

In Defence of Trotskyism No. 19

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Third Campism: “If this be Trotskyism then I at least am no Trotskyist”



From left to right, Ribbentrop, Stalin, and Molotov at the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (23/8/1939).

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler laid out the main tenets of his racist worldview and outlined his political goals. Two of his main objectives were the racial upbreeding of the German people and the conquest of living space [*Lebensraum*] in Eastern Europe. Hitler explained that it was necessary to fight the “Jewish-Marxist world conspiracy” and to pursue a merciless racial war against the Soviet Union. **Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Volume 1 (1925).**

“Mistakes on the question of defence of the USSR most frequently flow from an incorrect understanding of the methods of “defence”. Defence of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle.” **Trotsky (25/9/1939).**

Workers Liberty and the Third Camp:

Reply by Gerry Downing to Workers Liberty; The Two Trotskys, How the “Orthodox” in the 1940s buried the spirit of one Trotsky to save the ghost of another and to other Third Campists

Introduction

Trotsky sums up the petty bourgeois opposition as a whole just after the split in the SWP (US) in April 1940 in his article, *Petty-Bourgeois Moralists and the Proletarian Party*:

“The petty-bourgeois minority of the SWP split from the proletarian majority on the basis of a struggle against revolutionary Marxism. Burnham proclaimed dialectical materialism to be incompatible with his moth-eaten ‘science’. Shachtman proclaimed revolutionary Marxism to be of no moment from the standpoint of ‘practical tasks’. Abern hastened to hook up his little booth with the anti-Marxism bloc...

Only the other day Shachtman referred to himself in the press as a ‘Trotskyist’. If this be Trotskyism then I at least am no Trotskyist. With the present ideas of Shachtman, not to mention Burnham, I have nothing in common... As for their ‘organisational methods’ and political ‘morality’ I have nothing but contempt. Had the conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated. He united with anti-Marxists to wage a struggle against Marxism. He helped fuse together a petty-bourgeois faction against the workers. He refrained from utilising internal party democracy and from making an honest effort to convince the proletarian majority. He engineered a split under the conditions of a world war. To crown it all, he threw over the split the veil of a petty and dirty scandal, which seems especially designed to provide our enemies with ammunition. Such are these ‘democrats’, such are their ‘morals’! [1]

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Workers Liberty’s Sean Matgamna wants to persuade us all, and his own young members in particular, that they are the genuine one of the “two Trotskys” and the other, the “orthodox”, personified by the post-Trotsky leadership of JP Cannon of the US SWP, Ernest Mandel, Michel Pablo, Gerry Healy, Ted Grant, etc. is a bogus one. [2] Trotsky too made serious errors in the last year of his life (1939-40 – see Trotsky’s *USSR in War* in this pamphlet), Sean would have us believe, although he was coming around to the way of thinking represented by Max Shachtman and, had he lived long enough, he would have admitted he was wrong. Shachtman was right and Sean Matgamna is also right now it seems in defending Shachtman up to 1958, when he dissolved the Independent Socialist League and entered the small Socialist Party in an unprincipled adaption to the Democrats.

After 1958 apparently the mantle fell to the left Shachtmanites Hal Draper, CLR James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and others until eventually Matgamna shouldered the Shachtman burden and raised the flag of genuine Trotskyism after about 1983. The thesis that we intend to prove is: There is and was only one Leon Trotsky politically and that heritage is definitively not represented by either Max Shachtman or Sean Matgamna who was and are renegades from Trotskyism. Shachtman could likewise said of them, “if this be Shachtmanism I

at least am no Shachtmanite” if that’s not just too ridiculous.

We will therefore make a critical defence of the SWP under Cannon and the Fourth International during WWII up to 1948-9, acknowledging that severe problems were emerging during WWII which Shachtman picked up on. But his attacks on the SWP was always with a rightist agenda and therefore ultimately from the right; the trajectory identified by Trotsky in his collection of essays contained in *In Defence of Marxism* is correct even not all documents are contained in it and Shachtman took far longer to get there than his comrade-in-arms James Burnham. He hared off to the right almost immediately to defend American imperialism in such famous publications as *The Managerial Revolution*, (today it is obviously farcical nonsense) a rejection of internationalist class politics and anti-imperialism correctly identified by Trotsky as the real basis to the 1939-40 SWP opposition. As it is of the AWL today.

The main, central, enemy of the global working class is the global hegemon, US-dominated imperialism, its NATO and other allies

The main enemy is ALWAYS at home in imperialist countries, NEVER in semi-colonial Buenos Aires, Damascus, Kabul, Tripoli, Teheran, Moscow or Beijing. In semi-colonial and Stalinist countries that also hold true even if more emphasis must be put in opposing the local bourgeois or Stalinist leadership but in all conflicts with imperialism true revolutionaries understand the theory of Permanent Revolution. They know their temporary allies are just that; they are conjectural opponents of imperialism who will stab consistent opponents in the back to broker a new compromise with imperialism at the first opportunity. Remember James Connolly’s famous quote in 1916 on this which he bril-



Max Shachtman; 1904-1972. Trotsky: “Had the conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated”.

liantly foreshadowed Trotsky’s famous theory: “In the event of victory, hold on to your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty.”

In 1983 the Workers Socialist League (WSL), which had fused with Matgamna’s International-Communist League in 1981, split from the old WSL group led by Alan Thornett and Alan Clinton. The Matgamna majority refused to call for the defeat of the British Expeditionary force to the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in the war of 1982. They took a dual defeatist position on the grounds that Argentina was not a semi-colony of imperialism but ‘sub-imperialist’; a regional imperialist power. They called for self-determination for the Malvinas islanders. He split his organisation in three on those disgraceful ‘principles’. The WSL minority took a centrist position, the group around the WSL international, the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, (TILC) took the

correct line of calling for the defeat of the British Expeditionary force.

In 2007 Matgamna made a critical assessment of Max Shachtman because it was necessary to explain how he ended up in such a bad place politically if he had been correct up to then. He supported the CIA-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and the US wars on Vietnam and Cambodia (via opposition to withdrawing US troops) up to his death in 1972. He admits:

“Max Shachtman died of a heart attack on 4 November 1972, as the USA was preparing to “bomb Cambodia into the Stone Age” — which it did, leaving the ultra-Stalinist Khmer Rouge as murdering kings of the ruins. The folly of relying on US imperialism against Stalinism could not have been more horribly proven. At his end Shachtman stood as a negative example of the need for the

politics he had defended for four decades — independent, socialist, working class politics. Yet his earlier writings continue to stand as an immensely valuable positive embodiment of such politics” [3]

Wasn’t “The folly of relying on US imperialism against Stalinism” the essence of Third Campism? “Well not really for the ‘left’ Shachtman and his political heirs, we are neutral and refuse to take sides” they object. We will see how hollow this claim is later. But you couldn’t get away with that on Vietnam because of the leftism of the age. His earlier writings on the USSR stand

for no such thing, as we shall see but for now we will examine the following lines by Matgamna because this is essential Shachtmanism, even after the USSR is long gone:

“In the post-war world, where the USSR was the second great global power, recognition that the USA and Western Europe — advanced capitalism — *was the more progressive of the contending camps*, the one which gave richer possibilities, greater freedom, more

for socialists to build on, was, I believe, a necessary part of the restoration of Marxist balance to socialist politics. It was a pre-requisite for the reconstruction of Marxism after the systematic destruction of its concepts over a long period.” (out emphasis) [4]

In all wars even with semi-colonial countries it was ALWAYS true for the AWL that “the USA and Western Europe — advanced capitalism — was the more progressive of the contending camps.” This is consistent with Shacht-

man’s Workers Party whose main concern in splitting from Trotsky and the SWP was to signal their loyalty to global imperialism; they could not even defend colonised China against imperialist Japan let alone their later refusal to give critical support to Mao Tse Tung against Chiang Kai-shek in the Chinese Revolution. As Barry Shepherd explains: “In addition to maintaining the hands-off, third-camp position regarding the Nazi-Soviet war, the Workers Party also took a third-camp position in the war by colonised China against its Japanese occupiers.” [5]

In siding with their own ruling class in its wars the AWL reject Marx's and Lenin's theory of imperialism outright. Marx and Engels, Trotsky reminds us, "supported the revolutionary struggle of the Irish against Great Britain, of the Poles against the Tsar, even though in these two nationalist wars the leaders were, for the most part, members of the bourgeoisie and even at times of the feudal aristocracy ... at all events, Catholic reactionaries."

Trotsky went on to point out that the Bolsheviks supported Abd El-Krim in Morocco in 1921 against the French (and Spanish) when he temporarily liberated northern Morocco from Spanish colonial rule. He was an emir, a Rif from the Berber community who fought for an independent Rif republic, whose name is not allowed to be mentioned even today in Morocco. 'Respectable' democrats and Social Democrats like Leon Blum spoke with hate of the struggle of a "savage tyrant" against the "democracy" as the AWL do today about Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Ukraine.

But, says Trotsky, "we, Marxists and Bolsheviks, considered the struggle of the Rifians against imperialist domination as a progressive war". And he refers to the record of Lenin who "wrote hundreds of pages demonstrating the primary necessity of distinguishing between imperialist nations and the colonial and semi colonial nations which comprise the great majority of humanity. To speak of "revolutionary defeatism" in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists." [6]

And of course Trotsky also opposed wrong ultra-left Third Campist phrase mongering on Abyssinia in 1936, on China in 1937 and Brazil (hypothetically) in 1938. Here he spells out the correct position against imperialism on China:



Direct equation of Stalin and Hitler in Socialist Appeal under Shachtman's editorship; a portent of the split to come.

"The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army" (say his ultra-left Third Campist opponents - GD). And Trotsky explains "to participate actively and consciously in the war does not mean 'to serve Chiang Kai-shek' but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence—is to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek... that is the only revolutionary policy". [7]

If there is any historical justification for Matgamna's quote above it is the position taken by Marx before his "Irish Turn" in 1870 when he explained:

"England, the metropolis of capital, the power which has up to now ruled the world market, is at present the most important country for the workers' revolution, and moreover the only country in which the material conditions for this revolution have reached a certain degree of maturity. It is consequently the most important object of the International Working Men's Association to hasten the social revolution in England. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent. Hence it is the

task of the International everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. It is the special task of the Central Council in London to make the English workers realise that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the first condition of their own social emancipation.” [8]

Previous to that he and Engels had a position that the advanced capitalist countries showed backward nations their own future. Elsewhere, in reference of the question of forming a revolutionary party, Matgamna suggests that one is not necessary and before 1848 Marx thought so too (an early Shachtmanite) and we who rejected this modern idiocy had not reached the level of understanding that Marx had in 1848. It would be helpful if Matgamna managed to reach the level of understanding of Marx’s thinking on Ireland, and the colonial world in general, after 1870. We have polemicalised extensively against the pro-imperialist left, which category the AWL led from 1983, in the *Socialist Fight* journal and website. Of course their reactionary on Ireland and their pro-Zionism is well known and can be directly attributed to their Shachtmanism after 1983 in particular. Analysis of these issues requires another pamphlet.

The ‘Nature’ and ‘role’ or ‘function’ of the Stalinist bureaucracy and workers’ states

Barry Sheppard succinctly sets out the Trotskyist position on the USSR thus:

The SWP in the United States and the Fourth International in its majority held to Trotsky’s analysis. This view posited that the ruling bureaucracy was not a new ruling class in a new form of class society, as the bureaucratic collectivists maintained, nor a capitalist class ruling through a new form of state capitalism. The bureaucratic counter-revolution had not destroyed all the gains of the Russian Revolution, especially the property forms the revolu-

The Two Trotskys

Champions of Peace and Democracy!



Socialist Appeal, 1 October 1939

This *Socialist Appeal* (SA) cartoon, on 1 September 1939 (not 1 October as it says above), reproduced in AWL publications, clearly indicates that it is the aggressive Stalin and not the terrified victim Hitler who is the threat to ‘western civilisation’. *Socialist Appeal* was under the editorship of Shachtman then and appeared three times a week from 1938 to 1940.

tion had established – the nationalised and planned economy and subsidiary aspects such as the monopoly of foreign trade. Labour power was no longer a commodity and the reserve army of the unemployed no longer existed. The bureaucracy did not derive its privileges through ownership of the means of production, but through its control over distribution. It was a parasite on the nationalised and planned economy. The new property forms that were established by the revolution were working-class conquests that remained.

These gains had to be defended both internally and from imperialist attack, so this current defended the USSR against the Nazi invasion. It also defended China against Japan and all movements by oppressed countries against imperialist colonisation and oppression. [9]

But the nature and role of Stalinism was a point of political confusion which caused great problems. The 'nature' of Stalinism is always counter-revolutionary; the role of Stalinism in the USSR and internationally can be either progressive/revolutionary in national economic and social terms or reactionary/counterrevolutionary in global terms depending on circumstances or their perceived material interests. It is vital to understand this distinction. As with the trade union bureaucracies Stalinist bureaucracies do not and did not have a 'dual' or contradictory nature and neither has the workers' state, healthy, degenerated or deformed. In so far as the state continued to exist it was bourgeois in character to a certain degree and in a certain sense and therefore counter-revolutionary but should have been continually withering away as the productive forces developed exponentially as socialism moved on to communism where there would be no state and no classes and a superabundance of wealth. But war and isolation made withering away impossible and therefore made the rise of the bureaucracy inevitable if revolutions were not successful in the advanced capitalist countries.

But in the USSR the opposite happened, the state became a monstrously repressive organ of privilege in the midst of universal want. The state WAS the bureaucracy, its

policemen, because the by-now degenerated Communist Party appointed all the functionaries of that state and there was no real separation of powers between government, legislature and judiciary/police. It was a real dictatorship, a dictatorship of the proletariat wielded by the democratic Soviets in the USSR when it was a healthy workers' state up to 1923-4 and wielded by the Stalinist bureaucracies in degenerated and deformed workers' states since, both defending nationalised property relations allied with a monopoly of foreign trade in a planned economy. But that Stalinist bureaucracy and state was counter-revolutionary full stop after 1923-4 and not withering away at all.

But we cannot leave the matter there; like the trade union bureaucracies they rest on gains of the working class so sometimes they must defend and even advance those gains in defence of their own privileges. So they have a con-

So they (the bureaucracies) have a contradictory role or function.

They must maintain their trade union or workers' state because that is the source of their privileges so they must do some progressive things like call strikes and provide welfare and fight off and sometimes defeat feudalists, fascists, imperialists and their proxies. But they must not fight too consistently or mobilise the working class globally to such an extent that capitalism and global imperialism itself is endangered by revolution.

tradictory role or function. They must maintain their trade union or workers' state because that is the source of their privileges so they must do some progressive things like call strikes and provide welfare and fight off and sometimes defeat feudalists, fascists, imperialists and their proxies. But they must not fight too consistently or mobilise the working class globally to such an extent that capitalism and global imperialism itself is endangered by revolution. This would abandon the vital corollary to the fundamental theory of socialism in a single country; peaceful co-existence with imperialism.

Again and again the Soviet bureaucracy opposed wars in Korea (not vetoing the UN support for the US invasion), [10] in Vietnam and in Cuba only to change their tune when the facts on the ground opened up the possibility of putting a bit of extra pressure on imperialism on the understanding that it would never go as far as advocating world revolution that would threaten imperialism in its heartlands.

Because if the working class gets its head it will not forget all the previous acts of treachery and unprincipled compromises they had made to enrich themselves. The workers threaten them from below and the bosses from above; hence their contradictory role or function. But both the reformist trade union bureaucrats and their allied bourgeois-workers' parties, Labour of Social Democratic, and the Stalinist workers' state functionaries are counterrevolutionary themselves; they cannot ever lead a real workers' revolution against global capitalism.

Of course we cannot take the trade union bureaucracy analogy too far. Unlike the TU bureaucrats, who have a direct relationship of loyalty to their own ruling class, it must be acknowledged that the Stalinist bureaucracy was the sole ruling cast or stratum in Soviet society after 1928 as Trotsky explained in *The Revolution Betrayed*:

"The state support of the kulak (1923-28) contained a mortal danger for the socialist future. But then, with the help of the petty bourgeoisie the bureaucracy succeeded in binding the proletarian vanguard hand and foot, and suppressing the Bolshevik Opposition. This "mistake" from the point of view of socialism was a pure gain from the point of view of the bureaucracy. When the kulak began directly to threaten the bureaucracy itself, it turned its weapons against the kulak. The panic of aggression against the kulak, spreading also to the middle peasant, was no less costly to the economy than a foreign invasion (1928-32 – GD). But the bureaucracy had defended its positions. Having barely succeeded in exterminating its former ally, it began

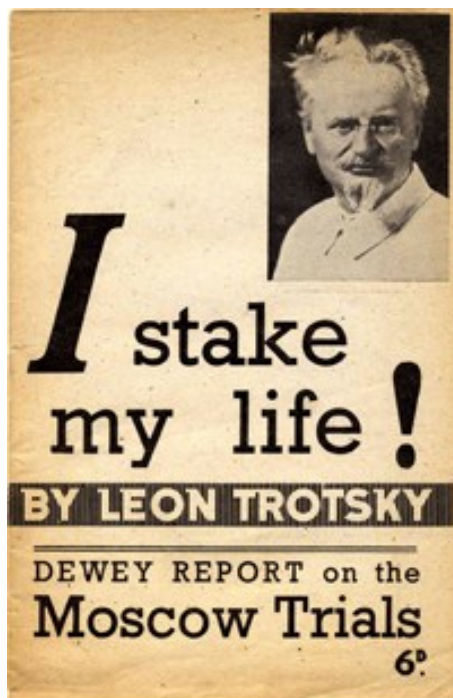
with all its power to develop a new aristocracy. Thus undermining socialism? Of course but at the same time strengthening the commanding caste. The Soviet bureaucracy is like all ruling classes in that it is ready to shut its eyes to the crudest mistakes of its leaders in the sphere of general politics, provided in return they show an unconditional fidelity in the defence of its privileges. The more alarmed becomes the mood of the new lords of the situation, the higher the value they set upon ruthlessness against the least threat to their so justly earned rights. It is from this point of view that the caste of parvenus selects its leaders. Therein lies the secret of Stalin's success." [11]

And on occasions like great financial crises and war revolution is they only thing that will avoid disaster and secure a future for youth, which neither TU bureaucrats nor Stalinists will ever lead. Dave Bruce wrote in 1887:

"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."

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



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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." [12]

It was Michel Pablo and not a genuine Trotskyist who falsely (almost) claimed that Stalinism was "objectively revolutionary" – no centrist groupings claiming the heritage of Trotskyism defend that line today. In fact what he referred to was the "objectively revolutionary significance of these facts" in the

following passage in *Where Are We Going?* in 1952:

"Those who think they can respond to the anxiety and the embarrassment of some people at the so-called victories of Stalinism by minimising the objectively revolutionary significance of these facts are obliged to take refuge in a sectarianism, anti-Stalinist at all costs, which scarcely conceals under its aggressive appearance its lack of confidence in the fundamental revolutionary process of our epoch. This process is the most certain pledge for the inevitable final defeat of Stalinism, and it will be realised all the more rapidly, the quicker the overthrow of capitalism and of imperialism progresses and gains a bigger and bigger part of the world".

That passage showed a complete descent into centrist objectivism by the leaders of the Fourth International at that point. However the position of Shachtman and the Workers' Party was worse and to their right even then, as we shall show. But first we must show why the global working class were obliged to defend the USSR even after the Hitler-Stalin pact and during WWII up to its final collapse in August 1991.

A Critical Defence of the US SWP against Shachtman 1940-1948

The confusion between 'nature' and 'role' is the ideological source of the mistakes on Stalinism and the 'Red Army' that Shachtman picked up on during the course of the war. The split of April 1940 severed the Stalinophobic right wing of the SWP and now very clear signs of Stalinophilia began to emerge without that balancing force and Trotsky's guidance.

It was wrong to call the Red Army Trotsky's Red Army. It was simply the armed forces of the Stalinist bureaucracy, all revolutionary leadership had been eliminated in the Great Purges and now only yes men remained. Of course the motivation for that line was to appeal to the US Stalinists whose strength reached 100,000 before the war's

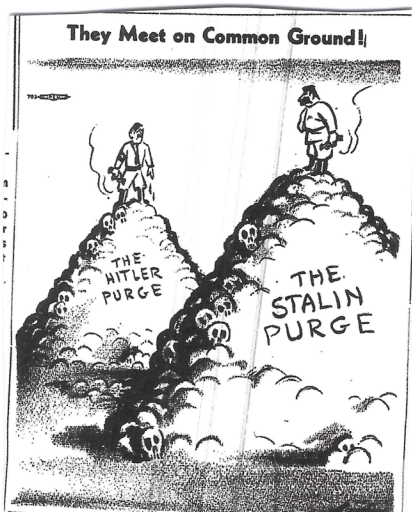
end. Nevertheless the illusions are clearly wrong and Cannon's objections to the defence of the revolutionary uprising in Warsaw in August 1944 demonstrated that those illusions went to the top.

Nonetheless it is wrong to for Shachtman assert that there was no motivation amongst the Red Army and the working class to defend the gains of the October Revolution. Putting it down simply to fear of the Nazis and fear of Stalin's NKVD 'mopping-up' battalions behind the lines to shoot retreating soldiers is Stalinophobia.

But by continually denying any revolutionary essence in the leadership of the Red Army and in the bureaucracy itself, correctly, against Cannon, Shachtman dismisses this revolutionary impulse in the masses themselves. Warsaw arose not just because the nationalist leadership wanted to prevent the Red Army taking over from Hitler but because the masses wanted to liberate themselves and establish socialism and they thought, wrongly, that the Red Army had come to help them. This happened in practically every major city that was under Nazi occupation. And the mass bombing of the working class quarters of the German cities was to prevent just these revolutionary uprisings.

The SWP were quite right against Shachtman to demand that Stalin appeal to the German working class to rise up and overthrow Hitler because they were coming to liberate them. This was the correct Transitional demand to appeal to the ranks of the Red Army. But instead under the leadership of and on the urgings of Stalin and the Red Army leaders they raped and slaughtered their way into Berlin because they accepted Stalin's lies that all Germans were Nazis. Western imperialism agreed.

The advance of the Red Army and the way it fought inspired the working class of the planet but the Stalinist bureaucracy betrayed that in Warsaw, in Czechoslovakia, in North-



This cartoon in SA on 29-8-1939 works at a certain level, Stalin was certainly as brutal as Hitler. But alarm bells should have rung at the direct equations that were constantly made.

ern Italy, in Greece and in Vietnam. And six communist parties entered European governments to save capitalism from revolution at the end of the war, only to be ejected from government when the revolutionary wave had ebbed and Marshall Aid had replaced it from April 1947.

But Shachtman only points to the counter-revolutionary acts of the bureaucracy and not to the revolutionary struggles of the masses, which the Trotskyists on the ground did everything they could to advance and instead he looks to imperialism itself, Stalin's allies in counter-revolution, to assist. Of course the Stalinists overturned property relations in a bureaucratic manner, having first smashed the revolutionary upsurge of the masses and then relied on them as a controlled stage army to expropriate the capitalists beginning from the end of 1948.

If Shachtman can point to the shortcomings of the SWP leaders in fighting Stalinism it was from the increasingly obvious perspec-

tive of siding with ‘democratic imperialism’ against Stalinism.

Bob Pitt recounts:

If Matgamna’s tradition-building project requires him to tinker with the real history of the WP/ISL, it also involves a parallel distortion of the politics of the Shachtmanites’ “orthodox Trotskyist” opponents in the United States, represented by the SWP and its leader James P. Cannon.

The SWP’s applause for the Soviet armed forces during the war as “Trotsky’s Red Army” is made much of in this collection, which backs up the Shachtmanites’ anti-SWP polemics with illustrations of the offending articles and cartoons from the SWP’s paper *Socialist Appeal*. Shachtman himself insisted that this position on the Red Army was a necessary consequence of the pro-Stalinist politics implicit in the SWP’s Soviet defencism. But it seems to me that the Cannonites’ line stemmed not from an intrinsic softness towards Stalinism (which they were not inclined to) but rather from an effort to relate to the consciousness of US workers (which Cannon in particular certainly was inclined to – it was one of his political strengths).

During the war the anti-fascist sentiments of the working class took the form of enthusiastic support for the Soviet Union in its resistance to the Nazi invasion. The Communist Party won widespread popularity for its Stalinist politics as a result, and I think that the SWP leadership with its “Trotsky’s Red Army” line sought to direct this pro-Soviet response towards the October Revolution and away from its Stalinist degeneration. They may have been wrong in this, but it hardly stands as conclusive evidence of a consistent Stalinophile deviation. Post-war, the SWP along with other sections of the world Trotskyist movement had to grapple with the question of Soviet Stalinism’s expansion into Eastern Europe, along with successful seizures of power by indigenous Stalinist forces in Yugoslavia and China. These developments ran entirely counter to Trotsky’s predictions – which had anticipated that the inevitable outcome of the war would be Stalinism’s overthrow either by workers’ revolution or by capitalist restoration – so it is not sur-

prising that Trotskyists had difficulty in comprehending the new situation.

Comrade Pitt wrote well in 1990 but I think he was wrong to excuse the SWP leaders to that extent. We understand the pressures; the CPUSA had 100,000 members at its high point during the war, Trotsky stressed the need to orientate towards these workers, the Shachtmanites really were petty-bourgeois and not workers themselves and could not nor did not want to orientate towards workers at all. Hence Trotsky’s insistence on ‘proletarianising’ the party.

Why the economic base of the USSR had to be defended

The economy of the USSR was not simply based on ‘nationalised property’ but on nationalised property *relations* together with central planning (however distorted) and the monopoly of foreign trade. The AWL scribes continually refer to ‘nationalised property’ only in order to infer that the Trotskyists hold that the degree of nationalisation determines a workers’ state. That became the reformist criterion for Ted Grant which led him to accept a whole list of third world countries as workers’ states beginning with Burma and Egypt when they were simply bourgeois nationalist regimes.

But the workers’ state is not simply the base of the state or the superstructure but the dialectical relationship between the two. Of course you cannot plan an economy without state ownership of the main means of production, the ‘commanding heights’. Of course you must have a revolutionary party or historically a Stalinist party determined to maintain their position and privileges to achieve this. The LTT’s *The Marxist Theory of the State* made just this point;

“according to Trotsky’s succinct definition, “the class character of the state is determined by its relation to the forms of property in the means of production” and “by the character of the forms of property and productive relations

which the given state guards and defends". This implies a dialectical rather than a mechanical relationship between base and superstructure: it is not merely a question of the existing forms of property but of those which the state defends and strives to develop." [13]

Remember Germany under Bismarck and Russia under Stolypin had very big state sectors with the state ruling industry on behalf of the capitalists. This is the mistake Ted Grant made with third world countries. Not the degree of nationalisation as Trotsky says: "The class nature of the state is, consequently, determined not only by its political forms but by its social content; i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends."

And what is the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (another phrase for a workers' state):

"The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not primarily an economic but predominantly a political category ... All forms, organs, and institutions of the class rule of the proletariat are now destroyed, which is to say that the class rule of the proletariat is now destroyed." After hearing about the "different forms" (say Burnham and Shachtman GD) of the proletarian regime, this second contention, taken by itself, appears unexpected. Of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only "predominantly" but wholly and fully a "political category." However, this very politics is only concentrated economics.

And of course both currents (Stalinists and Third Campists) absolutely oppose the perspective of world revolution, the Stalinists from a nationalist peaceful co-existence with imperialism perspective of the self-satisfied bureaucrat, the result of the pressure of imperialism on the first isolated workers' state. The Third Camp came from the perspective of direct capitulation to the 'civilising mission' of their own ruling class, the old 'white man's burden' so obvious in the quote in defence of his own ruling class from Matgamna above; they are "*the more progressive of the contending camps*" let there be no doubt.

The domination of the Social Democracy in the state and in the soviets (Germany 1918–19) had nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat inasmuch as it left bourgeois property inviolable (as the USSR left capitalist property relations intact in Austria and Afghanistan when they occupied them, for example – GD). But the regime which guards the expropriated and nationalized property from the imperialists is, independent of political forms, the dictatorship of the proletariat." [14]

Underlining this approach, Lenin argued in early 1918 that:

"No one, I think, in studying the question of the economic system of Russia, has denied its transitional character. Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognised as a socialist order." [15]

Matgamna's "totalitarian economicism" is simply nonsense, a non-Marxist category. And as an

aside where and when did Trotsky and Cannon say the obvious falsehood perpetrated by Workers Liberty?

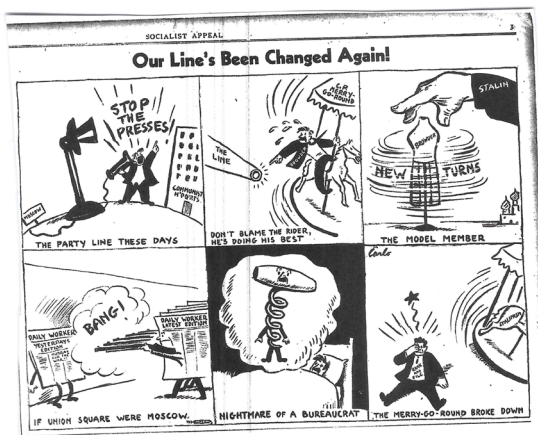
"When Trotsky (and Cannon after him) said the bureaucratic autocracy ... seized a proportionately greater share of the social product in Russia than the rich in the advanced capitalist countries." [16]

Third Campism is the opposite side of the same coin as Stalinism's socialism in a single country

The AWL conception of the Third Camp is false and ahistorical; it conflates and confuses two distinct concepts of Marxism. Of course in order to make socialist revolutionary the working class must establish its own political class independence and it was in this sense that Trotsky defended the term before the 1939-40 conflict here:

"The attempt of the bourgeoisie during its internecine conflict to oblige humanity to divide up into only two camps is motivated by a desire to prohibit the proletariat from having its own independent ideas. This method is as old as bourgeois society, or more exactly, as class society in general. No one is obligated to become a Marxist; no one is obligated to swear by Lenin's name. But the whole of the politics of these two titans of revolutionary thought was directed towards this, that the fetishism of two camps would give way to a third, independent, sovereign camp of the proletariat, that camp upon which, in point of fact, the future of humanity depends." [17]

But in the 1939-40 conflict in the US SWP Shachtman and Burnham attributed a new and opposite meaning to the term Third Camp which Trotsky absolutely opposed. This is that in a conflict between imperialism and the USSR the working class took no side, they were dual-defeatist and that was the 'Third Camp'. This cowardly position of back-handed support for your own imperialist ruling class in war was summarised later by Shachtman in the slogan; "Neither Washington nor Moscow but the international working class". This could not possible establish the political independence of the working class but signified their subordina-



Nothing to complain about in this SA cartoon on 6-10-1939. It ridicules the CPUSA's mind-boggling U-turns before and during the war.

tion to their own ruling class. Trotsky clarified:

"The very first "programmatic" articles of the purloined organ (*The New International* - GD) already reveal completely the light-mindedness and hollowness of this new anti-Marxist grouping which appears under the label of the "Third Camp." What is this animal? There is the camp of capitalism; there is the camp of the proletariat. But is there perhaps a "Third Camp" – a petty-bourgeois sanctuary? In the nature of things, it is nothing else. But, as always, the petty bourgeois camouflages his "camp" with the paper flowers of rhetoric. Let us lend our ears! Here is one camp: France and England. There's another camp: Hitler and Stalin. And a Third Camp: Burnham, with Shachtman. The Fourth International turns out for them to be in Hitler's camp (Stalin made this discovery long ago). And so, a new great slogan: Muddlers and pacifists of the world, all ye suffering from the pin-pricks of fate, rally to the "third" camp! ... The schoolboy schema of the three camps leaves out a trifling detail: the colonial world, the greater portion of mankind!" [18]

The final sentence shows the greatest political weakness of the Third Campers – it al-

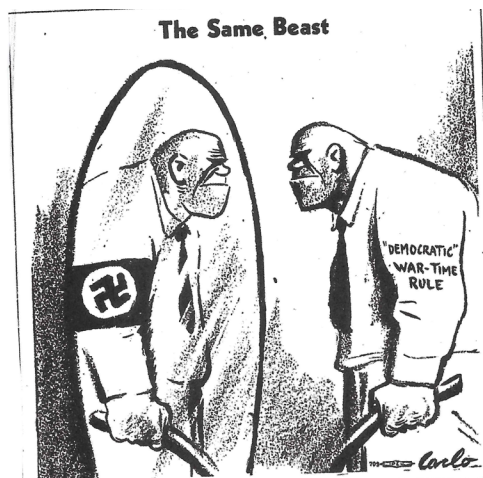
lows most [19] who gather beneath its banner to side with their own imperialist ruling class against the semi-colonial world as we have pointed out above in relation to the AWL.

Third Campism is, in fact, the opposite side of the same coin as the Stalinist socialism-in-a-single-country. Stalin, with the theoretical assistance of Bukharin, abandoned the Leninist-Bolshevik perspective of world revolution in 1924. They opted for the defence of their own bureaucratic privileges then and Shachtman abandoned it even that in 1939 in favour of defence of the petty bourgeoisie's privileges in university academic circles in the face of the furious reaction caused by the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact in August 1939 and Stalin's consequent invasion of eastern Poland, the Baltic States and Finland.

And of course both currents absolutely oppose the perspective of world revolution, the Stalinists from a nationalist peaceful co-existence with imperialism perspective of the self-satisfied bureaucrat, the result of the pressure of imperialism on the first isolated workers' state. The Third Camp came from the perspective of direct capitulation to the 'civilising mission' of their own ruling class, the old 'white man's burden' so obvious in the quote in defence of his own ruling class from Matgamna above; they are "the more progressive of the contending camps" let there be no doubt.

Trotsky condemned Stalin's invasions of eastern Poland etc. as agreed by Hitler in the secret protocols of the Hitler-Stalin pact. This did great damage to the class consciousness of the international proletariat but he acknowledged they were acts of self-defence by Stalin, albeit in his own brutal way and with his own bureaucratic methods. "From the standpoint of the strategy of the world proletariat" Trotsky insisted was how we had to judge these events. Shachtman said they were simply an example of Soviet imperialist expansionism.

And the main political characteristic of Shachtmanism comes out in the question of



This SA cartoon on 13-10-39 is just wrong politically. Although they are different forms of the same capitalist beast bourgeois democracy is NOT the mirror image of Fascism. That is a Third Period ultra-left error.

how he saw his Third Camp and how he defended his view. **Shachtman was a gross political coward**; that was the reason he abandoned the theory of the degenerate workers' state and adopting the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. This was, he said, a new form of exploiting society that was not capitalist (contrary to the later state capitalism of Tony Cliff). But it initially involved defence of the USSR because it contained some elements of the remnants of the gains of the Russian Revolution in its property relations. So it seems that they could have remained in the SWP in 1940 and not split at all as the differences were merely terminological. But there was more to it as Trotsky understood. Not defending the USSR as a degenerated workers' state after the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939 changed after June 1941 when Hitler invaded the USSR and now it could not be defended even when attacked by the world's most ferocious imperialist power, Nazi Germany.

It is noted that when Shachtman abandoned his line that the USSR was a degenerated after the attack on Finland he began calling it

‘imperialist’, thereby abandoning the Leninist definition of imperialism, the domination of Finance capital allied to transnational corporations, which is still the position of Third Campists today. Lenin anticipated them in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

“Colonial policy and imperialism existed before this latest stage of capitalism, and even before capitalism. Rome, founded on slavery, pursued colonial policy and achieved imperialism. But ‘general’ arguments about imperialism, which ignore, or put into the background the fundamental difference of social-economic systems, inevitably degenerate into absolutely empty banalities, or into grandiloquent comparisons like ‘Greater Rome and Greater Britain.’ Even the colonial policy of capitalism in its previous stages is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital.”

Bob Pitt recounts the sorry tale of political cringe and cower:

“This position – that the Soviet Union was a new system of exploitation, a bureaucratic collectivist society, but that it should nevertheless be defended against imperialism – was, initially, Max Shachtman’s own view. Included in Matgamna’s collection is the article “*Is Russia a Workers’ State?*”, published by Shachtman in the New International in December 1940, not long after the split with James P. Cannon and the majority of the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP) had led to the formation of the Workers Party. In this article Shachtman concluded that, even though Russia was no longer a workers’ state but a new form of class society, if the Soviet Union were to come under attack from the capitalist world it would be necessary for revolutionaries to rally to Russia’s defence.

His argument is worth quoting: “Under what conditions is it conceivable to defend the Soviet Union ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracy? It is possible to give only a generalized answer. For example, should the character of the present war change from that of a struggle between the capitalist imperialist camps into a struggle of the imperialists to crush the Soviet Union, the interests of the world revolution

would demand the defence of the Soviet Union by the international proletariat. The aim of imperialism in that case, whether it were represented in the war by one or many powers, would be to solve the crisis of world capitalism (and thus prolong the agony of the proletariat) at the cost of reducing the Soviet Union to one or more colonial possessions or spheres of interest.... There is no reason to believe that victorious imperialism in the Soviet Union would leave its nationalized property intact – quite the contrary.... imperialism would seek to destroy all the progress made in the Soviet Union by reducing it to a somewhat more advanced India – a village continent.... Such a transformation of the Soviet Union as triumphant imperialism would undertake, would have a vast and durable reactionary effect upon world social development, give capitalism and reaction a new lease on life, retard enormously the revolutionary movement, and postpone for we don’t know how long the introduction of the world socialist society. From this standpoint and under these conditions, the defence of the Soviet Union, even under Stalinism, is both possible and necessary.”

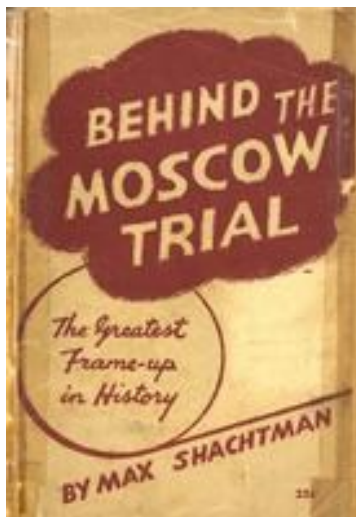
Only six months later, in June 1941, the Soviet Union did indeed come under attack, and not just from any imperialist power but from the most reactionary imperialist power of all – Nazi Germany. Here was a situation where, by Shachtman’s own analysis, revolutionaries were obliged to defend the Soviet Union. One would therefore have expected him to call on the WP to adopt a Soviet defencist position.

But Shachtman did nothing of the sort. Quite the contrary, in fact – he insisted that defence of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany could not be justified. His argument was that the fundamental character of the war had not changed, that it was still an inter-imperialist conflict, and that the German attack on the Soviet Union was a subordinate part of that wider conflict, with Stalin in a bloc with one group of imperialist powers against another. “In a struggle between Stalinist Russia and capitalist imperialism, on the one side, and another section of capitalist imperialism on the other”, Shachtman asserted, “the revolutionary proletariat takes its position against both camps.”⁷

This argument was, I think, entirely fraudulent, because the consequences of imperialist conquest and capitalist restoration, so eloquently described by Shachtman in the passage from “Is Russia a Workers’ State?” quoted above, would surely follow irrespective of whether the Soviet Union was in a military alliance with another section of imperialism.

Another article, written two years later, underlined the incoherence of Shachtman’s position. “The Russian people have shown no signs of wanting the restoration of capitalism with its bankers and industrial monopolists”, he wrote. “That is all to the good, for otherwise they would be the poor dupes of world reaction. The road to freedom for Russia does not lead backward but forward.” He explained: “They do not want their country over-

run and ruled by a foreign oppressor. And this is no ordinary foreigner, but a fascist. For long years, from Lenin’s day through Stalin’s, the Russian people have learned to feel a horror and hatred of fascism. The record of fascism’s conquests in Europe has only deepened this feeling. Their feelings in this matter are more than justified, and correspond with the interests and ideals of the international proletariat.” From which one would presumably conclude that revolutionaries should be in a united front with the Russian workers in supporting armed resistance to the Nazi invasion. But Shachtman evaded this conclusion and took refuge in abstentionist propaganda: “The task of the revolutionary Marxists can be fulfilled only by taking these progressive sentiments into full account, while continuing their ‘patient enlightenment’ of the masses as to the imperialist and reactionary character of the war itself, the harmfulness of political support of the war and the war regimes, the need of breaking with imperialism and the ruling classes, the urgency



Max Shachtman played a leading role as a Trotskyist up to 1939 but lacked the political courage to continue the struggle after the Hitler-Stalin pact; he ran away from the perspective of the world revolution like Stalin before him.

of an independent, internationalist road for the proletariat of all countries.”

... Shachtman did later come round to this point of view himself, and in 1948 the ISL adopted as its official position a version of bureaucratic collectivism based on Carter’s analysis. When he reprinted “Is Russia a Workers’ State?” in the 1962 collection of his writings *The Bureaucratic Revolution*, Shachtman edited out the part about defending the Soviet Union. But, in his introduction to that collection, he failed to acknowledge Carter as the originator of the theory of reactionary-bureaucratic collectivism.

Shachtman’s aim, Ernie Haberkern has argued, was

to construct his own bogus theory of continuity by presenting himself as the sole author of the bureaucratic collectivist position: “For this purpose it was necessary to conceal the fact that there had been two theories of bureaucratic collectivism. One, espoused by Shachtman, held that collectivist property forms were per se progressive, a conquest of the Russian Revolution that had to be defended no matter what class was the immediate beneficiary (or victim) of the social relations based on these forms. The other, originally proposed by Carter, insisted ... against Shachtman that the bureaucracy’s control of collectivist property condemned the working class to a new form of exploitation and represented a step backwards for modern civilisation.” [20]

So for Shachtman in all these conflicts after 1939 the main consideration and only consistent platform he stood on to his dying day was never to oppose the fundamental interests of your own ruling class in the serious

matter of war. And that is why the AWL admire him so much because it is their position too from that 1982 war on the Malvinas to the current wars in Syria and the Ukraine.

The AWL's Paul Hampton, in *What Next* No. 12 replied to Bob Pitt in No. 11 with the following points:

"Whose analysis provided the real breakthrough on Stalinism? As the introduction to the book explains, Trotsky himself was the innovator in 1939, in his article on the Stalin-Hitler Pact, "The USSR in War". Here he acknowledged the theoretical possibility that nationalised property might also be the basis of a new exploiting class, thus effectively cutting the roots of the theory that Russian Stalinism could only be a workers' state. Using the mask of Rizzi, Trotsky acknowledged that should Stalinism outlast the war, then he would be forced to re-evaluate his designation of Russia as a "degenerated workers' state" which should be defended against imperialist attack. In fact Trotsky's whole approach to Stalinism was to continually modify his theory in the light of its development: for example on whether reform or revolution was necessary, or on the Thermidor and Bonapartism analogy. In 1928, in the letter to Borodai, he argued that the possibility of reform of the Bolshevik Party was the basis on which he still characterised Russia as a workers' state – by 1931, when this perspective was becoming plainly impossible, he focused more narrowly on nationalised property. His later positions in 1939-40 went even further (although he drew back somewhat in the debate within the SWP): on the slogan for an independent Soviet Ukraine, on the possibility of bureaucratic collectivism, and, in the last days of his life, on Communist Parties outside the USSR. What is clear from Trotsky's body of work in the thirties as a whole is that his concrete analyses of Stalinism were chafing and ultimately undermining the characterisation of Russia as a degenerated workers' state. Shachtman and his followers only drew out the logic of this analysis – firstly for the political conclusions ("defencism") and later for the formula ("workers' state") that Trotsky himself had laid bare." [21]

In a note Paul says: "Although Trotsky is referring to the prospect of world war, the quote (by Trotsky - GD) is still sufficiently broad to include Stalinism as the "second" camp apart from capitalism which is what the WP/ISL meant by it."

Our quote from Trotsky in *Petty Bourgeois Moralists* above just about scuppers that argument. We ask the reader to study Trotsky's *The USSR in War*, in this pamphlet, and the other quotes from him on *Third Campism and Shachtman* to assess for themselves if Trotsky was leaning towards Shachtman in his last days. Note again the 'nationalised property' without the 'relations' after it to imply a truly idiotic notion by Trotsky.

Trotsky was not simply analysing a fixed category called Stalinism but its evolution from centrism in the period 1923-33 to consciously counter-revolutionary thereafter. And, whilst Stalinism clearly examined the possibility of defending its privileges by restoring capitalist property relations in the period 1936-39 during the Great Purges it was forced to defend the national property relations when Hitler attacked in June 1941. And we all know that it was the Stalinist bureaucracies themselves that restored capitalism in the period 1989-92.

And Andy Y (Workers Power), replying to Tim Nelson's post cited p.20 made the telling point that the third option postulated by Trotsky was not 'bureaucratic collectivism' or 'state capitalism' but capitalism itself restored by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which is what actually happened. Trotsky quote:

"To define the Soviet regime as transitional, or intermediate, means to abandon such finished social categories as capitalism (and therewith "state capitalism") and also socialism. But besides being completely inadequate in itself, such a definition is capable of producing the mistaken idea that from the present Soviet regime only a transition to socialism is possible. In reality a back slide to capitalism is wholly possible. A more complete definition will of necessity be complicated and ponderous."

REDS INVADE POLAND

CLING TO PEACE,
IS VANDENBERG
PLEA TO NATION

Calls on Both Parties
to Guard Liberty.
Keep America Out!

NEWS SUMMARY

NEW YORK, Sept. 27. — The news summary for the day includes reports on the invasion of Poland, the League of Nations, and the actions of the United States.



RUSSIANS CROSS BORDER TO 'PROTECT MINORITIES'

300,000 Men Engaged
in 40 Mile Battle
on West Front;
Nazi Retreat.

GERMANY WARNS
WARSAW: GIVE UP
IN TWELVE HOURS

Soviet Troops Move
in After Note Is
Handed to AB
Embassy.

Andy replies:

"This quote doesn't indicate that Trotsky believed there was a third alternative to capitalism and socialism. He discusses three "hypotheses": the workers overthrow the bureaucracy, a bourgeois party overthrows the bureaucracy and re-establishes capitalism, and then this third "variant", the bureaucracy becomes a ruling class. From everything else he has written it is clear he means by this a capitalist ruling class, as the Transitional Programme (and other writings) make clear and his writings immediately after the "third variant" etc."

"The new class society/bureaucratic collectivism theories etc. which as an idea ripped apart Marx Engels and Lenin's' whole conception of historical materialism, and the organic relationship between capitalism and its successor, socialism, just as Cliff's theory of state capitalism effectively bins Marx's Capital."

The United Front and the Anti-Imperialist United Front; never political defence of Stalinism or bourgeois nationalists

"Defence of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle." (Trotsky)

In late 1939, following the Hitler/Stalin pact, Stalin, having invaded Poland on 17 September, invaded the Baltic States and Finland. The Finns fought and were eventually de-

feated in March 1940. Trotsky defended the sovietisation of Eastern Poland, the establishment of nationalised property relations and the expropriation of the capitalists, but not the invasion that preceded it nor the manner in which it was carried out. Genuine Trotskyists trace the process of degeneration thus:

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

But there is another. In order to gain the possibility of occupying Poland through a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the USSR and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganization of the ranks of its own Communist International.

The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, wholly retain their

reactionary character and remain the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

Our general appraisal of the Kremlin and Comintern does not, however, alter the particular fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure. We must recognize this openly. Were Hitler on the morrow to throw his armies against the East, to restore “law and order” in Eastern Poland, the advanced workers would defend against Hitler these new property forms established by the Bonapartist Soviet bureaucracy.” [22]

Notes

- [1] Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism, Petty-Bourgeois Moralists and the Proletarian Party*, (April 1940), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/dm/30-pbmoral.htm>
- [2] The two publications that contain this defence of Shachtmanism are *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*, volume 1 (1999). <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/11665> and the recent one, *The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism: the fate of the Russian Revolution*, volume 2 (2015) Contents here <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/25589>
- [3] Sean Matgamna, *The fate of Max Shachtman: a critical assessment*, 25 September, 2007, <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2007/09/24/fate-max-shachtman-critical-assessment>
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Barry Sheppard: *Three theories of the USSR*, <http://links.org.au/node/3901>
- [6] Leon Trotsky, *On the Sino-Japanese War*, (September 1937) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/10/sino.htm>
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] Karl Marx, *Letter to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt In New York*, 1870, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_04_09.htm
- [9] Sheppard, *Three Theories*.
- [10] The Soviet Union was a permanent member of the UN Security Council, they had a “veto power” over any vote taken by the Security Council. When the Security Council voted in 1950 to introduce UN forces the Soviets were absent, having walked out a few days pre-

viously over something else, they said. They did not walk back in again to support their ally North Korea because they wished to send the message to the USA that they did not really support Korea or China because they were seeking ‘peaceful co-existence’.

[11] Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed, What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?*, (1936), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/>

[12] These arguments are made in greater detail in Dave Bruce’s *Trotsky and the Material Analysis of Stalinism*. <http://socialistfight.com/2016/01/04/trotsky-and-the-materialist-analysis-of-stalinism-by-dave-bruce/>

[13] *In Defence of Marxism Number 3* (June 1995), *The Marxist Theory of the State and the Collapse of Stalinism*, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/ltt/ltt-idom3.htm>

[14] L. Trotsky, *Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?* (November 1937), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/11/wstate.htm>

[15] W. I. Lenin, *Collected Works, Vol. 27*, Moscow, 1965, p.335.

[16] *The Leningrad delirium, Submitted by AWL* on 13 -10-15, <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/25716>

[17] *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement 1934-40, 1979*, pp.868-869.

[18] Leon Trotsky, *Petty-Bourgeois Moralists...*

[19] The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB, Weekly Worker) and the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP USA) call themselves Third Campists who would not defend the concept to the extent that Shachtman took it even in 1940.

[20] Bob Pitt review, *Max Shachtman, Soviet Defecism and “Unfalsified Marxism”* What Next? No. 11, 1998, <http://www.whatnextjournal.org.uk/Pages/Back/Wnext11/Reviews.html#Review2>

[21] Paul Hampton, What Next No. 12, Workers’ Liberty and the Third Camp. <http://www.whatnextjournal.org.uk/Pages/Back/Wnext12/Hampton.html>

[22] Leon Trotsky, *The USSR in War*, (September 1939), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/09/ussr-war.htm>.

Third Campism of the Second Order: the Ideological Defence of Imperialism Today

The International Socialist Network (ISN) and the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP-US)

Comment by Gerry Downing
Tim Nelson of the International Socialist Network weighs in:

Tim outlines his analysis thus:

“The problem which increasingly faced the Trotskyist movement throughout the 1940s was that Trotsky’s analysis and predictions did not fit events. For example, Trotsky argued that the Soviet bureaucratic regime was a temporary, unstable anomaly, thrown up as a result of the final crisis of capitalism not producing a workers’ revolution except in an economically backward society. He went on to argue that this accident of history would eventually collapse. Furthermore, unless there was a revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, the bourgeois democracies would be replaced by totalitarian dictatorships, the beginnings of which were being witnessed with the increase of authoritarianism and state control in the war time Western democracies. Such totalitarianism was the only way that capitalism could maintain itself in a time of such profound crisis. It became increasingly evident that this analysis was incorrect. Following the Second World War, both the Stalinist regime and Western capitalism entered a period of extended stability. Anglo-American imperialism did not descend into totalitarianism, and did not, as many Trotskyists expected, install dictatorships in those parts of Western Europe it occupied after the defeat of Nazi Germany. Far from being in its final crisis, capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s experienced a period of unprecedented boom. Trotsky was wrong. This in itself should neither be surprising, nor especially upsetting. Revolutionary predictions from Marx onwards usually have been incorrect, and all analyses in Marxist theory are subject to constant revision. However, the Trotskyists of the



The International Socialist Network voted unanimously to dissolve itself at its National Members Meeting of 26 April 2015. It had split from the SWP two years previously.

1940s, led primarily by Cannon, had begun to treat Trotsky’s writings as scripture. When it was clear that the Second World War had not brought about the collapse either of the Stalinist bureaucracy or Western democracy, Cannon concluded that, rather than Trotsky having been wrong, the Second World War must not have ended.” [1]

Of course Trotsky was right in 1938 to predict a catastrophe. But he did not say it was the ‘final crisis of capitalism’; he polemicalised extensively against the Stalinists on just this question when they were in their Third Period ultra-leftism from 1928-34. And whilst what he was predicting about the collapse of the Soviet Union in

WWII did not happen and revolutions did not triumph both events almost happened.

Trotsky was not a soothsayer predicting the future but he was analysing the revolutionary potential in present and coming events and attempting to inspire his followers to lead revolutions armed with this theoretical understanding. And when these situations occurred in Warsaw, Czechoslovakia, northern Italy, Greece and Vietnam leadership was the key but the fascists and the Stalinists got to them first.

After all Trotsky had opined that had the Tsar's police assassinated Lenin before October 1917 the revolution would have failed. So it's never a question of what WILL 'inevitably' happen or with the wisdom of hindsight what DID 'inevitably' happen but the understanding what we do is what makes the difference, what leadership we can provide to make the revolution is vital, to become "the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process". But we must understand and analyse the revolutionary potential lodged in political struggles and favourable situations. And that is what Trotsky did in 1938.

As for Shachtman the concluding Stalinophobic remark by Tim – "Plus, he fucking hated Stalinists. You have to respect that" – and the earlier analysis of why Stalinists were not part of the workers' movement and worse than right wing TU bureaucrats shoots a big hole in the whole article. All the serious political evenhandedness and scholarly analysis (he does set out the genuine Trotsky stance very fairly) is destroyed by the realisation that he is an anti-communist Stalinophobe.

Walter Daum and the LRP, *The Life and Death of Stalinism* (1990)

Another defender of the Shachtmanite Third Camp is the League for the Revolutionary party (LP-US). Walter Daum, *The*

Life and Death of Stalinism (1990), Introduction. His version of bureaucratic collectivism is somewhat different. The argument goes approximately thus:

The labour-capital relationship continued to operate in the USSR but up to 1939 it was modified by the pressure from the dictatorship of the proletariat and its pressure on the ruling bureaucracy. Once this pressure was definitively eliminated during the Great Purges of 1936-39 that pressure ended and the bureaucracy were able to convert themselves into a new ruling class without any opposition. Of course Trotsky never applied a criterion like this to assign it the title of workers' state. It is all a bit moralistic, how bad really are the Stalinists? Eliminating all democratic opposition from the left is really beyond-the-beyonds and no reasonable democratic could tolerate that.

How they converted themselves into capitalists is not explained, why they had to do it and in what way it altered the basis structure of the economy. Everything operated in approximately the same way as before the war as after the war.

The central planning still existed, the law of value was still suppressed to approximately the same extent, there was no unemployment so no reserve army of labour to regulate its price, there was no abandonment of the monopoly of foreign trade and no stock exchanges operating - there was, in fact, no actual capitalist class until Yeltsin and his American advisor Jeffrey Sachs set about creating one after August 1991, the appalling gangsterist oligarchs.

Joe Stalin could not leave money or property to his daughter Svetlana [2] or neither could any other bureaucrat in the USSR – there were no wills as there would not be in any socialist society. Though he had great privileges he had no private property.

Barry Sheppard argued that the collapse of the USSR in 1991 showed the following:

“The fact is that the bureaucracy in its over half century of bureaucratic rule had not amassed anywhere near the capital necessary to buy the means of production. This fact contradicts the theory of state capitalism. If the USSR was capitalism of any kind, vast amounts of capital would have accrued to the bureaucracy, but this was not the case.

As Marx explained in volume one of *Capital*, the capitalist system is characterised not by the formula of C-M-C, of earlier commodity production, whereby independent producers created commodities (C), sold them in the market for money (M), which was then used to buy other commodities, completing the circuit of C-M-C.

Rather capitalism is characterised by a different circuit, M-C-M', that is, the capitalist brings money into the market and buys commodities such as raw materials and machines etc. and one other crucial commodity, labour power sold to the capitalist by workers. The capitalist sets these commodities into motion in capitalist enterprises and new commodities are produced, which he then sells on the market for money. Since the crucial commodity of labour power has the ability to create new value greater than the cost to the capitalist of labour power, the commodities that the workers produce but the capitalist owns have greater value than that of the original M the capitalist started with and when those commodities are sold for money, M' is greater than M. The circuit can then be renewed with M'-C-M'.

In the Soviet Union there was no such M-C-M' circuit and no capital accumulation. That explains why after a half century of supposed state capitalism there wasn't enough capital in the former USSR to buy the privatised means of production. If M-C-M' had existed, there would have been enough money capital to do so.

The theory of bureaucratic collectivism did not face this difficulty. According to this theory, the economic privileges the bureaucracy enjoyed stemmed from a non-capitalist mechanism. The fact that the bureaucracy had not amassed enough capital to buy the means of production in the return to capitalism indicated that bureaucratic collectivism – if that's what it was -- did not exploit the workers and peasants to the degree that capitalism does.

If what existed in the USSR was bureaucratic collectivism, then it was certainly short-lived, not long enough to be considered a new historical stage or a new type of exploitative society as its original theorists believed. On the scale of history the collapse of the USSR makes clear that the choice remains, capitalism or socialism, not a third way.

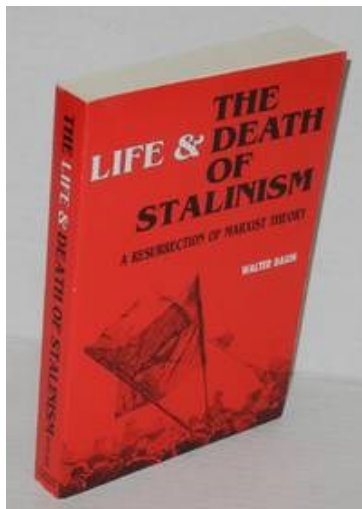
It is clear that the social force that carried through the return to capitalism was the bureaucracy itself. It was not the workers or the peasantry. Both “Third Camp” theories have no explanation why the bureaucracy would want to do this and excluded this possibility, unlike Trotsky, who predicted it.

“The wonder is that under such exceptionally unfavourable conditions planned economy has managed to demonstrate its insuperable benefits” Trotsky said in his *Introduction to Capital* in 1939. [3]

This is how Daum, like Shachtman and Matgamna, dismisses the post-WWII Trotskyists in his *Introduction* on the basis that Trotsky did not understand Trotskyism and no post-war Trotskyists understood Trotskyism either (until he came along). I have interspersed the quote with my own comments and observations in bracketed italics:

After Trotsky's death the majority of Trotskyists formally maintained his appraisal of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state heading for either capitalist restoration or a new workers' revolution. But when the dust

of World War II settled, Stalinism had proved itself capable of carrying out revolutions in Eastern Europe, China and elsewhere. To maintain Trotsky's term (but without its content – *Trotsky did not understand its content either Daum apparently thinks – GD*), most neo-Trotskyists added the qualification, implied if not stated, that Stalinism was not really counterrevolutionary (*some, like Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel did, almost all, including the ICFI did after 1951 – GD*). For many years the leading theorist of this position has been Ernest Mandel.



Against the socialist thesis, the workers' statisticians argue that nationalization of the means of production does not in itself mean socialism. But they weaken their case by insisting that Stalinist nationalization is not only progressive in itself but also enough to make genuine socialization possible, without further transformation of the economic base (*depending on what you mean by 'transformation of the economic base', Trotskyists held for the USSR that the restoration of Soviet democracy was necessary and the defeat of the bureaucracy in a political revolution, they were for maintaining the socialist property relations – GD*). Such conclusions stand out as wildly optimistic today, in the light of the collapse of so many Stalinist regimes. Moreover, they were never drawn by Trotsky, who understood that the USSR's backwardness and isolation subjected it to the laws of capital operating internationally, and that value relations applied internally despite nationalized property (*Trotsky never said that 'value relations applied internally despite nationalized property', he understood that central planning in alliance with a monopoly of foreign trade suppressed the law of value, even if it could not eliminate it. The full force of the market as unleashed by Yeltsin*

after 1991 decimated the economy and workers' living standards and life expectancy. That puts the law of value in perspective – GD). To achieve socialization the USSR would have to achieve qualitative economic progress over capitalism. The backwardness and crises now typical of the Stalinist countries vitiates the "workers' state" thesis just as much as "socialism" (*in fact the destruction of the workers' state proved it definitively just over a year after the publica-*

tion of Daum's book – GD).

In addition, these theories face an overwhelming contradiction. After World War II Stalinist rule spread across East Europe by military force (and in several countries, notably China, through armed revolution). These new states in time adopted the Soviet model, although in most cases they called themselves some form of "new" or "people's" democracy. That is, they claimed (*at first – GD*) to be not proletarian but simply more democratic versions of capitalism, leaning towards socialism. Most of the workers' state theorists of the USSR chose to label the new states "deformed" or "bureaucratized" workers' states. But not only had these states been established without working-class revolutions; most were formed only after workers' attempts to control factories and set up governing councils had been smashed by the Stalinists. Styling such creations "proletarian" with whatever modification flies in the face of history (*no it doesn't, if it could exist in the USSR in a degenerated form from 1924 to 1939 as Daum accepts than through bureaucratic imposition or my means of a 'Red Army' such relations can exist in the USSR could be replicated without and against the working class, as Workers Power and many other left Trotskyists including Socialist Fight have explained since. – GD*).

The proletarian label for the Stalinist states amounts to a cynical rejection of the Marxist conclusion that a workers' state can be established only through the workers' own conscious activity: "the emancipation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat itself" (*then Trotsky was a fool to explain that this is what happened in Eastern Poland after Stalin invaded in September 1939 – GD*). The neo-Trotskyist conception also calls into question Lenin's teaching that a workers' socialist revolution requires the guidance of a vanguard party. The Stalinist parties that seized power while denying that socialism was their intention could hardly be considered vanguards of proletarian consciousness (*no, they did it to preserve their own privileges in defence of their own interests, it really is not too difficult to understand that – GD*).

Marx's principle of proletarian self-emancipation is no abstract dogma. It derives from his analysis of capitalism: the system organically creates a class whose inherent struggle forces it to try to overthrow it and establish communism. In granting another class this proletarian characteristic, the deformed workers' state theorists reject a Marx-

ist understanding of capitalism as well as of Stalinism. In later chapters we will analyse the material roots and practical consequences of their misconception (*and for this observation Trotsky was also wrong in the period 1924-to 39 as well – GD*).

Notes

[1] Tim Nelson: *Max Shachtman and Trotskyism*, 4 October 2014, <http://international-socialist-network.org/index.php/ideas-and-arguments/500-max-shachtman-and-trotskyism>

[2] See Wikipedia, Svetlana Alliluyeva, "At 16, Alliluyeva fell in love with Aleksei Kapler, a Jewish Soviet filmmaker who was 40 years old. Her father vehemently disapproved of the romance. Later, Kapler was sentenced to ten years in exile in the industrial city of Vorkuta, near the Arctic Circle. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svetlana_Alliluyeva

[3] Leon Trotsky, *Marxism in Our Time*, April 1939, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/04/marxism.htm>

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Throwing babies out with the bathwater

Reply to Mike McNair on state capitalism and Third Campism

By Ian Donovan, from Weekly Worker 1001, 13 March 2014

Mike Macnair claims that he is engaged in an “educative” process in his reply to my earlier article [1] criticising third-campist politics. But in fact, his reply [2] contains some logical inconsistencies that will be anything but educational for those who read it, and will only increase confusion. Replying to every one of the unfocussed points in detail would require an inordinate amount of space. So I take up here some key points that get to the most important of the differences between us.

Mike claims that my amendment, which attempted to introduce a state-capitalist characterisation into the Communist Platform, was in the tradition of “various lefts” who allegedly use the term ‘state capitalism’ to “take moral distance from Stalinism”. There is some real irony in this statement, since no alternative analysis of the nature of Stalinism is provided in his article. In fact, if anything can be accused of simply seeking to put “moral distance” and nothing more between its authors and Stalinism, it is the existing formulation in the Communist Platform (partly derived from the earlier Socialist Platform): “We reject the idea that the undemocratic regimes that existed in the former Soviet Union and other countries were socialist, or represented either the political rule of the working class or some kind of step on the road to socialism.”

This purely negative assessment contains no analysis of what the Stalinist regimes were - only what they were not. But this will not convince anyone of its proposition. It contains no Marxist analysis of what the Stalinist regimes were. Why should anyone listen to a bare assertion that presents no analysis to justify itself? You can “reject” an idea until eternity, but until you replace it with a better one, you will not overcome it.

The mainstream of the CPGB is aware of this, and has the beginning of a theory - of the USSR as an “ectopic” society or an “evolutionary dead end”, but they are not sufficiently confident of its coherence to put it forward in a ‘broader’



Mike McNair (before his diet!)

context such as the Communist Platform bloc. Hence the agnosticism of the draft as put forward, which was subsequently adopted.

Such agnosticism is not strength, but a weakness, and belies, for instance, Mike Macnair’s facile equating of a variety of different theories of Stalinism as ‘state capitalism’. Mike notably makes an exception for Lenin’s use of the term to describe the early industrial enterprises of the Soviet state, but there is no logical reason for this, except perhaps deferral to Lenin’s authority.

There is no Marxist reason to equate the varying uses of the term by Kautsky, Cliff, Raya Dunayevskaya/CLR James or Walter Daum. Why, in any case, should Kautsky be criticised for seeking to take “moral distance” from Stalinism, since he opposed the Bolsheviks before Stalinism existed? Kautsky can be justly criticised for many things, but none of them provide any mo-

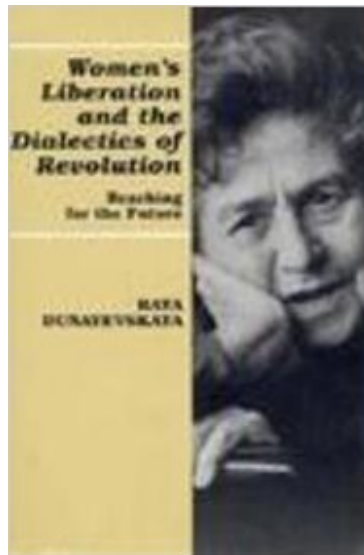
tive to seek moral distance from Stalinism (which did not exist in 1919, when he formulated these views). Such generalisations are just inattentive.

Cliff vs. Daum

The varying contents that such common terminology hides can be illustrated in the case of Tony Cliff and Walter Daum respectively. Cliff's theory of bureaucratic state capitalism in the USSR is a 'third system' theory in real terms. This is revealed by his view that the law of value, which is the historically specific economic law that is fundamental to capitalism and drives its specific form of exploitation - the extraction of surplus-value from the working class and its realisation in the market - was absent in the USSR.

Coupled with Cliff's insistence that the competition of the USSR and its satellite states with the western capitalist powers was purely of a military nature, not economic, this pointed to a society in which the driving forces in its internal and external economic relations were something other than the law of value. Cliff elided round this fundamental difference between his 'state capitalism' and the capitalism as analysed by Marx (or for that matter the European/American imperialist monopoly capital described by Lenin) by a mystification between 'military' competition over use values and the law of value. This was never explained, but made the law of value intangible and non-operative. Ultimately, his way out of this was the postulate that Soviet-style 'state capitalism' was a higher form of capitalism than 'normal' imperialism. Thus dismissing the idea that the USSR could revert to a more conventional capitalist model:

"Anti-Stalinist opposition forces in the USSR, however unorganised and inarticulate, strive consciously or semi-consciously, even unconsciously, towards a goal which, by and large, can be inferred



from the economic, social and political set-up of bureaucratic state capitalism, the set-up which these forces aim to overthrow. From a state-owned and planned economy there can be no retracing of steps to an anarchic, private-ownership economy. And this not only, or even mainly, because there are no individuals to claim legal or historical right to ownership of the major part of the wealth. The replacement of large-scale state industry with private industry would be a technical-economic regression." [3]

The lack of predictive power of this is obvious. But more important is that if this analysis had corresponded with

reality, Cliff would have been describing a non-socialist society in which the law of the determination of value by socially necessary labour time - the most fundamental law of capitalism - had been abolished. Obviously this would have been a new, basically stable, mode of production that was neither capitalist nor communist. This was a third-system theory, and the real content of Cliff's third-campism, notwithstanding his use of the term 'state capitalism'.

Daum's understanding is very different. Derived in part from insights developed by James and Dunayevskaya, Daum and the US ex-Shachtmanite trend, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), developed this into a coherent understanding that the law of value continues to be the dominant and determining material force in a stratified economy, where competition, private property in the means of production and even money itself is suppressed.

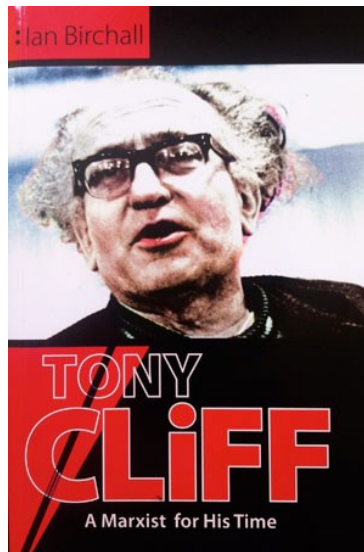
This would be the case even when the proletariat is in power through its own political party - though such a government would engage in prolonged, conscious effort to abolish that dominance. This could only succeed through the abolition of material scarcity via the internationalisation of the revolution and the development of the productive forces, to the point that the iron

necessity for the exchange of equivalents begins to wither away. The law of value, after all, is the law of the compulsive tendency for equivalent and proportional amounts of crystallised average labour time to be exchanged for each other in the form of differing use-values - not as a planned process, but as a blind average of fluctuating prices in anarchic economic conditions.

As long as material scarcity dictates the need for such equivalence as a norm, suppression of such forms merely creates a modified expression of this law, in an analogous manner to that in which the formation of prices of production from 'pure' value, described by Marx in volume 3 of *Capital*, is a modification of the operation of the law of value on the basis of the law of value itself. In the case of what Daum came to describe as "statified capitalism", such formal suppression of 'normal' capitalist forms must mean a form of capitalism prone to chronic economic inefficiency and a rate of profit that declines even more steeply than under classic imperialist monopoly. This results from the far greater centralisation/concentration of capital involved and the artificial maintenance of full employment, which was a residual gain of the workers' revolution that the regime had overthrown (but which it dared not immediately move to abolish).

Predictive

The salience of this analysis is shown by its ability to prefigure the events of more than a decade later, when it was first formulated in the late 1970s, in the aftermath of apparently major victories for Stalinism, such as the US defeat in Indochina. Even before the theory was fully solidified in terms of its terminology, it had real predictive power. For instance, the LRP wrote in 1978:



"Our state-capitalist (perhaps more accurately described as 'state-monopoly-capitalist') [or more recently and correctly 'statified capitalist' - ID] analysis rejects the idea that state capitalism is a new or higher stage of capitalism, either on a worldwide or a more limited basis. This analysis, in contrast to past state-capitalist theories ... does not see this society as an end-product of capitalist development in the advanced countries, even though we are fully aware of the tendencies inherent in capitalism that lead in that direction. In the face of a strong proletariat we agree with Trotsky that the chances for state capitalism are limited, since the target of a nationalised productive system is far too tempting. Russia,

as a result of its own build-up, has moved into the position wherein it can no longer maintain a viable state capitalism, and it totters on the brink of crisis, while attempting to introduce a variety of pluralist and open market forms. For all its development, Russia is profoundly weak and dependent on state monopoly imperialism. It aggrandises itself within the compass of maintaining the fabric of western-dominated imperialism."

Earlier in the same article there is a remarkable passage about the future of the Stalinist states that is really startling, considering this was published in 1978, in the light of what subsequently happened in 1989-91:

"Unable to catch up and create an independent national position for themselves within the capitalist world market, these nations devolve back into the orbit of state monopoly capitalism and move in the direction of its systemic forms (though a political revolution is necessary for full devolution)." [4]

This analysis was systematised and broadened out in Walter Daum's book *The life and death of Stalinism* in the late 1980s, in the context of the final crisis of Stalinism, but the above passages show that its predictive power was there much earlier, was considerable and thus its analysis deserves serious study and engagement for Marxists. It appears likely, from the facile equation of this analysis with Cliff's and even Kautsky's (!) by

Mike, that he has not read, or certainly not studied, this work.

Third-campism - as a political critique of the politics of the dominant trend of the CPGB (among others), is not dependent per se on the class nature of the USSR. In attacking such concepts as 'Not a workers' and not a bourgeois state', Shachtman's 'bureaucratic collectivism' or Burnham's concept of 'managerial society', Trotsky (in In defence of Marxism) was not only attacking those who reject the degenerated workers' state theory of the USSR, but also, as a distinct strand, those who posed the USSR as a third system. Trotsky's understanding of the relationship between these strands was flawed, but over the second strand he was completely correct.

Genuine Marxist statified-capitalist or state-capitalist analysis is not third-campist at all, but third-system theories are - they posit the existence of another contender for power other than the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Trotsky's 1939-40 attack on the historical pessimism growing out of third campism was correct, notwithstanding that his theory of the USSR was already outdated and he had failed to understand the true historical significance of the great purges of 1938-39 as representing the final victory of the counter-revolution in Russia.

Third-camp politics today mainly involves extending this concept to justify neutrality between oppressed peoples and imperialism. Hence we get the concept of 'reactionary anti-imperialism' - justifying a 'plague on both your houses' position regarding such struggles between imperialism and, say, Iraq or Iran. The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty are an archetype of this, openly based on Shachtman's theories and not-so-openly owing much to Burnham's as well.

Anti-imperialists

Another example of such politics is the Worker-Communist Parties of Iran and Iraq (WCPI), and their various splinters, who embraced this analysis after drawing false lessons from Stalinist betrayals in those countries. Their polemics settled on a policy of neutrality about the national rights of the Arabic core of Iraq under occupation when joint, coordinated uprisings between Sunni

Fallujah and Shia Najaf/Kerbala took place in spring of 2004. This form of third-campism influenced the CPGB possibly more than the AWL in the years since 9/11.

Regarding Mike Macnair's analysis of the Iraq war: it is historically false to denounce the Al Sadr movement as things stood in 2004 as puppets of Iran. The Iranian regime at that time supported the Supreme Council of the Islamic Republic in Iraq (SCIRI) and its armed wing, the Badr brigade, which was part of the US puppet government in 2004, and tried to suppress Al Mahdi with considerable bloodshed. Whatever may have happened later after the uprisings were defeated, it was utterly false to make such equations at that time.

This is rather like equating the two sides in the Irish civil war in the early 1920s on the grounds that both sides adhered to a formally similar ideology. The fact that one side was then fighting imperialism while the other was killing them on imperialism's behalf is a difference that compels Marxists to take sides. No matter what they may have done later.

An examination of the later career of Eamon de Valera and his clericalist governments makes the point perfectly about the correct Marxist attitude to take to this kind of conflict. Or does Mike argue that Marxists should have been neutral between Michael Collins' collaborationist Free State government and de Valera's Irish Republican Army in 1922-23? Or conversely, does he argue that different criteria should apply in a Muslim country, where Islamic radicals are involved in resisting imperialism, than in Ireland, for example?

I can see no reason why any different criteria should apply. I can think of reasons why some on the left might capitulate to this idea, particularly in tailing after the politics of the WCPI - a section of the Iraqi/Iranian left which responded to political Islam by embracing imperialism and western Islamophobia as implicitly progressive. But that is not a correct Marxist position.

It is also false to say, as Mike implies, that the 2004 uprisings were "sectarian"; how does he then explain the coordination of Najaf/Karbala with Sunni Fallujah? The Iranian and Iraqi re-

gimes/SCIRI and the US/UK occupiers coordinated their attempts to crush both Fallujah and the Sadrists. It is perfectly valid for communists to compare the assault on Fallujah with such crimes as Guernica or the Warsaw ghetto - and just as obligatory to take sides openly. Particularly given the use of radioactive and chemical weapons against the population - or 'shake and bake', as the US called it.

They would have done the same to Najaf and Karbala if it were not for the fear that this would produce a much wider reaction among the Shia, destroying the regime. Instead they relied on Shia collaborators such as SCIRI to defeat the movement in the Shia South and undermine it politically. The WCPI said this was a "war of terrorists" in which they could take no side. That was third-campism in action.

The CPGB comrades do not always refuse to take sides when an uprising is led by nationalists. They made a major public polemic in siding with the Kosova Liberation Army, for instance, in its 1999 war against Serbian occupation of Kosova. Likewise for the Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein - notably in 1991 - and rightly so! It also supported and gave solidarity to armed actions against apartheid led by the ANC. Again rightly so.

But this did not extend to the core Arabic-speaking areas of Iraq when these were placed under military occupation, even when they were embroiled in a joint uprising across Sunni-Shia sectarian lines that clearly had mass support. Such support was much more evident than, for instance, the Irish Easter Rising of 1916. To dismiss this joint uprising as 'sectarian' is a complete inversion of reality, as behind it was a fragile anti-sectarian impulse. This hides a failure to extend solidarity others rightly received to insurgent masses in Arabic Iraq under imperialist occupa-



Walter Daum (LRP, US)

tion. They deserved no less. This appears to single out Arabs and Muslims as uniquely undeserving of such solidarity - a disturbing position in a period of Islamophobia as an imperialist ideological weapon. The early Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front' (AIUF) is a complete red herring in this debate. That was about some level of political bloc between the Soviet government and various leaderships of colonial liberation movements, some of

whom had achieved governmental power. It is perfectly possible to reject such blocs, and still advocate taking sides with uprisings led by such forces. This is the position Trotsky advocated during and after the Chinese revolution of 1926-27, extending through the Japanese aggression in China in the 1930s.

It is perfectly possible to have rejected political alliances with the ANC, and yet support mass struggles, even armed ones, that it led against apartheid. One presumes in fact that this is still the position of the CPGB on this historical question - a refusal to take such a public side in such uprisings would be rightly seen as shameful. But, according to Mike's logic, by taking a side in such conflicts the CPGB would be embracing the flawed, half-Bolshevik-half-Menshevik AIUF position that the early Comintern briefly advocated before the rise of Stalinism. Mike's use of historical analogies is confused, to say the least.

Respect

Mike's recapitulation of the 'popular front' allegation against Respect no more makes sense than previously. None of the Stalinist 'unpopular fronts' that he refers to would have dared to call for resistance to their own ruling class in a colonial war, as Galloway did over Iraq. A similar policy was adopted about Iran at Respect's first delegated conference in 2005. None of these 'unpopular fronts' would have challenged the ruling class's war effort while a war was still being

fought on the basis of such policies and win a significant seat. Such actions would be unthinkable and utterly incompatible with the popular-front strategy, which is aimed at the formation of a joint government of bourgeois workers' parties and outright parties of the ruling class, and at erecting a barrier against the possibility of the working class taking power.

The real reason for the demonisation of George Galloway was his support for Arab resistance to imperialist conquest, which, though correct, was dictated in part by his softness on Arab nationalism. This continues to this day, despite his left-reformist politics and sometimes his individualist errors that have helped isolate him. It was a serious error for the CPGB to partially partake of this demonisation also, notwithstanding Galloway's softness on Arab nationalism.

In reality, insofar as it did indeed deviate from strictly pure models of class independence, Respect actually bore real resemblance to an electoral version of the early Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front' which Mike was mis-analogising in his article. Far from being the kind of counterrevolutionary instrument that the Stalinist popular fronts were, this was a flawed tactic aimed at promoting real struggle against imperialism and hopefully (in the eyes of its revolutionary component) a bridge to revolution. In the case of Respect, the aim was not revolution itself, but the revival of a militant left reformism on the basis of anti-imperialism. It takes a real myopia for Mike Macnair to equate these two strategic trends, which revealed their very different natures in real life - for instance, when popular-front governments in France, Spain, etc supported the suppression of revolts by colonial people.

Respect at its peak was an alliance of militant left-reformists, putative revolutionaries and angry Muslim radicals who rejected jihadism in favour of an alliance with the anti-imperialist left. More like Baku in 1920 than the Stalin-Laval pact of 1934. If the comrades had oriented to it in this way, they might have had something to say to its militants, instead of being seen as the far-left wing of the anti-Galloway/Islamophobic witch-

hunt, which was unfortunately the case at the time.

And the allegation that Respect had no appeal to anyone other than inner-city Muslims is simply untrue. The most serious blow against that view was the election victory of Respect councillor Ray Holmes, an ex-miner, in an almost completely white council seat in Shirebrook, Derbyshire, in May 2007, winning 53% of the vote. Like so many positive things in the past period, this was ultimately wasted. It, however, compares very well with the best results of other left initiatives. It also completely contradicts Mike's schema - I do not remotely see how he can explain it from the standpoint of his position.

Proletarian camp

To sum up, I would like to take up Mike's opposition to including positive references to the Bolshevik revolution and the Paris Commune in the Communist Platform. Mike writes:

"My own view is that to single out the Paris Commune and October 1917 as what the platform 'stands on' - as distinct from 'standing on' the whole history of the workers' movement, including those attempts - is to risk writing into our platform the modern far left's fetishism of the revolutionary movement at the expense of the preparatory tasks of workers' organisation and the struggle for a majority."

It seems to me that we cannot stand on the "whole history of the workers' movement", as the workers' movement has during its history made many steps backward, many defeats, some of which were eminently avoidable, and has at times during its history been dominated by leaderships and dominant practices that were reactionary or even counterrevolutionary. At the same time there have been major struggles short of revolution that have also led to significant victories; conversely both these short-lived revolutionary victories gave way to defeats and periods of reaction.

If Mike merely wishes to say that we stand on every real forward step and advance for the workers' movement, then I concur, though I do not see how such a position could justify opposing the positive references to revolutionary events that the Communist Platform endorsed. It

is also correct to endorse preparation and the struggle to win the majority of the masses to the communist programme. What is dangerous is a fetishism of 'preparatory' practices for their own sake, which could conceivably lead to the kind of divorce between the



George Galloway, "Goddamn you Tony Blair, Goddamn you".

practice of the workers' movement and its goals that the Second International indulged in, with disastrous consequences. The most stark formulation of this being Bernstein's statement that "The movement is everything; the final goal nothing". Not that I am accusing Mike of sharing Bernstein's politics, but if preparation does not openly proclaim its goals and concretise them, what is it 'preparation' for?

Mike asks whether various bourgeois and petty bourgeois trends which lead oppressed masses in struggles - for instance, in underdeveloped countries subject to imperialist aggression - should be regarded as part of the camp of the proletariat. Obviously with regard to the leaders themselves, the answer is usually no. But that does not exhaust the question. What of the masses that participate in such struggles? Even when they are not directly part of the working class, as in oppressed sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, etc, they are still part of our constituency, insofar as there is a democratic content to their struggles.

The existence of severe women's oppression, or the oppression of gays, or similar questions in many backward countries does not constitute a reason for refusing to support struggles against national oppression in the manner of the WCPI, for instance. Indeed such a stance actually undermines the fight against such oppressions by associating those advocating such social progress with pro-imperialist capitulation and national

oppression, thereby increasing the authority of reactionary trends among the oppressed. 'Pinkwashing' and the like has done no favours to gay rights or progress generally in much of the semi-colonial world.

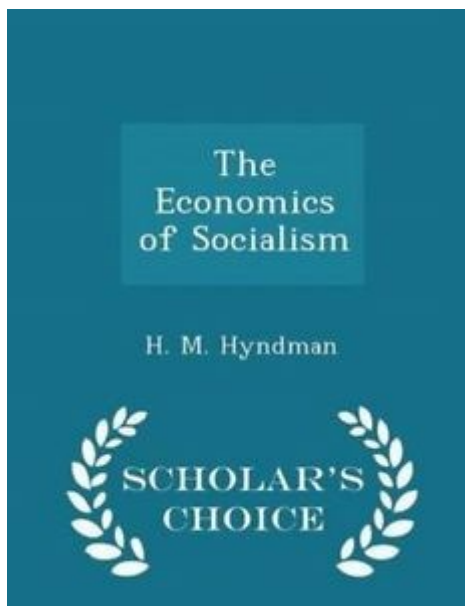
This is a self-defeating position that breaks not with any post-1917 deformation of communism,

but the responsibility of communists to be the tribune of the oppressed, which was one the most important programmatic conquests of Bolshevism prior to 1917. This is just as true on an international scale as it is within individual states.

I will not address Mike's position on imperialism at length, except to note that whatever similarities may have existed between the colonial adventures, slavery and the like of early capitalism, and the imperialism that emerged in the late 19th century, the distinction between a social system in its period of ascent, despite its brutalities, playing a progressive role and qualitatively increasing the productive power of humanity, and the imperialism of the 20th century onwards, which threatens to destroy all these advances and more, plunging humanity into barbarism, is fundamental.

Mike in fact appears to concede that modern capitalism does threaten humanity with destruction, which itself is a major difference from the epoch when Marx and Engels, in continental Europe, were seeking to bring the bourgeoisie to power to lay the basis for the future growth of the proletariat and the socialist revolution.

But the main effect of his theory is to blur the distinction between capitalism's constructive phase and the current destructive slow decline, dismissing in the process the idea that proletarian revolution is objectively possible in anything other than a very long-term perspective - and



“The nemesis of the chauvinist trend in British socialism typified by HM Hyndman, which was part of the baleful capitulation to imperialism that destroyed the Second International.”

after the destruction of US hegemony. This implies that the weakness of the working class is not merely subjective, but that there is a strategic objective barrier to working class power. With this perspective, the concept of the proletariat acting as a tribune of the oppressed in the here and now is seen as an irrelevance.

Mike has done some useful things in his *Revolutionary Strategy* in pointing out that the Third International threw out, along with the opportunism and chauvinism that was allowed free rein in the Second International, a good deal of the openness that also characterised the Bolshevik Party in its pre-revolutionary period - the very openness that enabled it to become a genuine mass formation able to take power at the head of the working class in the first place.

Mike is correct that the revolutionary Comintern came to fetishise the ‘purifying’ split, which is ultimately self-defeating, as opportunism - if not refuted consciously over and again - will

reappear to infect the most ‘pure’ party organisation, as long as it maintains its roots in social reality. In this sense the Comintern threw out the baby with the dirty bathwater and laid the basis not for Stalinism (which was something completely different), but for today’s fragmentation of the Trotskyist left, who are the real successors to the Comintern with all these faults.

But Mike is also guilty of throwing the baby out with the bathwater - albeit a slightly different baby, in the opposite direction. Many of the things he seeks to throw overboard - support for the struggles of peoples in underdeveloped countries against imperialist aggression - are not post-1917 deformations, but basic components of the socialist programme, going back to 1885, when the British Marxist pioneer, William Morris, gave courageous public support to the resistance in Sudan led by Mohammad Ahmad ‘al-Mahdi’ against the British general Gordon (which resulted in Gordon’s death). The scramble for Africa from the 1880s was the decisive event that transformed early colonialist capitalism into modern capitalist imperialism - the dating of which was one aspect of Lenin’s understanding of imperialism where he erred.

This is part of a proud socialist tradition, the nemesis of the chauvinist trend in British socialism typified by HM Hyndman, which was part of the baleful capitulation to imperialism that destroyed the Second International. Morris’s exemplary anti-imperialism was an anticipation of the issues that would later be key to the division between social-chauvinism and genuine communism, which despite its deformations was a principled and necessary split. Without that split there would be no basis for a Communist Party, which, reformed or otherwise, is the foundation stone of our movement 1

Notes

- [1] ‘*Not a matter of style*’, March 13.
- [2] ‘*Anti-imperialist illusions*’, March 20.
- [3] T Cliff State, *capitalism in Russia* chapter 9: www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1955/statecap/ch09.htm.
- [4] Quoted from ‘*Is nationalised property proletarian?*’ Socialist Voice No 6, spring 1978.

The USSR in War

By Leon Trotsky, 25 September 1939

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The German Soviet Pact and the Character of the USSR

Is it possible after the conclusion of the German Soviet Pact to consider the USSR a workers' state? The future of the Soviet State has again and again aroused discussion in our midst. Small wonder; we have before us the first experiment in the workers' state in history. Never before and nowhere else has this phenomenon been available for analysis. In the question of the social character of the USSR, mistakes commonly flow, as we have previously stated, from replacing the historical fact by the programmatic norm. Concrete fact departs from the norm. This does not signify, however, that it has overthrown the norm; on the contrary, it has reaffirmed it, from the negative side. The degeneration of the first workers' state, ascertained and explained by us, has only the more graphically shown what the workers' state should be, what it could and would be under certain historical conditions. The contradiction between the concrete fact and the norm constrains us not to reject the norm but, on the contrary, to fight for it by means of the revolutionary road. The program of the approaching revolution in the USSR is determined on the one hand by our appraisal of the USSR, as an objective historical fact, and



September 1, 1939: German ship Schleswig-Holstein fires on Westerplatte, Poland

on the other hand, by a norm of the workers' state. We do not say: "Everything is lost, we must begin all over again." We clearly indicate those elements of the workers' state which at the given stage can be salvaged, preserved, and further developed.

Those who seek nowadays to prove that the Soviet-German pact changes our appraisal of the Soviet State take their stand, in essence, on the position of the Comintern – to put it more correctly, on yesterday's position of the Comintern. According to this logic, the historical mission of the workers' state is the struggle for imperialist democracy. The "betrayal" of the democracies in favour of fascism divests the USSR of its being considered a workers' state. In point of fact, the signing of the treaty with Hitler supplies only an extra gauge with which to measure the de-

gree of degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, and its contempt for the international working class, including the Comintern, but it does not provide any basis whatsoever for a reevaluation of the sociological appraisal of the USSR

Are the Differences Political or Terminological?

Let us begin by posing the question of the nature of the Soviet state not on the abstract sociological plane but on the plane of concrete political tasks. Let us concede for the moment that the bureaucracy is a new “class” and that the present regime in the USSR is a special system of class exploitation. What new political conclusions follow for us from these definitions? The Fourth International long ago recognized the necessity of overthrowing the bureaucracy by means of a revolutionary uprising of the toilers. Nothing else is proposed or can be proposed by those who proclaim the bureaucracy to be an exploiting “class.” The goal to be attained by the overthrow of the bureaucracy is the reestablishment of the rule of the Soviets, expelling from them the present bureaucracy. Nothing different can be proposed or is proposed by the Leftist critics. [1] It is the task of the regenerated Soviets to collaborate with the world revolution and the building of a socialist society. The overthrow of the bureaucracy therefore presupposes the preservation of state property and of planned economy. Herein is the nub of the whole problem.

Needless to say, the distribution of productive forces among the various branches of economy and generally the entire content of the plan will be drastically changed when this plan is determined by the interests not of the bureaucracy but of the producers themselves. But inasmuch as the question of overthrowing the parasitic oligarchy still remains linked with that of preserving the nationalized (state) property,

we called the future revolution political. Certain of our critics (Ciliga, Bruno, and others) want, come what may, to call the future revolution social. Let us grant this definition. What does it alter in essence? To those tasks of the revolution which we have enumerated it adds nothing whatsoever.

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

Let Us Check Ourselves Once Again

It would therefore be a piece of monstrous nonsense to split with comrades who on the question of the sociological nature of the USSR have an opinion different from ours, insofar as they solidarise with us in regard to the political tasks. But on the other hand, it would be blindness on our part to ignore purely theoretical and even terminological differences, because in the course of further development they may

acquire flesh and blood and lead to diametrically opposite political conclusions. Just as a tidy housewife never permits an accumulation of cobwebs and garbage, just so a revolutionary party cannot tolerate lack of clarity, confusion and equivocation. Our house must be kept clean!

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

Is It a Cancerous Growth or a New Organ?

Our critics have more than once argued that the present Soviet bureaucracy bears very little resemblance to either the bourgeois or labour bureaucracy in capitalist society; that to a far greater degree than fascist bureaucracy it represents a new and much more powerful social formation. This is quite correct and we have never closed our eyes to it. But if we consider the Soviet bureaucracy a "class," then we are compelled to state immediately that this class does not at



Trotsky during the Civil War.

all resemble any of those propertied classes known to us in the past: our gain consequently is not great. We frequently call the Soviet bureaucracy a caste, underscoring thereby its shut in character, its arbitrary rule, and the haughtiness of the ruling stratum who consider that their progenitors issued from the divine lips of Brahma whereas the popular masses originated from the grosser portions of his anatomy. But even this definition does not of course possess a strictly scientific character. Its relative superiority lies in this, that the make shift character of the term is clear to everybody, since it would enter nobody's mind to identify the Moscow oligarchy with the Hindu caste of Brahmins. The old sociological terminology did not and could not prepare a name for a new social event which is in process of evolution (degeneration) and which has not assumed stable forms. All of us, however, continue to call the Soviet

bureaucracy a bureaucracy, not being unmindful of its historical peculiarities. In our opinion this should suffice for the time being.

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

The Early Degeneration of the Bureaucracy

The historical justification for every ruling class consisted in this – that the system of exploitation it headed raised the development of the productive forces to a new level. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Soviet regime gave a mighty impulse to economy. But the source of this impulse was the nationalization of the means of production and the planned beginnings, and by no means the fact that the bureaucracy usurped command over the economy. On the contrary, bureaucratism, as a system, became the worst brake on the technical and cultural development of the country. This was veiled for a certain time by the fact that Soviet economy was occupied for two decades with transplanting and assimilating the technology and organization of production in advanced capitalist countries. The period of borrowing and imitation still could, for better or for worse, be accommodated to bureaucratic automatism, i.e., the suffocation of all initiative and all crea-



Trotsky “The Spanish revolution (1936-9) was strangled by the Fascist and Stalinist bureaucracies before the very eyes of the world proletariat.”

tive urge. But the higher the economy rose, the more complex its requirements became, all the more unbearable became the obstacle of the bureaucratic régime. The constantly sharpening contradiction between them leads to uninterrupted political convulsions, to systematic annihilation of the most outstanding creative elements in all spheres of activity. Thus, before the bureaucracy could succeed in exuding from itself a “ruling class,” it came into irreconcilable contradiction with the demands of development. The explanation for this is to be found precisely in the fact that the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers’ state.

The Conditions for the Omnipotence and Fall of the Bureaucracy

The Soviet oligarchy possesses all the vices of the old ruling classes but lacks their historical mission. In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet State it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression but a special exceptional and temporary refraction of these laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist

environment. The scarcity in consumers' goods and the universal struggle to obtain them generate a policeman who arrogates to himself the function of distribution. Hostile pressure from without imposes on the policeman the role of "defender" of the country, endows him with national authority, and permits him doubly to plunder the country.

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

And What if the Socialist Revolution Is Not Accomplished?

The disintegration of capitalism has reached extreme limits, likewise the disintegration of the old ruling class. The further existence of this system is impossible. The productive forces must be organized in accordance with a plan. But who will

accomplish this task – the proletariat, or a new ruling class of "commissars" – politicians, administrators and technicians? Historical experience bears witness, in the opinion of certain rationalizers that one cannot entertain hope in the proletariat. The proletariat proved "incapable" of averting the last imperialist war although the material prerequisites for a socialist revolution already existed at that time. The successes of Fascism after the war were once again the consequence of the "incapacity" of the proletariat to lead capitalist society out of the blind alley. The bureaucratization of the Soviet State was in its turn the consequence of the "incapacity" of the proletariat itself to regulate society through the democratic mechanism. The Spanish revolution was strangled by the Fascist and Stalinist bureaucracies before the very eyes of the world proletariat. Finally, last link in this chain is the new imperialist war, the preparation of which took place quite openly, with complete impotence on the part of the world proletariat. If this conception is adopted, that is, if it is acknowledged that the proletariat does not have the forces to accomplish the socialist revolution, then the urgent task of the statification of the productive forces will obviously be accomplished by somebody else. By whom? By a new bureaucracy, which will replace the decayed bourgeoisie as a new ruling class on a world scale. That is how the question is beginning to be posed by those "leftists" who do not rest content with debating over words.

The Present War and the Fate of Modern Society

By the very march of events this question is now posed very concretely. The second world war has begun. It attests incontrovertibly to the fact that society can no

longer live on the basis of capitalism. Thereby it subjects the proletariat to a new and perhaps decisive test.

If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In that case the question as to whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was a “class” or a growth on the workers’ state will be automatically solved. To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse.

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

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

sor of a new exploiting régime on an international scale.

We have diverged very far from the terminological controversy over the nomenclature of the Soviet state. But let our critics not protest: only by taking the necessary historical perspective can one provide himself with a correct judgment upon such a question as the replacement of one social régime by another. The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin régime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin régime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except openly to recognize that the socialist program based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self evident that a new “minimum” program would be required for the defence of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society.

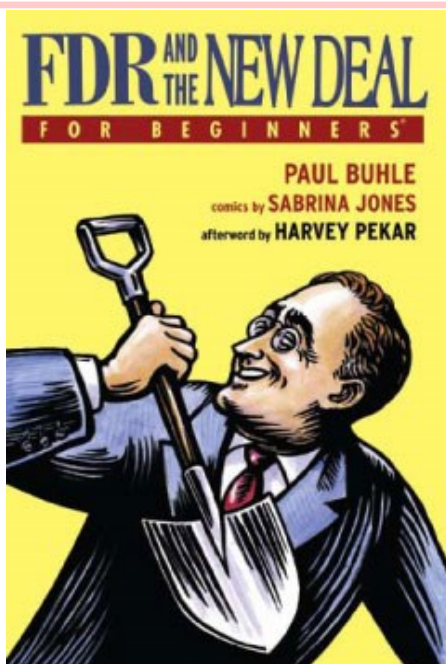
But are there such incontrovertible or even impressive objective data as would compel us today to renounce the prospect of the socialist revolution? That is the whole question.

The Theory of “Bureaucratic Collectivism”

Shortly after the assumption of power by Hitler, a German “left communist,” Hugo Urbahns, came to the conclusion that in place of capitalism a new historical era of “state capitalism” was impending. The first examples of this regime he named as Italy, the USSR, Germany. Urbahns, however,

did not draw the political conclusions of his theory. Recently, an Italian “left communist,” Bruno R., who formerly adhered to the Fourth International, came to the conclusion that “bureaucratic collectivism” was about to replace capitalism. (Bruno R. – *La bureaucratisme du monde*, Paris 1939, 350 pp.) The new bureaucracy is a class, its relations to the toilers is collective exploitation, the proletarians are transformed into the slaves of totalitarian exploiters.

Bruno R. brackets together planned economy in the USSR, Fascism, National Socialism, and Roosevelt’s “New Deal.” All these regimes undoubtedly possess common traits, which in the last analysis are determined by the collectivist tendencies of modern economy. Lenin even prior to the October Revolution formulated the main peculiarities of imperialist capitalism as follows: Gigantic concentration of productive forces, the heightening fusion of monopoly capitalism with the state, an organic tendency toward naked dictatorship as a result of this fusion. The traits of centralization and collectivization determine both the politics of revolution and the politics of counter revolution; but this by no means signifies that it is possible to equate revolution, Thermidor, fascism, and American “reformism.” Bruno has caught on to the fact that the tendencies of collectivization assume, as a result of the political prostration of the working class, the form of “bureaucratic collectivism.” The phenomenon in itself is incontestable. But where are its limits, and what is its historical weight? What we accept as the deformity of a transitional period, the result of the unequal development of multiple factors in the social process, is taken by Bruno R. for an independent social formation in which the bureaucracy is the ruling class. Bruno R. in any case has the



Bruno R. brackets together planned economy in the USSR, Fascism, National Socialism, and Roosevelt’s “New Deal.”

merit of seeking to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copy book exercises to the plane of major historical generalizations. This makes it all the easier to disclose his mistake.

Like many ultra-lefts, Bruno R. identifies in essence Stalinism with Fascism. On the one side the Soviet bureaucracy has adopted the political methods of Fascism; on the other side the Fascist bureaucracy, which still confines itself to “partial” measures of state intervention, is heading toward and will soon reach complete statification of economy. The first assertion is absolutely correct. But Bruno’s assertion that fascist “anti capitalism” is capable of arriving at the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is completely erroneous. “Partial” measures of state intervention and of na-

tionalization in reality differ from planned state economy just as reforms differ from revolution. Mussolini and Hitler are only “coordinating” the interests of the property owners and “regulating” capitalist economy, and, moreover, primarily for war purposes. The Kremlin oligarchy is something else again: it has the opportunity of directing economy as a body only owing to the fact that the working class of Russia accomplished the greatest overturn of property relations in history. This difference must not be lost sight of.

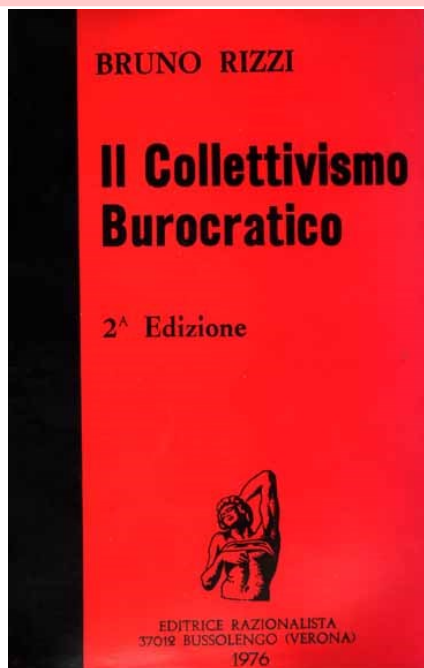
But even if we grant that Stalinism and Fascism from opposite poles will some day arrive at one and the same type of exploitive society (“Bureaucratic Collectivism” according to Bruno R.’s terminology) this still will not lead humanity out of the blind alley. The crisis of the capitalist system is produced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

way out for humanity is the world socialist revolution. The alternative to it is the relapse into barbarism.

Proletariat and its Leadership

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

The crisis of capitalist society which assumed an open character in July, 1914, from the very first day of the war produced a sharp crisis in the proletarian leadership. During the 25 years that have elapsed since that time, the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries has not yet created a leadership that could rise to the level of the tasks of our epoch. The experience of Russia testifies, however, that such a leadership can be created. (This does not mean, of course, that it will be immune to degeneration.) The question



consequently stands as follows: Will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class; that is, in the process of this war and those profound shocks which it must engender will a genuine revolutionary leadership be formed capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power?

The Fourth International has replied in the affirmative to this question, not only through the text of its program, but also through the very fact of its existence. All the various types of disillusioned and frightened representatives of pseudo-Marxism proceed on the contrary from the assumption that the bankruptcy of the leadership only "reflects" the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfill its revolutionary mission. Not all our opponents express this thought clearly, but all of them – ultra-lefts, centrists, anarchists, not to mention

Stalinists and social democrats – shift the responsibility for the defeats from themselves to the shoulders of the proletariat. None of them indicate under precisely what conditions the proletariat will be capable of accomplishing the socialist overturn.

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

Totalitarian Dictatorship – A Condition of Acute Crisis and Not a Stable Regime

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

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

It is an astonishing thing that Bruno R. sees precisely in the Stalinist purges proof of the fact that the bureaucracy has become a ruling class, for in his opinion only a ruling class is capable of measures on so large a scale. [2] He forgets however that Czarism, which was not a "class," also permitted itself rather large scale measures in purges and moreover precisely in the period when it was nearing its doom. Symptomatic of his oncoming death agony, by the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class. Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? Posing this question clearly should



"The twofold error of schematists like Hugo Urbahns (above) and Bruno R. consists, first, in that they proclaim this latter régime as having been already finally installed."

alone in our opinion restrain the comrades from terminological experimentation and overhasty generalizations.

The Orientation Towards World Revolution and the Regeneration of the USSR

A quarter of a century proved too brief a span for the revolutionary rearming of the world proletarian vanguard, and too long a period for preserving the Soviet system intact in an isolated backward country. Mankind is now paying for this with a new imperialist war; but the basic task of our

epoch has not changed, for the simple reason that it has not been solved. A colossal asset in the last quarter of a century and a priceless pledge for the future is constituted by the fact that one of the detachments of the world proletariat was able to demonstrate in action how the task must be solved.

The second imperialist war poses the unsolved task on a higher historical stage. It tests anew not only the stability of the existing regimes but also the ability of the proletariat to replace them. The results of this test will undoubtedly have a decisive significance for our appraisal of the modern epoch as the epoch of proletarian revolution. If contrary to all probabilities the October Revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the

contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts – then we should doubtlessly have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copy book label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the next decades if not centuries: Have we entered the epoch of social revolution and socialist society, or on the contrary the epoch of the declining society of totalitarian bureaucracy?

The twofold error of schematists like Hugo Urbahns and Bruno R. consists, first, in that they proclaim this latter régime as having been already finally installed; secondly, in that they declare it a prolonged transitional state of society between capitalism and socialism. Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current new war proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any other more favourable conditions for it; in any case no one foresees them now, or is able to characterize them. Marxists do not have the slightest right (if disillusionment and fatigue are not considered “rights”) to draw the conclusion that the proletariat has forfeited its revolutionary possibilities and must renounce all aspirations to hegemony in an era immediately ahead. Twenty-five years in the scales of history, when it is a question of profoundest changes in economic and cultural systems, weigh less than an hour in the life of man. What good is the individual, who because of empirical failures in the course of an hour or a day renounces a goal that he set for himself on the basis of the experience

and analysis of his entire previous lifetime? In the years of darkest Russian reaction (1907 to 1917) we took as our starting point those revolutionary possibilities which were revealed by the Russian proletariat in 1905. In the years of world reaction we must proceed from those possibilities which the Russian proletariat revealed in 1917. The Fourth International did not by accident call itself the world party of the socialist revolution. Our road is not to be changed. We steer our course toward the world revolution and by virtue of this very fact toward the regeneration of the USSR as a worker’s state.

Foreign Policy is the Continuation of Domestic Policy

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

There is not one among us who doubts that the Soviet workers should defend the state property, not only against the parasitism of the bureaucracy, but also against the tendencies toward private ownership, for example, on the part of the Kolkhoz aristocracy. But after all, foreign policy is the continuation of policy at home. If in domestic policy we correlated defence of the conquests of the October Revolution with irreconcilable struggle against the bureaucracy, then we must do the same thing in foreign policy as well. To be sure, Bruno R. proceeding from the fact that “bureaucratic collectivism” has already been victorious all along the line, assures

us that no one threatens state property, because Hitler (and Chamberlain?) is as much interested, you see, in preserving it as Stalin. Sad to say, Bruno R.'s assurances are frivolous. In event of victory Hitler will in all probability begin by demanding the return to German capitalists of all the property expropriated from them; then he will secure a similar restoration of property for the English, the French, and the Belgians so as to reach an agreement with them at the expense of the USSR; finally, he will make Germany the contractor of the most important state enterprises in the USSR in the interests of the German military machine. Right now Hitler is the ally and friend of Stalin; but should Hitler, with the aid of Stalin, come out victorious on the Western Front, he would on the morrow turn his guns against the USSR. Finally Chamberlain, too, in similar circumstances would act no differently from Hitler.

“As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan centres.”

The Defence of the USSR and the Class Struggle

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

In the tiny French periodical, *Que Faire*, it was recently stated that inasmuch as the “Trotskyites” are defeatists in relation to

France and England they are therefore defeatists also in relation to the USSR. In other words: If you want to defend the USSR you must stop being defeatists in relation to her imperialist allies. *Que Faire* calculated that the “democracies” would be the allies of the USSR.

What these sages will say now we don't know. But that is hardly important, for their very method is rotten. To renounce defeatism in relation to that imperialist camp to which the USSR adheres today or might adhere tomorrow is to push the workers of the enemy camp to the side of their government; it means to renounce defeatism in general. The renunciation of defeatism under the conditions of imperialist war which is tantamount to the rejection of the socialist revolution – rejection of revolution in the name of “defence of the USSR” – would sentence the USSR to final decomposition and doom.

“Defence of the USSR”, as interpreted by the Comintern, like yesterday's “struggle against fascism” is based on renunciation of independent class politics. The proletariat is transformed – for various reasons in varying circumstances, but always and invariably – into an auxiliary force of one bourgeois camp against another. In contradistinction to this, some of our comrades say: Since we do not want to become tools of Stalin and his allies we therefore renounce the defence of the USSR. But by this they only demonstrate that their understanding of “defence” coincides essentially with the understanding of the opportunists; they do not think in terms of the independent

politics of the proletariat. As a matter of fact, we defend the USSR as we defend the colonies, as we solve all our problems, not by supporting some imperialist governments against others, but by the method of international class struggle in the colonies as well as in the metropolitan centres.

We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but also in the USSR. Our tasks, among them the “defence of the USSR”, we realize not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the USSR, but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow. Such a “defence” can-

not give immediate miraculous results. But we do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks confronting us.

The defence of the USSR coincides for us with the preparation of world revolution. Only those methods are permissible which do not conflict with the interests of the revolution. The defence of the USSR is related to the world socialist revolution as a tactical task is related to a strategic

one. A tactic is subordinated to a strategic goal and in no case can be in contradiction to the latter.

The Question of Occupied Territories

As I am writing these lines the question of the territories occupied by the Red Army still remains obscure. The cable dispatches contradict each other, since both sides lie a great deal; but the actual relationships on the scene are no doubt still extremely un-

settled. Most of the occupied territories will doubtlessly become part of the USSR in what form? Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to “control” after the Fascist pattern. Such a

concession would have a deep going principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime: and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state.

It is more likely, however, that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large landowners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes



in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree: "Serfdom is abolished." This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants, nor by democratic principles but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR.

This measure, revolutionary in character – "the expropriation of the expropriators" – is in this case achieved in a military bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories – and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution it is impossible to constitute a new regime – will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses. This is one side of the matter. But there is another. In order to gain the possibility of occupying Poland through a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the USSR and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganization of the ranks of its own Communist International. The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in

themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, wholly retain their reactionary character and remain the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

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

We Do Not Change Our Course!

The statification of the means of production is, as we said, a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by "socialist" measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic maneuvers and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalized property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy. Our program retains, consequently, all its validity. The events did not catch us unaware.

It is necessary only to interpret them correctly. It is necessary to understand clearly that sharp contradictions are contained in the character of the USSR and in her international position. It is impossible to free oneself from those contradictions with the help of terminological sleight of hand (“Workers State” – “Not Workers State.”) We must take the facts as they are. We must build our policy by taking as our starting point the real relations and contradictions.

We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo-Russians themselves wish – of Soviet Byelo-Russia.

At the same time in the sections of Poland occupied by the Red Army, partisans of the Fourth International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land among the peasants, in creating Soviets and Workers’ Committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections the Soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust towards the Kremlin and its local agencies.

But let us suppose that Hitler turns his weapons against the East and invades territories occupied by the Red Army. Under these conditions, partisans of the Fourth International, without changing in any way their attitude toward the Kremlin oligarchy, will advance to the forefront as the most urgent task of the hour, the military resistance against Hitler. The workers will say, “We cannot cede to Hitler the overthrowing of Stalin; that is our own



German and Soviet soldiers meet in Poland in 1939: “We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin.”

task”. During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank and file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

This kind of “defence of the USSR” will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defence which is now being conducted under the slogan: “For the Fatherland! For Stalin!” Our defence of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: “For Socialism! For the world revolution! Against Stalin!”

In order that these two varieties of “Defence of the USSR” do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation. But above all it is necessary to establish clearly just what we are defending, just how we are defending it, against whom we are defending it. Our slogans will create con-

fusion among the masses only if we ourselves do not have a clear conception of our tasks.

Conclusions

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

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

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

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



The German 6th Army surrenders at Stalin-grad on 31-1-1943: Trotsky: “We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR, (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and their Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production of the USSR: that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.”

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September 25, 1939.
L. Trotsky

Notes

1. We recollect that some of those comrades who are inclined to consider the bureaucracy a new class, at the same time objected strenu-

ously to the exclusion of the bureaucracy from the Soviets.

2. True enough, in the last section of his book, which consists of fantastic contradictions, Bruno R. quite consciously and articulately refutes his own theory of “bureaucratic collectivism” unfolded in the first section of the book and declares that Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism are transitory and parasitic formations, historical penalties for the impotence of the proletariat. In other words, after having subjected the views of the Fourth International to the sharpest kind of criticism. Bruno B., unexpectedly returns to those views, but only in order to launch a new series of blind rumblings. We see no grounds for following in the footsteps of a writer who has obviously lost his balance. We are interested in those of his arguments by means of which he seeks to substantiate his views that the bureaucracy is a class.