’ movement of the entire world.

Those few Marxists who remained true to the ideals of the Russian Revolution and had survived the joint efforts of Stalinism, Fascism and “democratic imperialism” to destroy them, looked forward to the aftermath of the War to create the conditions for the final overthrow of Capitalism and a renewal of the Russian Revolution.

But it was not to be.

this book? Did he want to cool the ardor of the flatterers who were composing his Short Biography? No! He marked the very places where he thought that the praise of his services was insufficient. Here are some examples characterizing Stalin’s activity, added in Stalin’s own hand:

“In this fight against the skeptics and capitulators, the Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Bukharinites and Kamenevites, there was definitely welded together, after Lenin’s death, that leading core of the Party... that upheld the great banner of Lenin, rallied the Party behind Lenin’s behests, and brought the Soviet people onto the broad paths of industrializing the country and collectivizing the rural economy. The leader of this core and the guiding force of the Party and the state was comrade Stalin.”

Thus writes Stalin himself! Then he adds:

“Although he performed his tasks as leader of the Party and the people with consummate skill, and enjoyed the unreserved support of the entire Soviet people, Stalin never allowed his work to be marred by the slightest hint of vanity, conceit or self-adulation.”

Where and when could a leader so praise himself? Is this worthy of a leader of the Marxist-Leninist type? No. Precisely against this did Marx and Engels take such a strong position. This always was sharply condemned also by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

In the draft text of [Stalin’s] book appeared the

Page 16 Revolutionary Communism: Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or Mao?

Class Struggle in the Second World War

By Jack Gale

Chapter 1 of Jack Gale's book, *Class Struggle in the Second World War in response to a CPB comrade who said that the Trotskyists assisted Hitler by supporting strikes during WWII:*

Chapter 1 The Press Witch-hunt

ON APRIL 5, 1944, Special Branch detectives raided the headquarters of the Revolutionary Communist Party at 256 Harrow Road, London. They also raided seven private homes in London plus others in Nottingham, Newcastle and Glasgow. A total of 1,200 documents were taken away by the police. All the raids were carried out under the Trade Disputes Act of 1927, and were in connection with a strike of Tyneside apprentices against being conscripted to work in the coal mines.

On April 6, the *Daily Mail* reported: 'Women also took part in the raid so that they could search women Trotskyists down to the last stitch.' The *Mail* gloated over the treatment of one woman comrade: "Mrs LMailee was conducted to her home and taken to her bedroom where she was asked to remove all her clothing, which was thoroughly searched. Even the linings of her dresses and the brown corduroy trousers she was wearing were examined. It went on: 'Documents, clothing, office desks,' fireplaces and bedsteads were searched for the clue that will unmask the duped workers the secret that so far the Trotskyists have contrived to hide — *Who pays for their activities?*" The *Daily Mail* — which only a few years earlier had been a vociferous supporter of Sir Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists — conducted a lengthy and hate-filled campaign against the Trotskyists. Typical of the paper's spleen was its reference to polio victim Roy Tearse: "First man to hobble on the scene was the little cripple Rawlings (Roy) Tearse (Daily Mail, April 6). Tearse, the *Mail* said, 'has been active keeping the Clydeside apprentices out on strike at a vital period in the war.'

The *Mail's* campaign had, in fact, preceded the raids and it seems clear that the paper's proprietors knew in advance both that there were going to be such raids and that new regulations were going to be introduced into parliament. On April 3, the

Daily Mail wrote: "There is strong reason to believe that sinister influences are at work, both in the coalfields and in the shipyards. Young men are approached by trained agitators, working against the war effort, and are themselves trained to agitate amongst their workmates. Under the headline "Cabinet May Move against Strikes", the same issue of the paper said: "The Cabinet is considering immediate action against political mischief makers who are- believed to be largely responsible for the present discontent in the coalfields and other sections of industry by poisoning the miners' minds both against their own leaders and the government". It reported that, on War Cabinet instructions, Scotland Yard officers had already been sent to Wales, Derby, Newcastle and Scotland.

The industrial correspondents of the *Daily Mail* worked closely with right-wing union leaders, particularly in the Miners' Federation, in building up their dossier. One of them wrote in the *Mail* on April 3: "Will Lawther, president of the mineworkers' federation, told me last night that months have passed since he and his colleagues urged the government to take drastic action against the sinister men who move among the miners spreading discontent.' 'Hidden bad influences', the *Mail* went on, 'have been pouring most of their poison into the coalfields.' The paper was also able to quote Yorkshire miners' president Joe Hall who claimed that "a malicious machine is at work" and that "loyal men" were afraid. The *Mail* used Hall's outburst to rail at "rule by rabble" and accuse "gangs of youth" of acting as meeting-breakers.

On April 4, 1944, the *Daily Mail's* headlines screamed 'How Young Workers Are Duped: Stalin-Haters Fan Illegal Strikes'. It reproduced a front-page article from the Trotskyist Socialist Appeal, which was headlined '100,00 Miners Can't Be Wrong' and also a Trotskyist cartoon showing a union official saying 'Don't Strike Lads, I've Got Mine'. 'Most of the agitators,' said the *Mail*, "are fanatic adherents of Trotskyism, favour world revolutionary socialism and are doing all they can to foment class warfare. It slandered the Trotskyists by calling them 'Open enemies of trade unionism out to smash it', and said they were 'men without

Hurrah for the Blackshirts

BECAUSE Fascism comes from Italy, shortsighted people in this country think they show a sturdy national spirit by deriding it.

If their ancestors had been equally stupid, Britain would have had no banking system, no Roman law, nor even any football, since all of these are of Italian invention.

THE Socialists, especially, who jeer at the principles and uniform of the Blackshirts as being of foreign origin, forget that the founder and High Priest of their own creed was the German Jew Karl Marx.

Though the name and form of Fascism originated in Italy, that movement is not now peculiar to any nation.

By
**VISCOUNT
ROTHERMERE**

and disgusted by the incompetence of their elders in dealing with the depression that has followed on it. The other is made up of men too young to remember the war but ready to put all their ardour and energy at the service of a cause which offers them a vigorous constructive policy in place of the drift and indecision of the old political parties.

Blackshirts proclaim a fact which politicians dating from pre-war days will never face—that the new age requires new methods and new men. They base their contention on the

views" were an effective substitute in human affairs for action, the National Government would be the best that Britain has ever had. But the experience of the past two-years has proved that these futile and time-wasting devices are no more than a screen for inertia and indecision.

THE huge majority obtained by the present Government at the general election of 1931 was the last vote of confidence that the nation will ever give to Old Gang politicians. Two years from now another general election will be almost due. The whole future of Britain will depend upon its issue.

A prolongation of the present régime may be regarded, in the country's present mood, as out of the question. There will be a pronounced swing either to Right or Left.

**Crazy News
Reel**

Presented by
D. B. WYNDHAM LEW

OLD soldiers will note, with affection, one of the Most "The Soldier's Return," a group, at the British Art Exhibition. The handsome, even lopsided, soldier, wearing an expensive shirt and a natty velvet necktie, looking like Squire Thoroughbred, is evidently his humble and distinguished relative, who became quartermaster-in-waagen, and is now going to buy the village. His father waddlingly holds out to him a mug of rum. He ignores it. Rum is

The Daily Mail, famous for its admiration of Hitler now became fans of Stalin: "For two years," it said, 'certain organisations have been pouring poison into the ears of the younger elements in our major industries.'^o At that time, of course, the *Daily Mail* was a fervent admirer of Joseph Stalin, regularly referring to the Trotskyists as 'Stalin-haters' On April 4, the *Mail* proclaimed: "The Trotskyists seek to bring the whole of civilisation down in ruins in the hope that their own brand of Communism would then triumph. It is the kind of Communism rejected by Stalin when he expelled Trotsky and set out to build a Russia that has been able to stand up to the greatest military threat in history."

legitimate jobs'. 'For two years,' it said, 'certain organisations have been pouring poison into the ears of the younger elements in our major industries.'^o At that time, of course, the *Daily Mail* was a fervent admirer of Joseph Stalin, regularly referring to the Trotskyists as 'Stalin-haters'

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Scotland Yard is busy trying to answer.' The *Mail*, as it proudly told its readers on April 6, set a 'special team of investigators' on the job of tracking down the Trotskyists. These journalists, the paper said, went 'from a dingy room near King's Cross railway station, down to the Harrow Road, to a council house in Nottingham, to a flat in Glasgow and to two houses in Newcastle which were simultaneously raided by detectives'. The Special Branch, said the *Mail*, was 'in search of documents that would reveal the hidden hand of finance^o and was following 'a fantastic trail of clues'. 'Trotskyists Keep Money Secret' screamed the *Mail* headline on April 6, when it proclaimed to its readers 'the first full story of the Trotskyite wrecking machine in Britain — a fanatic body which says bluntly that it opposes this war and acts accordingly'. The *Mail*'s front page carried a picture of RCP general secretary Jock Haston in the party headquarters, and a picture of party member Mrs Mildred Lee captioned 'the woman in corduroys'. The back page carried pictures of Roy Tearse (captioned 'he trained agitators') and of detectives entering the party headquarters. The *Daily Mail* photographer, of course, 'just happened' to be

outside the premises when the police arrived! But the 'first full story of the Trotskyite wrecking machine' was not quite as full as its eager readers might have hoped. True, staff writer Harry Proctor announced imposingly: 'I sent my man to Nottingham believing that behind this apparently tremendous organisation there must be real money. Proctor's man found a council house in Cardale, Nottingham, where Roy Tearse had lodged. But he didn't find out much more. As Proctor complained: 'In this council house, as in the busy thoroughfares of London, the Trotskyist dictum "Say nothing to the Daily Mail" held good.' However, the *Mail* finally discovered a clue about the supply of cash to the Trotskyists. It found a factory in Nottingham where most of the workers contributed one halfpenny a week to the movement. 'Tearse had ingratiated himself with a few malcontents,' snarled Proctor.

More startling revelations were to come: 'From my man in Wombwell in South Yorkshire,' announced Proctor portentously, 'I have just heard that copies of the Socialist Appeal were being distributed at the pit-heads by a 19 year-old youth.' But this flimsy "evidence" was enough to keep the state machine moving against the Trotskyists. On April 8, the *Mail* announced 'Riddle of Money Used to Foment Strikes: *Yard Seeks Men Behind the Trotskyists*'. The documents seized on the April 5 raid, the *Daily Mail* said, were being examined it 'for evidence that might be used when the new Order making it a penal offence to incite unrest in industry comes into force next week'. This meant that new regulations could be applied retrospectively—with people being dragged into the courts for doing things which were not illegal at the time they did them. Scotland Yard, the *Mail* went on, was seeking the source of the Trotskyists' money and "the identity of the men who may be concerned behind the scenes'. Documents seized in Newcastle, the paper reported, had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Just to keep the witch-hunt boiling, the *Mail* on April 10 described RCP members who attended the IILP conference in Leeds as 'marching in silent, strangely Nazi-like procession up the circular steps leading to the body of the hall'. Although the *Daily Mail* led the pack, it was not running alone. On April 3, 1944, the News Chronicle carried an article headed 'Scotland Yard

Searches Men Who Duped Youths into Striking'. This said: 'it is beyond doubt that the Tyneside and Clydeside apprentices now on strike have been hoodwinked into their illegal action by sinister influences outside this area whose object is to injure the war effort and to use the boys as pawns in a political game.'

The *Sunday Despatch* of April 9 said: 'Strikes are being fomented by agitators belonging to the organisations calling themselves the "Militant Workers' Federation" and the "Revolutionary Communist Party" in connection with which is published and distributed the Socialist Appeal... those behind the Socialist Appeal — the writers on the paper and the agitators who foment trouble among the miners — are Trotskyists who believe in permanent revolution.

The *Evening Standard* of April 5 had this to say under the title 'Hidden Hand Agitators Marked': 'The principal aim of the new measures will be to get at the "hidden hand agitators" the law apparently requires some amendment to subject agitators outside the industry to the same consequences as can be imposed on strikers.'

In the *Sunday Express* of April 9, editor J. L. Garvin wrote:

There is proof that agitators outside the industry are playing an insidious and virulent part to incite sabotage of the war effort.' Garvin knew exactly what he wanted: 'To these intriguers no repression up to penal servitude can be too stern.

The *Daily Sketch* editorial of April 4 declared: 'From the very beginning there were some suspicious features about the strike of the apprentices in the North East. It seemed so unlikely that the boys had taken this serious step on their own initiative. On the contrary, there was every reason to believe that the strike was promoted and fomented by subversive influences. That inference is now almost completely vindicated by the facts.' S After this sustained press attack, four Trotskyists were brought to trial in Newcastle in June 1944. They had, of course, already been found guilty in advance by the capitalist press. For weeks they had been publicly reviled as 'agitators', spreading 'poison' among young workers, living off secret funds provided by shady unknown and sinister people behind the scenes. Their legal trial came after all this.

Chapter 8 of Jack Gale's book, *Class Struggle in the Second World War* in response to a CPB comrade who said that the Trotskyists assisted Hitler by supporting strikes during WWII:

The Stalinists join the Attack

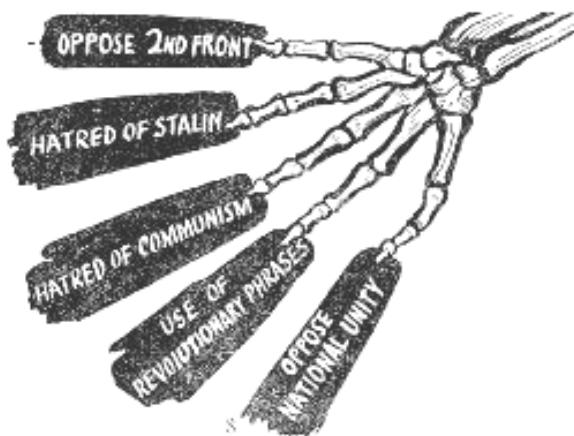
ONE TENDENCY fought might and main for the capitalist class and against the jailed Trotskyists - and that was the Communist Party. Its line was most clearly expressed in William Wainwright's pamphlet 'Clear out Hitler's agents. Under the heading, 'What to do with the Trotskyists, Wainwright wrote:

'First: Remember that the Trotskyists are no longer part of the working class movement. Second: Expose every Trotskyist you come into contact with. Show other people where his ideas are leading. Treat him as you would an open Nazi. Third; Fight against every Trotskyist who has got himself into a position of authority, either in your trade union branch, local Labour party or Co-op. Expose him and see that he is turned out.'

Acting on this position that Trotskyists were the same as fascists, the Communist Party opposed any support for the Defence Committee wherever it could. The party did, however, have difficulty with some of its members who knew the Trotskyists to be class-conscious fighters and were not prepared to see them jailed and do nothing about it.) The Stalinists were compelled, by the reaction of the working class, to oppose Regulation iAA. But they did so not in order to protect the right to strike but to call into use other reactionary laws against strikers and socialists. This, as we have seen, was the position put forward in parliament by DN. Pritt, the then Labour MP who was in complete political agreement with the Communist Party.

The Stalinist Pritt actually wrote a pamphlet for the National Council for Civil Liberties after the Newcastle trial, when the Trotskyists had been sentenced. The pamphlet was called 'Defence Regulation iAA. In it Pritt wrote:

'The view of the Council is: (a) that the regulation



Clear Out Hitler's agents! An exposure of Trotskyist disruption being organised in Britain By W. Wainwright Note the fifth charge, 'oppose national unity' ... with Churchill against the working class.

is unnecessary because the law already in existence is amply sufficient to cover both the activities at which the government professed to be aiming when it passed the regulation, viz: the instigation of strikes, and the many further activities which the provisions of the regulation itself plainly cover, viz: acting in any way in furtherance of strikes, whether by instigating them, or by merely taking part in them, or in any other fashion]

He went on: 'The Council recognises that during the war particular civil liberties, including the right to strike, must be suspended' The only strike which was suggested to have been unconnected with a trade dispute was the apprentices' strike, Pritt said. This, of course, was the strike which led to the jailing of the Trotskyists. This strike, Pritt argued, was 'sufficiently covered by other laws and regulations'.

But Pritt didn't stop there. He went on to outline the laws which could be used against strikers and those who supported them: 'What is the law that makes strikes illegal? This law is to be found in the "Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order" (SRO, 1940, No.1305), Order 1305 - later to be used by Aneurin Bevan against striking dockers in 1950 - was described by Mr Pritt KC as 'the well-known Order, made by the Min-

ister of Labour under powers given by Defence Regulation 58AA, which, among other things, set up the National Arbitration Tribunal. I need not examine in detail the steps by which this Order makes strikes illegal, because both the supporters and the critics of Regulation IAA agree that this is its effect’.

In addition to 1305, Pritt recommended the use of the Trade Disputes Act, precisely the Act under which the Trotskyists had been jailed: ‘Any strike unconnected with a trade dispute which could possibly happen in an essential service under present conditions would certainly be illegal by virtue of section 1 (1) of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927.’ Pritt was thus saying that the jailing of the Trotskyists was correct – they were guilty under the Trade Disputes Act.

If any amendment to existing law was needed to make it more effective against the Trotskyists the Stalinist Pritt was ready with suggestions:

‘The next step is to consider, these strikes being illegal, what there is in the law to penalise those who instigate them — and particularly those who instigate them from outside of set purpose and policy. The answer is that there is a whole armoury-of law on this point. The principal items can be stated under some five heads: (1) The common law lays down that to incite other people to commit a crime is itself a crime - so long as strikes are illegal, to incite strikes is punishable as a crime at common law. If there were the slightest doubt about the sufficiency of the common law, it would be very simple, and could do no harm, to insert in the regulation the words: “no person shall incite any other person to commit an offence against these regulations”.’ (Emphasis added.)

Pritt went on to uphold the prosecution and conviction of the Trotskyists at Newcastle:

Good evidence of the hollowness of the suggestion that there was not, (prior to the making of Regulation iAA, sufficient legal machinery to deal effectively with the instigation of strikes was provided by the recent prosecutions at Newcastle Assizes, which led to the imprisonment of several persons charged in connection with the strike of engineering apprentices in the Tyne the prosecution was brought not only without the help of Regulation iAA, but also without that of the amended version of Regulation iA just mentioned;

the strike was held to be illegal; and the prisoners were convicted and sentenced.

But even this wasn’t enough for the Stalinists.

Pritt went on to call for the internment of Trotskyist leaders, suppression of their journals, and compulsory winding-up of their organisation: ‘These are all the direct weapons; but they do not really exhaust the possibilities so far as a serious conspiracy to injure the war effort, as alleged by the government, lies behind activities in the industrial field. If such a x conspiracy exists [and the Stalinists — including Pritt himself speaking in parliament on April 28 insisted that the Trotskyists we-re carrying on such 4 a conspiracy] the government can intern the responsible leaders under Defence Regulation 18B, can wind up their organisation under Defence Regulation ISAA, and can deal with their periodicals under Defence Regulation 2C. These strong executive measures, when properly used, are A accepted ¥ generally by public opinion as proper and necessary for the prosecution of the war.’

But, unfortunately for the Stalinists, these ‘strong executive measures’ in other words, state attacks — were not accepted- by the working class One single issue of the Socialist Appeal, August 1944, could carry the following list of support for the campaign to free the three: AEL branches from New Moston, Meltham (Huddersfield), Llanelli, Alloa Hackbridge 131 HE, 6EE Enfield Lock, Ponders End, Luton Central 154 LE, Dudley N o. 1, Ponders End No. 1, Cove Stoke (Coventry), Hoddesdon 16, Strafford No.4, Hampton 111 HE, ‘Aylesbury No. 1, and Chiswick No. 2.

Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Branches Watford No. 1 and Brixton No. 1, Cricklewood and Harlesden Painters and-Decorators union branches in Southend, Torquay and Hitchin. National Union of Agricultural Workers branches in Princes Risborough and Amersham National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers in Romford and Holloway. Life Assurance Workers’ Union in Hackney and North West London. Banbury and District and Edmonton Trades Councils; Slough and Park (Sheffield) Divisional Labour Parties; plus 7/133 T&GWU branch Edinburgh, Bentley NUM Yorkshire, National Union of Foundry Workers Paisley, AUBTW Croydon, CAWU London General and the Amalgamated



Jock Haston, Ann Keen, Heaton Lee and Roy Tearse.

Society of Woodcutting Machinists at Plymouth. Factory support from Ford's Tool room, Trafford Park, Manchester; Enfield Lock Garage Room shop committee; Beasley French and Company, Ashton; Aluminium Plant and Vessel Company, London; and Nottingham quarterly shop stewards' meeting. Southend Co—op, Holloway Women's Co-op Guild and the Workers Northern Publishing Society, Manchester.

The same issue of Socialist Appeal carried reports of Defence Committee activities in Leeds, Norwich, Southall, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Working class concern was intensified by the Calderhead Colliery strike in Lanarkshire which broke out in May. By May 16, sympathetic strikes had started throughout the Shotts area. The CID visited the office of the Shotts District Council of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union and asked questions about the 'instigators' of the strikes. The Procurator-Fiscal informed the District Council that the sympathy strikes were in breach of Defence Regulation iAA and that the 'instigators' were in danger of prosecution.

This threat confirmed the warning carried in the July issue of Socialist Appeal. This said 'people who had held up their hands in pious horror at the thought of being associated with the defence of

Trotskyists should appreciate the implications of the prosecution'. In particular, the Appeal said that the Communist Party should 'hesitate a long time before rejoicing at the result of the Trotskyists' trial'. And the paper pointed out that Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the TUC, had blurted out the truth in a speech in the United States when he had said that Regulation IAA was necessary to cope with the industrial unrest that would come after the war.

Socialist Appeal reported in July that an application for bail for Haston, Tearse and Lee — with James Maxton MP and John McGovern MP offered as sureties — had been turned down by Mr Justice Wrottesley on the grounds that there were no special circumstances in the case. Mr. Burge, for the three, had asked for bail pending hearing of an appeal.

Mr Burge told the judge that bail was being applied for on the following grounds:

1. That this was the first prosecution under the Trade Disputes Act of 1927.
2. That this was an important trial to the political and industrial labour movement.
3. That there was a very substantial case in law and in fact to be pleaded before the Court of Criminal Appeal.

4. In the event of the appeal being successful, it would be wrong that these defendants should have been kept in custody.

5. That the major counts of conspiracy and incitement was rejected by the jury who returned a verdict of not guilty.

With bail refused, the campaign was intensified. The mid-July issue of Socialist Appeal reported an attendance of 400 at a Newcastle meeting of the Anti—Labour Laws Victims Defence Committee. James Maxton MP told the meeting:

‘We are taking the case from the Assize Court to a higher one. From the lower court we have got a decision that these people were not responsible for the strike, that they did not incite the strikers and that they were only concerned with furthering a strike. We want to know if furthering a strike can take place before a strike has taken place and whether furthering a strike in any way can incur a penalty of 12 months’ imprisonment.’

By this time the Campaign Committee’s sponsors had been joined by three more MPs — Hugh Lawson, John Loveseed and Sir Richard Acland. When the decision to appeal was announced, the Committee circularised the labour movement again. The conviction of the Trotskyists, their letter said, ‘demonstrates that the capitalist offensive against the workers has begun. It went on: ‘Though Bevin introduced Regulation IAA ostensibly because of a gigantic “conspiracy” and “incitement” to strike, the jury has returned a verdict of not guilty on the charges of conspiracy and incitement. Consequently, the whole basis of IAA falls to the ground if we are to believe the reasons given. If this conviction remains unchallenged, the government will have a weapon to attack all sections of the working class. The savage sentences indicate the hatred the ruling class displays towards militant workers.

‘It is necessary for the entire trade union and working class movement to face the issues involved in the trial. This is the first conviction under the Trade Disputes Act and as such sets a judicial precedent for the future. Unless this decision is challenged and the character of the Act exposed, many more prosecutions will follow. The Labour and trade union movement which has campaigned against this anti-Labour Act for 17 years must not allow the decision to stand by default.’

The Defence Committee stressed that two major points of law were involved in the convictions: ‘First, the decision that the Tyne apprentices’ strike was illegal will be challenged. Second, the decision that “furtherance” of a strike includes any action prior to the outbreak of the strike will be challenged. Although it has been ruled in the House of Lords by three judges that the definition of furtherance of a trade dispute can only be defined to mean any action after the strike has broken out, this ruling was completely ignored.

“Furtherance”, as interpreted by the present judgement, means that all trade union activity before a strike and leading to a strike, all propaganda and action in connection with a grievance of the workers, becomes illegal. In the light of such an interpretation, any shop steward in a factory who raised a wage dispute before the actual strike broke out could be convicted under the new Defence Regulation IAA and sentenced to up to five years’ imprisonment. The definition of the word “furtherance” is therefore of vital importance not only in relation to the Trade Disputes Act, but to IAA. It is the duty of all trade unions and other working class organisations to rally to the support of the defendants.

Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Communist Party refused to be intimidated by the attacks of the capitalist state. The party published a warning to its members in the August issue of Socialist Appeal:

‘All comrades and sympathisers are warned that when they are visited and interrogated by the CID, apart from producing their National Identity Cards and giving their names and addresses, they are not obliged to answer questions relating to their political affiliations or sympathies. They are not obliged to say whether or not they are members of the RCP or how much money they subscribe to its funds or to give any details of their political activity.

‘The Revolutionary Communist Party, British section of the Fourth International, is a legal organisation, membership of which has not yet been made a punishable crime! Any comrade whom the police attempt to interrogate should refuse to give any information whatever and should inform the police that they wish to get in touch with their legal advisers.’

Trotsky and the Materialist Analysis of Stalinism

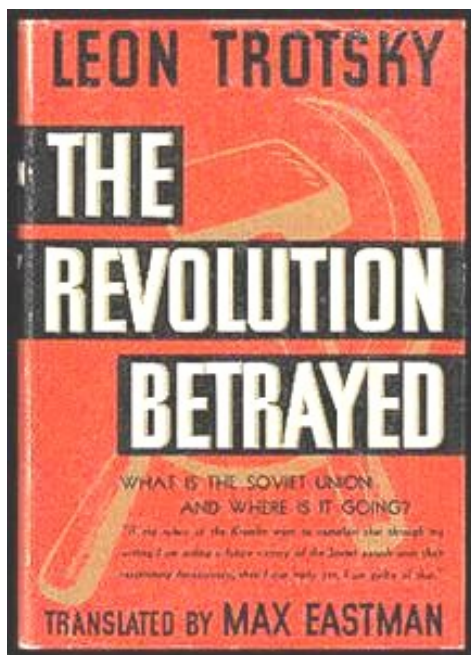
By D. Bruce

This essay comprises edited extracts from a polemic written in the late 1980s in the course of one of those spats with which any veteran of the left is dreadfully familiar. It is now nearly two decades since the Soviet Union and its east European satellites reverted to capitalism, Stalinism's heyday has gone, the groups involved have long-since dissolved and most of their members have quit political activity. So why revive and revise the piece now?

For no other reason than that I was approached out of the blue for a copy, a request I was reluctant to fulfil because it meant revisiting territory I had happily abandoned and because I couldn't find the thing. When I did eventually find it, it was clearly far too parochial to interest anyone now.

Trotsky nevertheless remains an important political thinker not least because China and North Korea remain in the grip of regimes that share characteristics with the Soviet Union's. He is still required reading for emerging generations of political militants. If, therefore, serious mis-interpretations of his thinking persist, it seems reasonable to try to correct them.

What I found when researching the original version of the following text was that few, if any, of those who had sought since Trotsky's death to develop an anti-Stalinist critique to inform political agitation seemed to grasp a key aspect of his analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy: the notion that a bureaucratic and administrative state apparatus could not be an agent for the emancipation of an oppressed class regardless of its political com-



position. Rooted as the analysis was in the historical materialist approach, it saw the *social* role of bureaucracy, its position within the mode of production, as primary and its political characteristics as secondary. His followers have typically reversed this.

The first part of the essay outlines Trotsky's writings on the contradictory role of the bureaucracy from 1933 onwards. The second argues that his analysis extends the ideas of Marx on the aftermath of the overthrow of a capitalist regime. In the third, I suggest that, after his death, his ideas became blurred in a welter of in-fighting and confusion about dual 'natures' and the like. It became apparent on re-reading the record that a false conception of his position, going back at least as far as the SWP's fight with the Cochran-Clark group in the early 1950s and probably earlier, has informed the understanding of

both sides of almost every divide in the Trotskyist movement since.

In short, the essay is an attempt to set the record straight. Whether it succeeds or even matters is for others to decide.

Dave Bruce, May 2010

The original text has been edited for cumbersome syntax though not substantially altered except that the names of contemporaries and lengthy but long irrelevant polemical points have been deleted. Comments in square brackets [] are new.

1 Trotsky on the dual *role* of the bureaucracy and of the workers' state

... Instead of Marxist discussion of the concrete changes which have taken place in the Soviet state (in its economic, political and legal institutions and in the inter-relationships of classes in the country) during the period of its existence, the capitulationists have opened a metaphysical discussion about the 'nature' and 'essence' of the dictatorship of the proletariat in general. They have become like metaphysicians, scholastics and sophists, tilting at theoretical windmills, a practice against which every page and line of Marx, Engels and Lenin rise up in opposition... [1]

It cannot be over-stressed that, in spite of widespread claims to the contrary, Trotsky *never* referred to the 'dual nature' of the workers' state, the bureaucracy or anything else. As a complex of institutions comprising millions of people, it would be absurd to talk of a 'dual nature' of a bureaucracy. On the contrary, in *The Transitional Programme*, he had written:

... from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko). The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism... Between these two poles, there are

intermediate, diffused Menshevik-S.R.-liberal tendencies which gravitate toward bourgeois democracy. [2]

What he did write about was the dual *role*, the dual *function* of the workers' state and the bureaucracy, more or less interchangeably. And that was no accident: the bureaucracy had usurped the state, leaving the working class no role or function within it. The Marxist conception of the workers' state assigned the role of defence of the state and of control of its bureaucracy to the working class, organised in Soviets. The capacity of the class to perform this role had been portended by the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871 and, to a degree, proved by the early experience of post-revolutionary Russia. However, under the appallingly difficult conditions of the first, backward and isolated workers' state, the working class surrendered the role. By the mid-1920s, if Trotsky is to be believed, the Thermidorian reaction had occurred and the bureaucracy had become the state.

In January 1921 Lenin had noted that:

... A workers' state is an abstraction. What we actually have is a workers' state with this peculiarity, first that it is not the working class but the peasant population that predominates and, secondly, that it is a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions. [3]

Nevertheless, despite the overwhelmingly reactionary nature and counter-revolutionary methods of the bureaucracy, Trotsky argued that the workers' state had not lost its progressive character in historical terms. In *The Class Nature of the Soviet State* (October 1933), he wrote:

... Nine-tenths of the strength of the Stalinist apparatus lies not in itself but in the social changes wrought by the victorious revolution. Still, this consideration alone does not decide the question, but it does bear a great methodological significance. It shows us how and why the Stalinist apparatus could completely squan-

der its meaning as the international revolutionary factor and yet *preserve a part of its progressive meaning* as the gatekeeper of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution. This *dual position* – we may add – represents in itself one of the manifestations of the unevenness of historical development.’ [4]

... We call the Stalinist apparatus *centrist* precisely because it fulfils a dual role; *today*, when there is no longer a Marxist leadership and none forthcoming *as yet*, it defends the proletarian dictatorship with its own methods but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy *tomorrow*. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the USSR has understood nothing. [5]

A year later, in December 1934, he wrote in *The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Assassination of Kirov* that:

... As regards the USSR, the role of the bureaucracy, as had already been said, is a dual one: on the one hand, it protects the workers state with its own peculiar methods; on the other it disorganises and checks the development of economic and cultural life by repressing the creative activity of the masses, it is otherwise in the sphere of the international working class movement where not a trace remains of this dualism; here Stalinist bureaucracy plays a disorganising, demoralising and fatal role from beginning to end. [6]

A chapter called *The Dual Role of the Bureaucracy* notes that:

The role of the Soviet bureaucracy remains a dual one. Its own interests constrain it to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October Revolution against the enemies at home and abroad. This task remains historically necessary and progressive. In this task the workers of the world support the Soviet bureaucracy without closing their eyes to its national conservatism, its appropriative instincts and its spirit of caste privilege. But it is precisely these traits that are increasingly paralysing its progressive work. [7]

Trotsky began writing *The Revolution Betrayed* in the summer of 1935, completing it in August of 1936. In the chapter called *The Dual Character of the Workers’ State*, he writes:

The state assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character – socialistic insofar as it defends social property in the means of production, bourgeois insofar as the distribution of life’s goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom. [8]

Concluding the previous chapter, he had noted that:

. . . before taking up the dual role of the ‘socialist’ bureaucracy, we must answer the question – what is the net result of the preceding successes?[9]

adding later:

The progressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy coincides with the period devoted to introducing into the Soviet Union the most important elements of capitalistic technique. [10]

The following year was a difficult time for Trotsky: hounded out of Norway by its ‘socialist’ government, he arrived in Mexico at the height of the Moscow Trials. Nonetheless, when he testified to the Dewey Commission, he answered cross-examination on his attitude to the Soviet Union with customary care. Testifying in April 1937, he said:

... The Soviet state was created by the proletarian revolution which set up the proletarian dictatorship. The proletarian dictatorship has as its objective to defend new forms of property, the collective property. And the proletarian dictatorship signifies politically the proletarian democracy. But the factors of the backwardness of the country, the isolated position of the Soviet Union and the defeats of the proletariat in other countries changed the situation in this sense, that the state has become a bureaucratic one and this state has now . . . a dual function.

It defends the new form of property

against the capitalist class and the capitalist enemies and it applies the new form of property in the interests of the bureaucracy. With the Left Opposition, we declared many times we will sustain Stalin and his bureaucracy in every effort it makes to defend the new form of property against imperialist attacks. At the same time we try to defend the new forms of property against Stalin and the bureaucracy, against inner attacks against the new form of property. That is our position. [11]

In 1937, he wrote an article perhaps less well known than *The Class Nature of the Soviet State or Revolution Betrayed* called *Not a workers' and not a bourgeois state?* In some ways, the formulation is even more clear. It is worth quoting at length:

The function of Stalin . . . has a dual character. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie – but he cannot serve the bureaucracy without defending the social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalised property from imperialist attacks and from the too avaricious layers of the bureaucracy itself. However, he carries through his defence with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society. It is exactly because of this that the Stalinist clique must be overthrown. [12]

and later:

...This means that even the most revolutionary bureaucracy is to a certain degree a *bourgeois organ* in the workers' state. Of course, the *degree* of this bourgeoisification and the general tendency of development bears great significance. If the workers' state loses its bureaucratisation and gradually falls away, this means that its development marches along the road of socialism. On the contrary, if the bureaucracy becomes ever more powerful, authoritative, privileged and conservative, this means that in the workers' state the bourgeois tendencies grow at the expense of

the socialist – in other words, that inner contradiction which *to a certain degree* is lodged in the workers state from the first day of its rise does not diminish, as the 'norm' demands, but increases. However, so long as that contradiction has not passed from the sphere of distribution into the sphere of production and has not blown up nationalised property and planned economy, the state remains a workers' state.

The organ of the rule of the proletariat – the state – becomes an organ for pressure from imperialism (diplomacy, army, foreign trade, ideas and customs). The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle.

In its capacity of a transmitting mechanism in this struggle, the bureaucracy leans now on the proletariat against imperialism, now on imperialism against the proletariat, in order to increase its own power. As the same time it mercilessly exploits its role as distributor of the meagre necessities of life in order to safeguard its own well-being and power. [13]

It used to be common when discussing this issue to refer to a quotation from Trotsky's 1940 polemic *From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene* but, oddly, not always in full:

... In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the bureaucracy places first and foremost for defence its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it but, in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy in a very distorted form the interests of the workers state are reflected. These interests we defend – with our own methods. Thus we do not wage a struggle against the fact that the bureaucracy safeguards (in its own way!) state property, the monopoly of foreign trade or refuses to pay Czarist debts. [14]

There are two possible objections to his line of argument here. The first is the qualitatively new stage in the degeneration of the Stalinist bureaucracy recognised by Trotsky in changing his categorisation from 'bureaucratic centrism' to 'opportunism'. In fact, this is not relevant to the notion of the dual role of the apparatus within the workers' state, applying as it does to the international arena.

... Some comrades continue to characterise Stalinism as 'bureaucratic centrism'. This characterisation is now totally out of date. On the international arena Stalinism is no longer centrism, but the crudest form of opportunism and social patriotism. See Spain! [15]

More important is the second possible objection. Although every quotation cited (and they are many, over a period of eight years) gives the defence of the workers state as one of the two roles of the bureaucracy, the other 'role' is sometimes described as the 'distribution of life's goods with a capitalistic measure of value' and at others as 'applying the new forms of property in the interests of the bureaucracy'. Does this mean that Trotsky was either confused or arguing about different things at different times?

I would reject such arguments. He is confronting the difference between the contradictions within any workers' state that must arise in a period of transition from capitalism to socialism and the peculiar problems that arose in the first, isolated, workers' state. The contradiction in his thinking reflects the contradiction he is struggling to grasp.[16] Again at the height of the Moscow Trials, he expressed this contradiction with particular sharpness.

During a certain period in which the Soviet bureaucracy was fulfilling a relatively progressive role – in great measure a role that the bureaucracy of capitalism had performed in

Western Europe in its day – dizzying successes fell to Stalin's lot. But this period proved to be very brief. Just at the moment when Stalin had become completely imbued with the conviction that his 'method' guaranteed victory over all obstacles, the Soviet bureaucracy exhausted its mission and began to corrode even in its very first generation .[17]

2 Trotsky's point of departure

Having laid out what might be called 'empirical data' to show that Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism is clear and consistent, it is perhaps time to go a little deeper into his theory.

He shows that his starting point is the established canon of Marxist doctrine. The transition from capitalism to socialism was first confronted by Marx in *The German Ideology* – the necessity of socialism on a world scale, of a development of productive forces without which 'all the old crap must revive'. After 1875, he developed his ideas in the light of the experience of the Paris Commune. In *Criticism of the Gotha Programme*, he argued that, in the 'first phase' of communist society, 'Equal right here is still in principle – bourgeois right . . .

Thus, with an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.

But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.

In a higher phase of communist society . . . after the productive forces have also in-

creased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety...[18]

... Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*. [19]

In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky draws attention to Lenin's commentary on Marx:

In explaining these remarkable lines, Lenin adds, 'Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes, of course, inevitably a *bourgeois state*, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of observance of its norms. It follows (we are still quoting Lenin) that under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie!' This highly significant conclusion, completely ignored by the present official theoreticians, has a decisive significance for the understanding of the nature of the Soviet state – or more accurately, for a first approach to such understanding. [20] ...

... It is because Lenin, in accord with his whole intellectual temper, gave an extremely sharpened expression to the conception of Marx, that he revealed the source of future difficulties, his own among them, although he did not succeed in carrying through his analysis to the end. A 'bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie' proved inconsistent with genuine Soviet democracy. *The dual function of the state could not but affect its structure*. Experience revealed what theory was unable clearly to foresee. If for the defence of socialised property against bourgeois counter-revolution a 'state



of armed workers' was fully adequate, it was a very different matter to relate inequalities in the sphere of consumption. [emphasis added] [21]

...The bourgeois norms of distribution, by hastening the growth of material power, ought to serve socialistic aims -but only in the last analysis. The state assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual i.e.. independently of its political degeneration], socialistic insofar as it defends social property in the means of production – bourgeois insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom. Such a contradictory characterisation may horrify the dogmatists and scholastics – we can only offer them our condolences. [22]

Neither Marx nor Engels anticipated that the proletariat would break through in a country as deprived as Russia. Lenin had not expected the prolonged isolation of the first workers' state. With Trotsky, he held that, far from giving rise to a bureaucratic degeneration, such a lengthy isolation would lead to a counter-revolution. In *State and Revolution*, he had anticipated the general outlines of how a

workers' state would defend itself against counter-revolution and how the proletariat would control those entrusted with supervision of the transition from capitalism to socialism. But he had not foreseen the problems when such an administrative bureaucracy degenerated politically and the working class had lost political control. Since his strategy was the extension of the revolution into the metropolitan countries – where the working class was assumed to have the cultural traditions and material conditions to retain such control – how could he 'foresee' such developments?

Trotsky stressed that the workers' state has two functions – hence its 'duality'. It had nothing to do with the political nature of those who happen to carry out its administrative tasks.

From this materialist notion of the dual role of the workers' state flowed Trotsky's *political* analysis of Stalinism. He started with the role of bureaucracy within the mode of production, its place within the economy. He did not proceed from bureaucracy in general but from one bureaucratic degeneration in particular, traced its roots to the material conditions of life and showed how its ideology arose.

In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism 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. [23]

He did not ignore analogies with previous historical periods, especially with the French revolution and its degeneration, but he did so cautiously. It is correct to draw attention to the writings of Rakovsky and others on this topic but it is perhaps wise to do so in a critical spirit. As did many members of the Left Opposition, Rakovsky made acid characteri-

sations of the growing bureaucracy. The *Documents of the 1923 Opposition* show assessments by those who were later to capitulate – like Pyatokov and Preobrazhensky – which were, if anything, sharper than those being made by Trotsky at that time. Rakovsky never lost his scorn for the corrupt but his analysis of bureaucracy, even though the comparisons with the French Revolution are penetrating, did not link the phenomenon of its degeneration to its material roots – with its functions in the state. Instead, he tended to look for elements in common between the degeneration of the two revolutions, for laws, as it were, of a post-revolutionary epoch. The strength of Trotsky's analysis is not that it made analogies with previous revolutions but that it stressed the differences and the reasons for them.

3 'Dual Natures' – and a history of confusion

Was the Stalinist bureaucracy 'counter-revolutionary through and through'? The formulation seems to have remarkable staying power but a closer examination suggests that it was meaningless bluster that served only to conceal perennial confusion about Trotsky's analysis among those who claimed to uphold it.

Stalinism, so the argument runs, is the name given by our movement primarily to the ideology of a reactionary caste within the workers' states which is generally assumed to have been charged with a progressive historical role. That it cannot fulfil this role is due to its reactionary character and its counter-revolutionary methods. What it does to defend the state today endangers it tomorrow: even its 'progressive' measures are carried out in a manner that confuses and demoralises the proletariat. It is, therefore, 'counter-revolutionary through and through'. [24]

As we have seen, Trotsky's argument was

subtly different: the bureaucracy had two functions in the workers' states – defence against counter-revolution and control of the norms of distribution.

What neither the state nor the bureaucracy could do was to emancipate the working class, to lead it to power however 'progressive' its nature. Even when led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky's time, it proved unable to do that. Trotsky discussed the Polish debacle in *My Life*.

The Polish war confirmed from the opposite side what was demonstrated by the Brest-Litovsk war – that the events of war and those of the revolutionary mass movement are measured by different yardsticks. Where the action of armies is measured by days and weeks, the movements of the masses of people is usually reckoned in months and years. If the difference in tempo is not taken fully into account, the gears of war will only break the teeth of the revolutionary gears, instead of setting them into motion. At any rate, that is what happened in the short Brest-Litovsk war and in the great Polish war. We passed over and beyond our own victory to a heavy defeat. [25]

More realistically, the emancipation of the working class was seen as requiring a worldwide revolutionary party independent of bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks at first sought to build such a party – the Comintern. The bureaucracy in the Soviet Union consolidated its position and deepened its degeneration when first it annexed the Comintern politically and later destroyed it. Trotsky makes an important distinction between the bureaucracy and the Comintern that eludes many. In *The Transitional Programme*, he noted that:

The definitive passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynically counter-revolutionary role throughout the world . . . created exceptional supplementary difficulties for the world proletariat. [26]

Although it abandoned its role as an em-



bryonic world party and became instead the agent of a bureaucracy, it was not identical to that bureaucracy – it had no 'dual role' or 'dual function'. The lessons of Germany, Spain etc do not need repeating here: the Comintern had become 'cynically counter-revolutionary' by 1933. (After it was dissolved during World War II, the bureaucracy developed different ways of protecting its interests against those of the working class and of imperialism.)

A complex and contradictory process gave Stalinism a continually crisis-ridden character which erupted periodically in catastrophic fashion. Khrushchev's 1956 so-called 'liberalisation' was accompanied by the suppression of the Hungarian uprising. The Gorbachev reforms were preceded by a martial law clamp-down in Poland. These were, without doubt, counter-revolutionary moves.

At the same time, the bureaucracy was often obliged to support in its way significant

national liberation struggles through what later became known as proxy wars. Vietnam is a case in point. Was it counter-revolutionary ‘through and through’ to ship military supplies even as China’s Red Guards were sabotaging them ‘to prevent the Vietnamese acquiring illusions in Soviet imperialism’. Yes, the Soviets cynically manipulated political puppets in the Vietnamese Communist Party. Yes, they used the supplies as bargaining counters with Washington. Yes, the policy was reactionary, the method counter-revolutionary. But ‘through and through’?

In the same vein, was the nationalisation of the basic industries of the Cuban economy (followed by the Stalinisation of the regime) ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’? Was it more or less so than the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion?

The notion of Stalinism being ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’ has a curious history which many can be forgiven for not knowing. The ‘official’ history of one section of the Fourth International was enshrined in a six-volume set, *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*. Strangely omitting the first dozen years of the FI, it purported to show that the onus of the struggle against Pablo’s ‘liquidationism’ was borne by the British. Cannon and the SWP, it claimed, ‘were unable to fight Pablo politically’. [27]

The picture is a distortion: substantive political documents dealing with theoretical as well as practical issues *were* being written and distributed by the Socialist Workers Party even if most of them were omitted from the ‘six volumes’. The student must turn also to the publications of the SWP to get a fuller picture – except that their editor seems to have been almost as partial as the ICFP’s.

One early piece that did make it into the ‘six volumes’ was the classic *Where is Pablo Going?* by Bleibtreu-Favre (June 1951):

All the experiences since 1933 have shown

the role of the Soviet bureaucracy with increasing clarity and simply express its dual character – *working class and counter-revolutionary* – its fundamentally contradictory nature, and its impasse. [28]

One of the more interesting documents published by the SWP is *What the New York Discussion has Revealed* by Joe Hansen, written in the heat of the Cochran-Clarke struggle. Summarising the position of the opposition, Hansen addresses their objection to the presentation of Stalinism as ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’. He gets in a hopeless mess about the ‘dual nature’ of Stalinism, urging his opponents to ‘lay heavy stress on its counter-revolutionary



J P Cannon and Felix Morrow, with a bust of Trotsky.

side’, going on to say that the Third World Congress of the Fourth International had explained that the social overturns in Eastern Europe had ‘flowed from the dual character of the Soviet caste’, adding that: “In relation to property forms, the caste thus plays a dual role – it will fight for its power and privileges against both workers and imperialism.” and

later that: “The caste has a dual character but the duality is not of two characteristics about the same size and weight which alternately come to the fore . . . the ‘counter-revolutionary pole is the active and predominant one . . .”[29]

This was not just a passing aberration on Hansen’s part: SWP veteran Tom Kerry’s 1970 lecture *The Anatomy of Stalinism* also tried to tackle the problem of the ‘dual function’ of the Stalinist bureaucracy and set the controversy in historical context. (He is attacking Mandel’s notion that the Maoists represented some kind of anti-Stalinist tendency.)

The Stalinist bureaucracy serves a dual function. On the one hand, its function is to defend the nationalised property established by the October Revolution. In that sense it plays a progressive role. On the other hand, as a reactionary political tendency which usurped the power of the workers in Russia, it functions as an agency of world imperialism in the world working class movement, and thereby plays a counter-revolutionary role.

The problem that arose in the world Trotskyist movement at that time[1946-51] was how to reconcile our view of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary ‘through and through’ with this new phenomenon – the phenomenon of Stalinist parties leading, or ostensibly leading, successful revolutions that established workers’ states. [30]

One can at least feel an empathy for Hansen’s ‘gut reaction’ to what he saw as Pablo’s capitulation. Since Cannon first smuggled Trotsky’s *Critique of the Draft Programme of the Comintern* out of the Soviet Union in 1928, the movement had been through decades of bitter struggle. Even if the SWP’s position was theoretically incorrect, there was undeniably a political fight against what they saw Pablo (and later Mandel) as representing.

Incidentally, in case anyone is still not convinced that the ‘dual nature’ confusion was a property of both ‘wings’ of the Fourth International Committee, a letter from the Socialist Labour League to the SWP dated May 8 1961 stresses that:

We must be under no illusions, for example, about the reasons for Khrushchev’s support of the Cuban revolution. Acting in accordance with the contradictory and dual nature of the bureaucracy, he regards that revolution as fundamentally a bargaining counter in his overall strategy of accommodation to imperialism. [31]

Mandel was continuing a process that had been started by Pablo in the 1950s. On the other side of the divide, by the early 1960s the SWP was arguing that Castro was playing a revolutionary role and that, despite Moscow’s endorsement, he was a symptom of a process of ‘de-Stalinisation’. Not only was there a workers’ state in Cuba but there had also been a socialist revolution to boot. [32] He could justify himself to a degree because the International Committee, which, not unreasonably, argued that the SWP was capitulating to Stalinism, could explain the events in Cuba only by pretending they hadn’t actually happened.

After the inevitable rapprochement between the SWP and the International Secretariat, discussion of the issue was all but ossified for the rest of the USSR’s existence. The IS seemed happy to act as Castro’s political attaché in the US while the International Committee was content to bask in the fading glory of Trotskyist ‘orthodoxy’.

It is certainly true that leading ICFI members said and wrote many things that claimed to defend this high ground; most members with year or two in the ranks could give a more-or-less correct summary of Trotsky’s position. However, beneath this formally correct exterior, lurked some very right-wing

notions indeed: the fulsome praise dished out to the butchers of the Vietnamese Trotskyist movement in the May 1985 editorial of *Labour Review* provided an ugly reminder of the price paid for theoretical carelessness:

“... Not only had the 30-year revolutionary war of independence come to a victorious end but for the second time in three decades imperialism in Asia had been completely expropriated by a workers’ and peasants’ regime and its native pseudo-bourgeois puppets expropriated completely. The pace of historical change was moving with increasing rapidity. Between the first successful socialist revolution in Russia in 1917 and the second in China in 1948, there had been a lapse of 30 years of traumatic defeats and betrayals and a major imperialist war. Between China’s socialist revolution and the coming to power of the Vietnamese workers, there had been a period of 27 years which had been characterised by the continued retreat of world imperialism before the wrath of the colonial masses and the metropolitan workers ..”[34]

By 1985, it had degenerated into crap like the above and, even after the trauma of the splits, nonsense about the proletariat being the proletarian pole of a duality and the bureaucracy being the bourgeois pole, the workers’ state being different from the bureaucracy was still doing the rounds. In short, there is a continuity from Bleibtreu-Favre in 1951, Hansen in 1953, the SLL in 1961 and on up at least to the WRP in the 1980s. [34] All of them ignore Trotsky’s *materialist* analysis of the bureaucracy in the workers’ states.

Does all this matter now? Why not just get together with everyone who agrees (at least some of the time) that Stalinist bureaucracy was ‘a bad thing’ and proceed?

It matters because history shows that those

who assigned a potentially revolutionary role to a workers’ state, to a bureaucracy, sooner or later assigned such a role to the Stalinist bureaucracies which at that time controlled the ‘worker’ states’. The inevitable result is to lend support in some form or other to Stalinist regimes.

Trotsky’s work remains the best analysis we have of the Stalinist bureaucracy. To mystify it is to miseducate cadre: the pseudo-left bluster that first prompted this essay was as reactionary as the down-the-line capitulation of other tendencies – and flowed from the same methodology.



A postscript – reaction and counter-revolution

Late-1980s fusion manoeuvres between the WRP and a Latin-American group (in the course of which the ‘dual nature’ controversy re-emerged) saw some almost magnificent confusion in a platform document comprising ‘Ten Points’. The first of these asserted that the Stalinist bureaucracy was ‘reactionary through and through’, the second that it was ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’. [35] Presumably its authors took the two to be the same: they could have done worse than refer to Trotsky’s 1933 work, *On Lenin’s Testament*, which commented as follows:

“A political reaction after the enormous effort of the years of the insurrection and the civil war was inevitable. The concept of reaction must here be strictly distinguished from the concept of counter-revolution. Reaction does not necessarily imply a social overturn – that is, a transfer of power from one side to another. Even Tsarism has its periods of progressive reform and its periods of reaction.” [36]

Introducing the Spanish edition of *Revolution Betrayed*, he wrote that: “In fact, the Soviet bureaucracy is today one of the most malignant detachments of world reaction.” [37]

In a 1939 *Letter on India*, he expressed his point well:

“The general historic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and their Comintern is counter-revolutionary. But through their military and other interests they can be forced to support progressive movements. Even Ludendorff felt himself forced to give Lenin a train – a very progressive action – and Lenin accepted. We must keep our eyes open to discern the progressive acts of the Stalinists, support them independently, foresee in time the danger, the betrayals, warn the masses and gain their confidence.” [38]

Notes

- [1] Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, p 155.
- [2] Trotsky, *Transitional Programme*, p 48 (New Park edition).
- [3] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32 p 48.
- [4] Trotsky, *Writings 1933/34*, p 102.
- [5] *Ibid*, p 116.
- [6] New Park Publications included the article in its 1966 *Moscow Trials Anthology*.
- [7] Trotsky, *Writings 1934/5*, p 124.
- [8] Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p 54 (New Park edition, Ch III sec 3.
- [9] *Ibid*, p 44.
- [10] *Ibid*, p 275.
- [11] The Dewey Commission, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p 282.
- [12] Trotsky, *Writings 1937/38*, p 65.
- [13] *Ibid*, p 67, p 70.
- [14] Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, p 158 (New Park edition).
- [15] Trotsky, *Writings 1936/7*, p 478.
- [16] [With hindsight, my argument here is unclear (not that critics spotted it at the time). I'd accept that Trotsky had not thought through every last nuance of his contention that the role of bureaucracy is inherently contradictory. Nevertheless, especially given his circumstances, his analysis of Stalinism remains a considerable intellectual achievement that retains its relevance. The odd

imprecision is a million miles from the confused muddle that followed his death.]

- [17] *Ibid*, pps 329-30.
- [18] Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p 17 (edited).
- [19] *Ibid*, p 26.
- [20] Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p 53.
- [21] *Ibid*, p 54.
- [22] *Ibid*, p 54.
- [23] Trotsky, *The USSR in War*, quoted from *Basic Writings* ed I Howe.
- [24] I never did discover where the formulation was first used though the phrases ‘counter-revolutionary through and through’ and ‘reactionary through and through’ can both be found in an SWP statement of 1944, *The European Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party*. Though reasonable in context, they might even then have had homily status.]
- [25] Trotsky, *My Life*, pps 457-8. He described the conduct of the Stalin/Voroshilov army command as contributing to the defeat but did not suggest it was decisive. [His assessment of the war in the book is, some might argue, a little sanguine.]
- [26] Trotsky, *Transitional Programme*, p 13.
- [27] *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol 1 p XVI. Ironically, the British contribution to this discussion, covering two and a half years from June 1951 to the 1953 ‘Open Letter’, comprised half a dozen letters by Gerry Healy and a couple of minor organisational documents.
- [28] Bleibtreu-Favre in *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol. 1 pps 61-2.
- [29] Hansen, *What the New York Discussion Has Revealed*, from *Towards a History of the Fourth International*, Pt 3, vol. 1.3 3, pps 30-43.
- [30] Kerry, *The Mao Myth*, pps 151 & 153.
- [31] *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, Vol 3, p 62.
- [32] Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, especially *Cuba – The Acid Test*.
- [33] Trotsky, *Writings 1939/40*, p 108-109.
- [34] Editorial, *Labour Review*, May 1985.
- [35] And, presumably, beyond. Don't take my word for all this – read the originals.
- [36] See footnote 23.
- [37] Trotsky, *On Lenin's Testament* in *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, p 58.
- [38] Trotsky, *Writings Letter on India, 1939/40*, p 108-9.

The Testament of Lenin

January 4, 1923

By the stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke before, I mean measures to prevent a split, so far as such measures can be taken. For, of course, the White Guard in Russkaya Mysl (I think it was S.E. Oldenburg) was right when, in the first place, in his play against Soviet Russia he banked on the hope of a split in our party, and when, in the second place, he banked for that split on serious disagreements in our party.

Our party rests upon two classes, and for that reason its instability is possible, and if there cannot exist an agreement between those classes its fall is inevitable. In such an event it would be useless to take any measures or in general to discuss the stability of our Central Committee. In such an event no measures would prove capable of preventing a split. But I trust that is too remote a future, and too improbable an event, to talk about.

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I intend to examine here a series of considerations of a purely personal character.

I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability – from this point of view – is such members of the Central Committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split, which might be avoided, and the avoidance of which might be promoted, in my opinion, by raising the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. On the other hand, Comrade Trotsky, as was proved by his struggle against the Central Committee in connection with the question of the People's Commissariat of Ways and Communications, is distinguished not only by his exceptional abilities – personally he is, to be sure, the most able man in the present Central Committee – but also by his too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs. These two qualities of the two most able leaders of the present Central Committee might, quite inno-

cently, lead to a split; if our party does not take measures to prevent it, a split might arise unexpectedly.

I will not further characterize the other members of the Central Committee as to their personal qualities. I will only remind you that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not, of course, accidental, but that it ought as little to be used against them personally as the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky. Of the younger members of the Central Committee, I want to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most able forces (among the youngest) and in regard to them it is necessary to bear in mind the following: Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theoretician of the party, but also may legitimately be considered the favorite of the whole party; but his theoretical views can only with the very greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxist, for there is something scholastic in him (he never has learned, and I think never has fully understood, the dialectic).

And then Pyatakov – a man undoubtedly distinguished in will and ability, but too much given over to administration and the administrative side of things to be relied on in a serious political question. Of course, both these remarks are made by me merely with a view to the present time, or supposing that these two able and loyal workers may not find an occasion to supplement their knowledge and correct their one-sidedness.

December 25, 1922

Postscript: Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us Communists, becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority – namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may seem an insignificant trifle, but I think that from the point of view of preventing a split and from the point of view of the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance.