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5



Oryol Prison Mental Hospital, U.S.S.R.

**Stalinism and the
Political Revolution**

Lib-Lab Pact

**Carter, Human Rights and
'Bourgeois' Democracy**

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Editorial I

LIB LAB PACT

Disturbing complacency grips sections of the left in relation to the Lib-Lab pact. "It is meaningless" say some with a shrug of the shoulders. But the pact is no more meaningless than the complacency. Reginald Prentice's decision to stand as a 'Democratic Labour' candidate in Newham followed within a day or so the announcement of the Callaghan-Steel agreement. Herein lies the key to the real meaning of the pact. The right is more determined than the left.

For Callaghan's government, and for the bourgeoisie, it is a step in the direction of coalition politics. For the Labour Party it means the contours of a future split are already in the process of formation. The flag of 'Democratic Labour', first hoisted by Taverne in Lincoln, is the flag of the Labour bureaucrat tired of being called to account by democratic processes in a workers' party. It is the flag of Lib-Labism. The difference between Callaghan and Prentice is that the latter makes explicit what is implicit in Callaghan's deal. Whereas Callaghan submits Labour's programme to the vetting of a bourgeois party, Prentice wants to be rid of responsibility for such a programme altogether.

The City showed, in the days prior to the vote, that it favoured Callaghan's path. The problem for the bourgeoisie is that February 1974 showed a Tory government cannot rule in the face of determined union opposition. Yet the accession to power of the Tories might unleash just such determination.

The Cabinet's pact with the Liberal Party represents the second major turning point in the fortunes of the Labour Government that came to power in 1974. The first stage, from the Spring of 1974 to the Spring of 1975, culminated in the June referendum and the removal of Tony Benn from the position of Industry Secretary. This was a period when the forward thrust of the workers' movement secured the repeal of repressive Tory legislation, substantial pay rises and the beginnings of the implementation of radical legislation on industry. This stage was brought to an end by a concerted CBI campaign against clauses in the NEB Bill that would have secured disclosure of confidential business secrets to the trade unions. The resignations of Heffer, Hart and Lestor were signs that the City was getting its way inside the Cabinet. The NEB Bill was cruelly amended, Benn, after an open confrontation concerning redundancies with Monty Finniston, the head of nationalised steel, was finally moved by Wilson to the Energy ministry.

The second stage, from the Spring of 1975 as far as the pact, was dominated by the social contract and the unions agreement on phase one and phase two of pay restraint. This was characterised by a dramatic fall in the strike rate and a general acquiescence of the working class which had been assured that the Government's part of the social contract involved the maintenance of the 'social wage' (i. e. public expenditure on social services) and the reduction in the rate of inflation. The Parliamentary Tribune Group found themselves well to the left of the trade union movement. This was symbolised by the Jones - Mikardo clash.

Social Contract

Only the studiously blind convinced themselves that this social contract was a 'con-trick' foisted on an innocent and hostile trade union membership. Anyone who studies the figures of the 1975 and 1976 pit head ballots in the NUM can discover that the very miners who led the struggle that brought down the Tories in February 1974, voted for the social contract, although the second time with a smaller majority. So did the majority of trades unionists in the country. People who do not accept that fact may stop reading at this point. Indeed it is also certain that many of these same miners (though perhaps not on this occasion the majority) voted also for entry to the Common Market. Halfway through this second stage of the Labour Government's fortunes Callaghan was elected Prime Minister by the PLP, but throughout it, the policies of the Treasury and the City prevailed more and more in the Cabinet over the policies of Labour's manifesto. A series of heavy cuts in projected public expenditure began to eat into the social services. Price inflation accelerated once more. Government figures revealed that real wages were falling. The dissatisfaction of the working class with this state of affairs was shown in a series of quite disastrous by-election defeats, notably at Workington, where it is impossible not to draw the conclusion that many former Labour voters switched to the Tories. These defeats, themselves a product of the right-wing course of the Callaghan Cabinet, by relentless logic led it to spell-out in the pact what was implicit in the Government's actual course. Instead of merely pursuing the policies of the Liberals without their formal acknowledgement, Callaghan will now check with them to make sure.

The pact is first and foremost, a pact between the Labour Cabinet and the Liberal Party. It is a pact arranged at the highest levels of the thoroughly bourgeois apparatus, and as such is directed against the Labour Party. It is the parliamentary, bourgeois leadership of the party protecting itself from the manifesto of a workers' party which expresses the elementary needs of the working class. The Lib Lab pact is Callaghan's answer to Labour's manifesto.

But we must explain why the pact came exactly when it did. The months immediately prior to the pact exhibited a marked weakening of the right-wing's position inside the Labour Party. Roy Jenkins, Prentice and Crosland were no longer in the leadership. Healey had become immensely unpopular as the Treasury's man inside the Party. The Party Conference came out hugely for the nationalisation of the banks. Important sections of workers had taken strike action. The differentials issue reared its head inside the trades union movement. Phase three was in doubt. But the move to the left within the Party was not matched by a move to the left in the working class at large. It was a contradictory development though not difficult to explain. A politically active worker's response to the defeats resulting from right wing policies is to struggle harder against the right wing inside the party. But an inactive Labour voter may be moved by these same circumstances to abstain in elections or even desert to the Liberals or Tories.

The beginnings of a modest radicalisation in the trades unions led Callaghan to move from informal reliance on liberals inside the party to formal reliance on Liberals outside the party. Stage two ended at this point.

Tribunites and the Pact

What prefaced the pact was the action of the Tories moving a vote of no confidence in the Labour Government. The terms of the Callaghan - Steel pact

were engineered in secret and published only hours before the vote of confidence. Contrary to what the sectarian spectrum is saying the pact has not been endorsed by the PLP or the NEC. Callaghan did not dare to put it to the PLP where a large minority would have refused to accept it. The NEC has, up to the time of writing, been unable to secure a meeting to pronounce upon it. The Party nationally has yet to say its piece and resolutions opposing it are already flooding in for annual conference. Break with the pact !

This left the following question for the Tribune left in the PLP. Since they were against the pact, should they vote for the Tory motion of no confidence. The Tribune MPs decided correctly to vote against the Tory 'no confidence' motion and to refuse to be bound by the pact.

Only those who wish to enjoy the privilege of the harlot through the ages will mutter to each other that the Tribunate MPs vote against the Tories was 'inconsistent' with their opposition to the pact.

For what does that mean when you say it aloud? It means that you think the Tribune MPs should have voted with the Tories to bring the Labour Government down in the full and certain knowledge that a Tory government would succeed it. It means you accept the right of the Cabinet to determine the terms on which the Labour Government shall remain in office, leaving the party no say. Those who claim the Tribune MPs were 'inconsistent', understandably confide such things only to each other in whispers. At open forums they would get a justifiable drubbing from Tribunites and Marxists alike ! What did the Tribunites do? They faced a fait accompli secretly arranged behind the party's back in the form of a pact. Fifty of them declared in a letter, circulated by Mikardo, that they

"do not consider (themselves) bound in any way to the implementation of the whole or any part of the arrangement entered into between the Cabinet and the Liberal Party".

This left nobody, except sectarians, in any doubt that the vote against the Tory 'no confidence' motion would not bind the left of the party in any way.

Those who doubt it should consider the ironic fate of the devolution bill, defeated by many Tribunate votes.

It leaves them free to campaign in the party for an alternative economic policy, the nationalisation of the banks, an end to the Treasury's policies and a return to the manifesto. Indeed that is the only justification for voting for the vote of confidence - to give the party the opportunity to save Labour from electoral disaster that would inevitably be the result of continuing with the Cabinet's Lib-Lab pact and its present policies. To fight for the alternative policies now with Labour in power and with the working class emerging from acquiescence into anger would be a thousand times better than 'logical consistency' of opposing the Liberal pact with one hand only to vote for the Tories with the other.

Should we provoke an election?

The situation really demands an emergency Labour Party conference, but whether or not a campaign to bring forward the conference is feasible, a campaign ought to begin now to move resolutions for conference demanding a return to the policies of the manifesto, repudiation of the pact, new re-selection procedures for MPs and new election procedures for party leaders.

For those remote from this protracted process of clarification through struggle, the alternative of what they call a 'principled stand' followed by a Tory government and a nice straightforward battle between workers and Tories is easier to comprehend.

The sophisticated sectarians who have previously been arguing (correctly) that the Labour Government is a bourgeois government resting on a workers' party, now discover that it has 'surrendered its class independence' ! And yet the reason we Marxists have maintained consistently that we would be for keeping a (bourgeois) Labour Government in office whilst the only alternative was a capitalist party or a coalition, was in order that the minimal demands thrust forward from the party and expressed in its manifesto might be developed to the point where they could come into the sharpest conflict with the course of the bourgeois Labour Government. This would only be possible through the mobilisation of the masses and the development of a programme for a workers government that begins to break with the bourgeoisie. The extent to which that were possible of course would in turn, depend very largely on the mood and combativity of the masses which currently lags well behind its level of 1974 .

The Tribune MPs, by voting against the Tory 'no confidence' motion, at least provide the left with what might be the last chance for very many years to seize this task without for one moment being bound by 'the whole or any part' of the pact. Thus do parliamentary left reformists (with all the reservations we Marxists have of them) provide some opportunity to the working class. In place of such a struggle however, the sophisticated sectarians demand that Callaghan (no less) 'seek a workable mandate' ! In place of the Transitional Programme they believe the left should ask the bourgeois leadership of the party to call a general election.

To put it more brutally, they believe Callaghan should invite the Tories to succeed him and that this will somehow advance the consciousness of the working class. For Marxists and the left such a prospect would resolve absolutely nothing in terms of the development of programme, consciousness or leadership. And yet it is advocated in the name of 'progressive revolutionary traits of the masses', which are expressed only in their own rebukes and apparently do not find the remotest shadowy reflection anywhere in the PLP, NEC, TUC and (probably) in the labour movement at large !

In short one wonders whether this indifference to the struggle within the reformist organisations means that sophisticated sectarians are on the point of renouncing the Labour Party and the world of the flesh for the spiritual calm of a 'Society of Friends'. The world is not yet ready for them though through suffering it may atone.

Phase three and stage three

Stage three in the history of this government therefore opened on Wednesday March 23rd. On that day Callaghan gave to the Liberals the freedom to examine impending government legislation and policy, a privilege he apparently denies to the joint working party of the NEC and Cabinet in the field of economic policy! The Left refused to be bound by it. The battle within the party is now on a new plane.

What happens in this third phase of the government's life may very largely be determined by the fate of phase three of the wage restraint policy; in other words by the combativity of the working class. This is a most disturbing foundation for a Lib-Lab pact. However it is apparent that the labour movement is deeply divided on the important question of phase three. On the one hand the combative sections of the unions, led at this point by the skilled workers' demand for a return to 'free collective bargaining' is chiefly to protect their differentials. But they will surely be followed by others if inflation gathers pace. The other section is more cautious. They genuinely fear that the skilled workers' campaign could culminate in the strongest unions outbidding them. They fear

perhaps even more, a return to the perilous inflation rates of 1975, believing that wage rates are the main determinant of inflation. It would be quite wrong, and quite in the spirit of vulgar sectarianism, to dismiss these sentiments, which have recently won the majority at the Shop Workers' Conference and the Scottish and Welsh TUC Conferences, as 'reactionary' or 'right wing'. Things have reached a sorry pass if such organisations are to be placed in this category. The main task now is the defence of living standards. To the trades union movement and these cautious layers in particular, who see phase three as the only alternative, should be put the following proposition.

'The Government has reneged on the promise it made to you in phases one and two to keep down the rate of inflation and to protect public spending on the social services. You cannot deny that real wages are falling. Government figures confirm it. How can we ensure that real wages will be protected? We cannot accept the Government's promise for the future so we need a sliding scale of wages; a form of indexing. This will protect the standards of all, both skilled and unskilled. It will protect differentials also and pensions and fixed-incomes can be included in the scheme to protect the old and the sick. If you are worried that weightings of the official index do not accurately affect workers' priorities you could add that the TUC should call for a review of the indexing so that a committee of trades unionists, and not Treasury officials, will decide on the weightings'.

Such a position, if campaigned for, could win support from both the combative and currently cautious wings of the trades union movement. Above all it would separate the purely cautious from the truly right wing. We could then turn our attention to the political course of the Government. For if phase one and two have proved anything they have proved that even when the strike rate falls and the trade unions draw in their horns world inflation still proceeds and food prices rise.

Instability

Whatever the trades unions decide the Callaghan government faces permanent political uncertainty as part of the crisis of the bourgeois order which is now entering what could be a protracted phase of 'Italian' instability, with governments falling and unstable coalitions arising for short periods. British politics in the late seventies and eighties will be very different from the relatively even keel of the fifties and sixties.

Some indications of this are given by the growth of the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Unionists split from the Conservative Party, the emergence of the SLP, the volatile vote of the Liberals and the growth of the National Front. The chaotic fragmentation of Trotskyism is in its own way a reflection of this turbulence as classes and their subsidiary layers begin to shake free from traditional alignments and ways of thinking. There lies ahead a period of great challenge to Marxists. To those who proceed with tablets of stone, knowing all the answers to every question and denouncing everyone except themselves as traitors we guarantee solitude and dreams of glory. The place for Marxists is not only inside the Labour Party but inside the Tribune current within that, as part of the Left preparing for what we believe will be thrust on the Labour Party by the right wing and by the course of events of the class struggle - a split. Such a split can in no sense be 'engineered' any more than the historic splits in German and Russian Social Democracy were engineered, and it is quite useless to schedule it in terms of time. But Marxists believe it to be on the agenda historically if there is such a thing as the proletariat and the class struggle. One wing of such a split will more than likely emerge as an organised mass centrist current gathered around a left reformist Tribunate leadership.

When that happens the prospect of building a revolutionary party will cease to be the rhetoric of calculating egoists in fragmented 'Trotskyist' sects. Within the centrist current Marxists could fight for the practical foundation of such a party, bringing to the struggle the rich experiences and theoretical traditions of the Fourth International which alone can ensure its realisation.

Editorial 2

CARTER AND 'BOURGEOIS' DEMOCRACY

The owl of wisdom is said to take flight only in the gathering dusk. Considering the lateness of the hour it is hardly premature for Marxists to stretch their wings on the subject of 'bourgeois' democracy, particularly in view of the fact that the contempt in which it is held by all manner of 'Marxists', 'Trotskyists' and super-revolutionaries of every hue is second only to the bourgeoisies own compelling drive to finish with this same 'bourgeois' democracy for good and all.

Perhaps we ought to start therefore by asserting that the phrase 'bourgeois' democracy is too generous to the bourgeoisie. It gives them credit where it is only partly due. The bourgeoisie, which was a revolutionary class up until 1848, (and in the United States up until the end of the Civil War in 1865) took the leadership of the struggles against the pre-capitalist classes and their social order - the aristocracy, the landowners and slaveowners. But bourgeois revolutions are not made by the bourgeoisie alone - no more than workers revolutions are made by workers alone. The bourgeoisie led an alliance which contained peasants, artisans, workers, religious dissenters and even lesser nobility in England. At crucial stages in the revolution the separate interests of these artisan and revolutionary petty-bourgeois masses came into conflict with the bourgeois leadership of the revolution.

To the degree that the bourgeoisie required the extension of democratic liberties for its own purposes it enlisted the support of these other classes who desired these same liberties for their own purposes. But to consolidate its own, bourgeois, rule it thought nothing of withholding such liberties from its one-time allies. Indeed there were many cases of Leveller, Digger and Chartist, who were consistent fighters for 'bourgeois' democracy, being either imprisoned or put to the sword, both during the course of the revolution or subsequently. The more surely the bourgeoisie entrenched themselves in power, the more the leadership of the struggle for 'bourgeois' democracy fell into the hands of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

'Socialist' bourgeois liberties

Our theoretical credentials for maintaining that the phrase 'bourgeois' democracy is a misnomer are impeccable. Marx, writing in "The Eighteenth Brumaire", himself puts the phrase in inverted commas to indicate its inappropriateness. When the French bourgeoisie had abolished universal suffrage two years after the 1848 revolution, Marx wrote, that then, for the bourgeoisie;

"Even bourgeois liberalism is declared socialistic, bourgeois enlightenment socialistic, bourgeois financial reform socialistic.... This was not merely a figure of speech, fashion or party tactics. The bourgeoisie had a true insight into the fact that all the weapons which it had forged against feudalism turned their points against itself, that all the means of education which it had produced rebelled against its own civilisation.... It understood that the so-called bourgeois liberties and organs of progress attacked and menaced its class rule at its social foundation and political summit simultaneously and had therefore become 'socialistic'. In this menace and this attack it rightly discerned the secret of Socialism, whose import and tendency it judges more correctly than

so-called Socialism itself..... What the bourgeoisie did not grasp, however, was the logical conclusion that its own parliamentary regime, that its political rule in general, was now also bound to meet with the general verdict of condemnation as being socialistic". (double line my emphasis WW) Anticipating by over seventy years what fascism came to fully develop, Marx in a prophetic passage says;

"Thus, by now stigmatising as 'socialistic' what it had previously extolled as 'liberal', the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests dictate that it should be delivered from the danger of its own rule; that in order to restore tranquillity to the country, its bourgeois parliament must first of all be given its quietus; that in order to preserve its social power intact its political power must be broken (i. e. the bourgeoisies own political power - WW) that the individual bourgeois can only continue to exploit the other classes and enjoy undisturbed property, family and religion and order only on the condition that their class be condemned along with the other classes to like political nullity....."

In Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal the above was achieved in the twentieth century by anti-parliamentary fascist parties, the true inheritors of Louis Napoleon's 'Society of December 10'.

The U.S.A. is still a long way from fascism but if bourgeois democracy was, already, in 1848, irksome to the emerging French bourgeoisie, then how much more intolerable must it be to decaying imperialism in the U.S.A. today.

Watergate was a dramatic revelation to the American people of the bourgeoisie's impatience with 'bourgeois' democracy.

There is today in the U.S.A. and England not a single aspect of 'bourgeois' democracy worth preserving for which workers have not fought and died over three centuries. When the Stalinist totalitarians sneer at 'bourgeois' democracy it is this revolutionary proletarian content of democratic liberties at which they sneer. If the bourgeoisie today cannot do away with 'bourgeois' democracy, as they did in Germany and Italy before the war, it is not because they would shrink from it, but because the proletariat and its organisations will not permit it. If the bourgeoisie is forced to dismantle fascist dictatorships in Spain and Portugal it is because the proletariat's strength means that fascist dictatorship is not, at this juncture, an option. The bourgeoisie prefers 'bourgeois' democracy to the proletarian dictatorship.

With what envy the bourgeoisie of Europe and America must view the state apparatuses of the U.S.S.R. and China where there exists less liberty for the working class than even under 'bourgeois' democracy, despised by Bourgeoisies, Stalinists and sectarian apologists alike.

Monopolist liberty

For the sectarians such as Ted Grant of the Militant, 'bourgeois' democracy is a blessing bestowed benevolently upon us by monopoly capital. With a profound grasp of vulgar economic determinism, a sublime indifference to historical fact and penetrating mediocrity, which puts him head and shoulders above your average sectarian, he tells us;

"The metropolitan countries have seen the fabulous enrichment of the monopolies, which have gained a greater and greater share of Western and of total production. This laid the basis for an increase in the standard of living of the working class in absolute terms. This provided the economic base for the flowering of bourgeois democracy in the Western countries. The bourgeoisie could bask in the luxury of 'enlightened liberal democracy'".

(Militant International Review- February 1977)

Lest the bold imaginative sweep of his lead boots has left the reader reeling, let us trace his logic step by step.

- 1) The 'fabulous enrichment' of the monopolies laid the basis for the increase in the standard of living of the working class.
- 2) The increased standard of living of the working class was the basis for the flowering of 'bourgeois democracy'.
- 3) This liberal democracy is a luxury which the bourgeoisie itself 'basks in' and enjoys.

From this one can only conclude that the well being of the working class was dependent upon the enrichment of the monopolies, which not only provides an increased standard of living but democracy as well. However, Grant adds that 'how the situation is changing'. Only now!

But Grant's scenario falsifies reality. He makes all the conquests of the working class, both in the way of living standards and democratic rights, mere emanations of monopoly capital. He has annexed the product of proletarian struggles on behalf of monopoly capital and in the name of Trotskyism. The gains made through trades unions, Social Democratic governments and the conquests of generations of proletarian struggle are reduced to mere superstructural consequences of the development of monopoly capital.

Grant and sectarians generally, do not understand thirty-two years after the defeat of German fascism what Marx understood eighty-three years before Hitler came to power. The fact that a leading 'theoretician' of one of the most important tendencies aspiring to Trotskyism should dare to broadcast his ignorance of the Leninist alphabet by asserting that the monopoly capitalist epoch provides 'the economic base for the flowering of bourgeois democracy' is truly quite daunting! It means that Militant is certain to destroy itself; that theoretical poverty will force it to beg from benevolent Social Democracy, whose best disciples are at least literate. Elsewhere in his laboured insult to the theoretical traditions of Marxism, Grant refers to Trotsky's "Where is Britain Going" and its immense superiority to "bourgeois twaddle and reformist rubbish". Grant forgot to add that it also stands in lofty contrast to sectarian dyslexia. The sectarians' 'authority' for rivalling the bourgeoisie in their hatred of 'bourgeois' democracy probably derives from their garbled understanding of Lenin's struggle with the Menshevik opponents of October. But if they turn again to these polemics they will discover that the Bolsheviks were the staunchest fighters for the convening of the Constituent Assembly against a bourgeoisie that preferred the military dictatorship of Kornilov and the interventionist plotting of Kerensky. And it was the Bolsheviks' uncompromising struggle to defend the democratic gains of February from an anti-democratic bourgeoisie that led the Russian working class and peasantry to Soviet democracy. Once this highest form of democracy, the proletarian dictatorship through the soviets, had been achieved, the Russian bourgeoisie and its Menshevik apologists 'discovered' the Constituent Assembly, which weeks earlier Kornilov, who was the bourgeoisie's true representative, would himself have dispersed with armed force.

What Lenin was therefore attacking was the fraudulent assertion of the Mensheviks that bourgeois democracy was possible in Russia when the experiences of 1917 had proved that it was not. To maintain even those limited freedoms that the proletariat would have under a normal 'bourgeois' democracy, it was necessary for the Russian working class to seize power. Kornilov and the bourgeoisie sought to destroy 'socialistic' bourgeois democracy even before it had been formally constituted. The limited bourgeois democratic achievements of February were not only preserved by the Bolsheviks but qualitatively transformed from being implicitly 'socialistic' to explicitly socialist. Soviet power, the proletarian dictatorship, was the dialectical completion of the struggle for bourgeois democracy. Stalinist totalitarianism was Kornilov's revenge in disguise.

The epoch of monopoly capital, which entered general crisis in 1914 through a series of wars and revolutions, is distinguished chiefly by the bourgeoisie's intolerance of 'bourgeois' democracy. In this epoch, far from basking in the luxury of enlightened bourgeois democracy', monopoly capital has rather submitted to the necessity of fascist totalitarianism. Italy, Germany, Spain and Portugal (and in the war all Europe save Britain and the neutral states) have experienced long periods of fascist rule. In Spain and Portugal that epoch has only very recently come to an end, whilst in France the Bonapartist regime of De Gaulle straddled ten full years and the Greek Colonels six, not to mention the butchering government of the civil war years. In Latin America, Indonesia, Indo China, Korea, Africa and the Middle East there have been a series of military-bureaucratic police states of varying degrees of savagery which at no time remotely resembled 'enlightened bourgeois democracy'. Only in Britain (with the notable exception of Northern Ireland), the U.S.A. and a small minority of bourgeois states has 'bourgeois' democracy held sway.

Bourgeoisie tramples American Constitution.

Even in the U.S.A. the bourgeoisie has had to trample on its 'own' constitution to rule the world in a manner to its liking. To establish and sustain military dictatorships in Korea, Vietnam, Chile and elsewhere the bourgeoisie was obliged to set-up secret agencies of government, behind the back of even Congress and the Senate; to establish spying and wiretapping of US citizens and parties as a political norm; to systematically lie, burgle, embezzle and murder in a manner that alarmed those sections of American society who took 'bourgeois' democracy seriously. The fall of Nixon was the result of a conflict between those who believed in the tenets of 'bourgeois' democracy which the bourgeoisie was daily discarding and those, such as Nixon, who recognised the impossibility of the bourgeoisie governing the U.S.A. and the world, in the epoch of monopoly capitalism with the Constitution bequeathed by the American revolution.

What Carter is engaged in today is an elaborate public relations exercise in 'open government' to try to convince the American people that the bourgeoisie does not rule in the manner carelessly revealed by the blundering Nixon. He is attempting to rehabilitate the American people's trust in the formal appearances of bourgeois rule - Congress, the Presidency, the Cabinet etc.. Hence the televised Cabinet meetings, 'phone-ins' and the informality. But does anyone imagine for a moment that the CIA has ceased to intervene daily in the political life of other capitalist countries and, of course, their labour movements?

The fall of Nixon was the bourgeoisie's revolutionary past, embodied in the American Constitution and wielded by American public opinion, prevailing over its counter revolutionary present and future. It was 'bourgeois' democracy, in which the American masses have ironically been brought up to believe and respect, prevailing over the organised gangsterism of the imperialist mafia.

Detente

It is little wonder that Nixon became the Western architect of 'detente'. He, above all, found in the Soviet and Chinese totalitarians something worth co-existing with. The East European and Chinese masses find it hard to co-exist with them, but Nixon did not.

In a televised confrontation between Carter and Ford before Christmas, Nixon's appointee blurted out that Eastern Europe was not oppressed by Russia.

Justifiable protests rained in upon him from emigree organisations, the Jewish community and public opinion generally. Not content with one faux-pas, Ford added that this was not the official view but his own, indicating to all but the slow-witted that it was the official view. This was no more than Marxists had already surmised from the Schonnenfeld memorandum. *

Secret government

So it is that now we have Carter, who is, simultaneously, attempting to rehabilitate confidence in the formal institutions of government and demonstratively taking up a verbal defence of 'Human Rights' in Eastern Europe. Nixon was seen as the anti-democratic, anti-Constitutional advocate of detente with practitioners of psychiatric torture. All the more reason that Carter be seen to be the 'democratic', 'constitutional' statesman who will not keep silent about human rights even for the sake of an agreement, which is not as pressing for the U.S.A. as for the U.S.S.R., on strategic arms limitation.

Why is it necessary for Carter to maintain this elaborate charade? Because the mass of American people, who are deeply ingrained with long established democratic traditions, have grown distrustful of secret government at home in secret negotiations with secret government in Eastern Europe.

On the issue of human rights in the 'West', Washington scarcely disguises its support for the Pinochets and Parks; and on human rights in Eastern Europe Washington plays a double game. Every word of 'support' for dissidents from that tainted source makes the latter's task in rallying Soviet opinion more difficult. Washington thereby parades its 'democratic' credentials whilst impeding the tasks of the dissidents. There is a world of difference between the workers' movement in the West utilising the gains it has won within the framework of 'bourgeois' democracy to rally support for the dissidents as part of the world struggle of the proletariat against imperialism and Stalinism on the one hand, and on the other a discredited bourgeoisie, recently caught trampling its 'own' democracy in the mud after a bloody war in Vietnam mouthing its concern for human rights in Eastern Europe.

U.S. policy is, and has been since the Teheran conference at the end of the war, that Eastern Europe is a Soviet (i. e. Stalinist) sphere of influence.

Ford's slip of the tongue in his television debate is US State Department policy. It is consistent with the Schonnenfeld memorandum. Carter needs to carefully cover all this up again and put it back into secrecy. To achieve this he will be as 'open' as possible.

But it must be said loud and clear (so that even sectarians can hear) that the fact that Carter mouths phrases of 'support' for human rights in Eastern Europe does not detract one iota from the progressiveness of the dissidents' cause and its revolutionary implications. Those who see in Sakharov and his supporters the main threat of restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union are merely shamefaced apologists for Brezhnev and his barbarian state apparatus. They are deceived by Carter's subterfuge.

'Intercontinental Press' is right to draw our attention to the fact that the US State Department was a prime mover in setting up the Corcolan-Bukovsky deal between Pinochet and Brezhnev.

Throughout 1975 and 1976 it was the Labour movement that had begun to make the running on human rights in Eastern Europe. In France the Trotskyists of the OCI played the major role in forcing the PCF to add its weight to the demands for Plyushch's release. Plyushch, himself a Marxist, was living proof that

* The Schonnenfeld memorandum. Vladimir Dedijer revealed in a Tribune article in Autumn 1976 that a meeting of American diplomats in Eastern Europe was briefed by a senior State Dept. official that is was unofficial policy that the US backed the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe.

it was not liberals and religious dissidents alone who were being tortured by the KGB, but supporters of the October Revolution. Here we had Marxists in the West, utilising the freedoms of 'bourgeois' democracy won by the working class, securing the release of Marxists and others from the clutches of the Stalinist agents of world imperialism. Let the sectarian denegrators of 'bourgeois' democracy work that one out!

It became most important for the US leaders to wrest the initiative, to throw back the movement for human rights.

The Bukovsky-Corvolan deal was ideally suited to their purposes. It stigmatised the courageous but naive Bukovsky and threw him into the arms of Carter who then was able to present the struggle for human rights in traditional post-war 'bloc' terms (i. e. the Eastern 'bloc' is against human rights and therefore 'logically' the Western 'bloc' is for them).

If the reader thinks this explanation of Carter's tactics somewhat elaborate, let him ask himself what other explanation is there?

Should we, for example, be expected to believe that the US leaders, fresh from a brave attempt at genocide in Vietnam, butchery in support of Pinochet in Chile, bribery and murder through the CIA and wholesale contempt for their own Constitution as revealed in the Watergate scandal were truly and genuinely concerned about the rights of Crimean Tartars, Soviet intellectuals and national freedom in Czechoslovakia?

Should we reason that all the vile corruption and brutality that came to full flowering under the Nixon administration were merely personal aberrations of the man, and that Carter's election has changed the reality of bourgeois power?

If Carter, the Pentagon and the monopolies feel unable at this time to conduct another Vietnam in Zaire or Angola * it is because the Vietnamese have lifted the veil from the eyes of the American people and engendered in them a sober and critical mood. Broad sections of the American people now follow closely the revelations of enquiries into the CIA, the FBI and the Kennedy and Luther King assassinations. It is time for the imperialist mafia to lay low, to put on its blue jeans and smile a big folksy smile, to be called by its christian name and to invite everyone into the kitchen for a slice of bullshit pie. Carter is a cleverer man than Nixon but the class he leads is the same. American imperialism has no option at this time but to appear what it is not - constitutional, democratic, 'open', human, pious and clean. Watergate, Vietnam and Nixon expressed the deepest needs of American capital. Carter expresses its deep need to conceal its deepest needs from the eyes of Americans.

* This does not make 'right' the diplomatic and military adventures of the Kremlin bureaucracy in Angola and their support for MPLA at the expense of the Bakongo and Ovambo peoples and the proletariat.

Stalinism & the Political Revolution

BY ROBERT BLACK
& TOM HORTON

PART ONE

THE ORIGINS OF STALINISM

Stalinism is the political rule of the Kremlin caste. Its historical-material origins are to be found in the ebbing of the revolutionary wave in Europe which followed World War I. The failure of the October revolution in Russia to spread to any of the advanced nations of capitalist Europe in the period 1919-1923 nourished a highly conservative nationalistic layer inside the Soviet Communist Party and state-apparatus. This layer more and more openly rejected the internationalist orientation which the party and the Comintern had developed in the period of upsurge, under Lenin's leadership.

Several factors came together in a conjuncture which changed the course of human history for the following half-century and more.

Amongst them were:

- a) The exhaustion of the masses as a whole in the world and civil wars...
- b) The decimation of the proletarian vanguard in the civil war and the absorption of its best elements into the various apparati of administration...
- c) The oppressive dead-weight of a culturally backward peasantry concerned only with the solution of bourgeois-democratic tasks, in particular the land question...
- d) The dislocation of an already backward economy and transport system...
- e) The nourishment of military-bureaucratic methods of administration during the civil war - the period of 'War Communism'...
- f) The mistaken ban on factions within the party, imposed by the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1921...
- g) The revival of market relations and petty-bourgeois capitalist accumulation in the same year, flowing from the adoption of the New Economic Policy...(1)

Two more factors, perhaps more important than any of the others, came into play:

- a) The defeat of the German revolution in the autumn of 1923...(2)
- b) The illness of Lenin and his death in January 1924.

Revision

The tiny Bolshevik vanguard was subjected to stupendous political, social, moral and psychological pressures. As early as autumn 1924, Stalin opined that the U.S.S.R. could build socialism independently of world economy and of the world revolution. This was counter to all that Marxist writers and activists had held and it gave expression to all the nationalistic and conservative traits of the bureaucracy.

Bourgeois

It was Lenin who first, in the trade union debate, (3), came to grips with a problem which, for obvious reasons, had never previously been encountered in history by a communist movement - the bureaucratisation of a revolutionary party within a workers' state. Lenin denounced the ruling Soviet state machine as a barbaric, ex-Tsarist bureaucracy, "anointed with Soviet oil". He spoke and wrote of the U.S.S.R. as a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations--even of it being a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie. As Marx and Engels had said before Lenin, and as Lenin himself had written in the actual course of the Russian Revolution itself, any state is a relic of barbarism, even a workers' state.

Even a workers' state has a bourgeois aspect. It has the oppressive machinery which is common to all state machines, even though it democratically oppresses a minority on behalf of a majority. Its bourgeois aspect is that part of its functions which preserve inequality in the sphere of distribution. In the early years of Soviet power, this aspect of the state flowed, in the main, from the exigencies of the situation. Concessions had to be made to bourgeois elements (e.g. the old Czarist army officers, and layers of highly-qualified technical, academic and other skilled professional workers) in the interests of self-preservation, and the conduct of the civil war and of a struggling economy. But the state had not yet become a parasitic organ feeding off Soviet society. The traits were there, but they had not yet assumed a dominant role. Lenin saw them before anyone, Trotsky included. The Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists saw the danger too, but they did not know how to fight it except with demagogy.

In the period which followed Lenin's death (1924-1927), the Soviet state progressively assumed a more bourgeois character, in the course of pursuing its function as an unequal distributor of the national wealth and income. The tendency was not only to freeze existing inequalities. It was to widen them still further, rather than leading towards the model of Marx and Lenin in which all officials receive no more than a skilled workers wage.

This period of shifting alliances and political improvisations, of casting about from right to left (1924) and then from left to right (1925-27) was only the first stage of the degeneration of the Bolshevik party, and the transformation of the Soviet state and the Comintern into counter-revolutionary formations- decisive obstacles to the world proletarian revolution and defenders of the bourgeois order.

Although Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' was announced in 1924 towards the end of the period of leftism associated with the first peak of Zinoviev's influence in the Comintern, it already gave expression to all the nationalistic and conservative traits which were to flower in the period of the right turn of 1925-1927, when Stalin found himself in a bloc with the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky wing of the CPSU. This latter tendency looked to the 'strong peasant' as the mainstay of socialist construction in the country-side, and reached new heights of demogogy in its attacks on theory of the Permanent Revolution. (4) They condemned it as a blueprint for robbing the peasants at home and launching military adventures abroad.

In the countryside, the kulaks grew rich at the expense of the poor peasant, the rural labourer and the city worker, who had to pay higher prices for his food. In the towns, merchants and other beneficiaries of the resumption of petty-bourgeois capitalist accumulation with the New Economic Policy-

the so called NEPmen - grew rich on the free market, while the real wages of the worker fell. All the petty-bourgeois elements looked to the Stalin-Bukharin bloc as their protectors against the policy of the Opposition, which was based on industrialisation and voluntary collectivisation at the expense of the rich and privileged. They looked to Stalin, with his doctrine of "Socialism in a Single Country", to protect them from the inevitable upheavals and sacrifices that would follow from the internationalist course of subordinating the U.S.S.R. and its socialist construction to the world-revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and oppressed peoples. Inside the party and state apparatus, these petty-bourgeois and even restorationist pressures found not only their political expression but also their social reflection. From performing a functional role as a distributor of the national income in accordance with the necessities of Soviet economy, the apparatus began to assume, imperceptibly at first, something more than the role of social arbiter in the distribution of the national product. It began to secure for itself what Trotsky called the "lions share" of what was to be distributed. An entire caste, with specific caste interests within the Soviet economy, was emerging, extending from the highest levels of the apparatus down through all those layers whose position was privileged, including those whose ultimate interests lay in the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R. Precisely that aspect of the Soviet state's function that related to the bourgeois sphere of distribution (as distinct from, and in effect in contradiction with, its other role, as the defender of the nationalised property relations, the planned economy and monopoly of foreign trade on the U.S.S.R.) became more and more its central pre-occupation.

Fractures

The first two fractures inside the ruling party bloc ran along the lines of this contradiction. Kamenev and Zinoviev recoiled from their anti-Trotsky bloc, when they saw it was leading the Soviet economy toward a return to bourgeois norms of distribution, and the Comintern away from world revolution towards collaboration with reformist trade union leaders and anti-communist bourgeois nationalists. (5)

Stalin in his turn was driven to break from the Bukharin wing in 1928, after it had led him to the very precipice-edge of capitalist restoration in the villages. But whereas the former split led to a two-year bloc between Kamenev and Zinoviev on the one hand and Trotsky on the other, the latter involved a left turn by Stalin which plagiarised many of the arguments of Trotsky's Left Opposition, and caricatured them on the false foundation of the theory of 'socialism in one country'.

These initial lurches within the ruling apparatus originated partly in the dual function that had been assumed by the Soviet state - on the one hand, defender of nationalised property relations, and on the other, upholder and even extender of social inequalities. The latter function, essentially bourgeois, became more and more the concern of the most corrupt and parasitic elements in the ruling apparatus. That is why Trotsky never sought a bloc with Bukharin against Stalin after their split in 1928, even though Bukharin's objections to some of Stalin's policies seemed similar to those being made by Trotsky. On the essential question of the defence of the property relations, the Stalin faction reflected, in a very imperfect fashion to be sure, the healthy proletarian tendencies in the state and the party and the collectivist tendency in the economy. The crime of Radek, Smilga and others was not that they gave conditional support to the break with Bukharin, but that they surrendered to Stalin. They threw away the priceless capital which

the Opposition had accumulated, purely on the basis of a left zig-zag within Stalin's overall course - a zig-zag which in no sense put in question the theory of 'socialism in one country' that had been the basis of the previous phase of opportunism.

Centrism

The characterisation of Stalinism which Trotsky evolved at this time and continued to use up to early 1935 was that of centrism. Centrism is that current within the workers' movement that vacillates between, but never fully merges with, the reformism of the parties of the Second International to the right and Communism to the left. The international course charted by the Stalinist apparatus between 1924, the year of ultra-leftism, and 1935, the year of the decisive placing of the weight of this apparatus behind the bourgeois policy of the Popular Front (6), was one of ever-wilder oscillations between these two poles. What made Stalinist centrism unique was that, unlike previous and contemporary centrist formations, it arose in the setting of a victorious revolution and the planned economy of a workers' state. It possessed the immense material resources of the planned economy, the State apparatus, the Comintern and so on, and the deep moral and political capital of being able to pass itself off, with much success, as the creator and inheritor of the October Revolution. By contrast, centrist parties such as the German U.S.P.D., lacking deep historical roots in the working class and created through a passing conjuncture of left-ward moving workers and hardened centrist politicians, were torn apart by the polar opposites which brought them into being. Half of the U.S.P.D. found its way into the K.P.D., the German Communist Party, and the other half back to the reformist womb in the S.P.D. - all within four years. Such parties can linger on for decades as sects, but they have no future because of their mongrel past. It was a vastly different matter with the centrist leadership of the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern. While the U.S.P.D. was a centrist party, basing itself on a centrist programme, the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern, in the period under review, were revolutionary organisations with centrist leaderships. They were organisations originating in the Russian Revolution and in the split of communism from centrism and reformism in all Europe. That is why Trotsky sought the path of reform in the U.S.S.R., the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern, until events proved beyond all doubt that such a course had no prospect of success. The test was Germany in 1933.

W.R.P. (7)

The current W.R.P. leadership, capitulatory to world Stalinism today, seeks to prove that it is intransigent to Stalinism by claiming that it was counter-revolutionary from as early as 1924. In a pamphlet entitled "The W.R.P. and the Transitional Programme" (8) written in 1973, Cliff Slaughter made the preposterous claim that the social-democrats and the Stalinists were the main "weapon" of the German ruling class - not the Nazis! Yet Trotsky continued with his orientation of seeking to reform the K.P.D. as a section of the Comintern right up to the victory of Hitler and for weeks after. Even after that tactic had been wound up in July 1933, Trotsky continued to write that Stalinism was a centrist tendency, not putting it on the same political plane as reformist social democracy.

Thus the W.R.P. puts forward a clear and open revision of Trotsky's analysis - an analysis which proceeded step by step with the crystallisation of Stalinism out of its centrist oscillations of 1924 - 1935 into the fully

developed counter-revolutionary role which it has since played on the world arena to this day.

In the period between 1924-1933, Trotsky's policy was to seek, despite the exclusion of the opposition from its rightful place in the leadership of the Comintern, the party and the state, the reform of these bodies. Lacking the hindsight now provided by Cliff Slaughter and others among the W.R.P.'s "Red Professors", Trotsky had to grope his way towards an understanding of the historically unique process that was unfolding in the U.S.S.R. after the death of Lenin. He opposed the slogan of new parties both for the U.S.S.R. and for capitalist states, and attacked the German "Lenin-bund" for running a slate against the K.P.D. in the 1928 Reichstag elections. Indeed, Trotsky on several occasions renounced his right to form a faction on the C.P.S.U., since this would have been a violation of the decision on factions of 1921, a decision which not only he but Lenin also, came to regret.

Platform

In following this policy of reform, Trotsky was continuing the struggle which Lenin began in the last two years of his active political life, though the setting was now much more difficult. All the elements of the Platform of the Left Opposition existed in embryo in the last struggle of Lenin against the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Party and state, certainly insofar as they applied to domestic issues:

- a) The national question, especially in relation to Georgia, over which Lenin clashed bitterly with Stalin and his cronies...
- b) The State and Party bureaucracy...
- c) The Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which Stalin had bureaucratised more than any other communist organisation...
- d) The independence of the trade unions from the bureaucratised State, where his chief opponent was, ironically, Trotsky himself...
- e) Internal party democracy (exemplified by Lenin's vehement defence of the Old Bolshevik practice of electing the Central Committee by platform, at the very Congress of 1921 which was to put a ban on the party factions) and comradely relations between party members, over which Lenin broke with Stalin at the very end of his political life...

It is true that Lenin began the work of analysing the origins of Soviet bureaucracy and to advance policies that might check its growth. But it should also be said that none of Lenin's proposals provided the answer. They each depended on harnessing reserves in a new ruling class, the proletariat, which had been drained to the last drop. The fight against bureaucracy required an international impetus, a break-through in at least one of the advanced capitalist countries. In 1923, that country was Germany. Its culturally and technically advanced proletariat and economy were the key to so many of backward Russia's problems. The aborting of the revolution in that year, therefore placed more strain on the depleted moral and political reserves in the workers' state.

Lenin's authority and plans would only have postponed, but not prevented, the rise to power of the bureaucratic caste under Stalin. In the U.S.S.R., the swing of the pendulum to the right after 1923, was organic and was not the product of the tactical skill, or lack of it, of the leaders. The opposite is true. Its main international determinant was the abortion of the 1923 German revolutionary situation.

Thermidor ?

The question which faced Trotsky was - how far to the right could this swing go ? The distance which he projected as being possible was as far as a capitalist restoration. Trotsky used the analogy of the French Revolution to place this problem in its setting. The French Revolution had, like all great revolutions, experienced a profound reaction after reaching its peak of radicalism..

That reaction had assumed the name of "Thermidor", which is the name in the revolutionary calendar of the month of the fall of some of the leaders of the Jacobin "Committee of Public Safety" - Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon. They were arrested on the orders of the Convention on July 27, 1794, and were guillotined the next day. The state power then passed from the hands of the left and centre Jacobins, essentially petty bourgeois in class origins and social outlook, to the bankers and big bourgeoisie, whose dictatorship was consummated and protected by the sword of Napoleon in the coup of the 18th Brumaire, 1799. (9) But the power never passed back to the old monarchists though the threat existed. Napoleon's regime was the political cap-stone of the social rule of the bourgeoisie. His rule was the result of a series of molecular and sudden shifts in political power, through the full spectrum from extreme petty bourgeois egalitarianism to military dictatorship. Despite these varied political forms, the social power was always bourgeois. The new mode of production, unfettered by the fall of the feudal power, was a capitalist one.

Thus all these shifts to the Right, ending in the rule of Napoleon, were changes of power within one class - the bourgeoisie. The power passed from faction to faction, party to party, leader to leader, but not from class to class. The social content of these political shifts and coups was bourgeois in essence. It flowed from the conquest of power by the bourgeoisie after the successful overthrow of the monarchy in the period 1789 - 1793. The 1789 revolution, which overthrew the Bourbon dynasty, had been a social revolution, in that one class replaced another as the ruling class.

Mistake

Trotsky thus used the experience of the great French revolution to illuminate the problems of the Russian revolution. The mistake which Trotsky made, and which he corrected in 1934, was to transpose Thermidor wrongly, from bourgeois France to proletarian U.S.S.R. His writings in the period from 1924 to 1933 repeatedly make references to the danger of Thermidor, especially towards 1933. Thermidor in the France of 1794 and after, was a political consolidation of the social gains that the bourgeoisie had made in the revolution of 1789. The democratic slogans were discarded once the masses had done their job of dislodging the feudal power. Freedom for property became the foundation of Napoleon's empire, not equality or fraternity. Trotsky, however, used "Thermidor" in the U.S.S.R. to warn of a capitalist restoration, even though in France Thermidor had not led to a feudal restoration. For a full ten years Trotsky operated on the understanding that Thermidor, which he equated with a capitalist restoration, lay in the possible future, whereas it had in reality begun back in 1924;- not with a capitalist restoration, but with the squeezing of the Bolshevik "Left Jacobins" from the Party leadership and with the consequent political shift - on the basis of the property relations created by the revolution - towards a privileged stratum within the new ruling class, in alliance with remnants of the old ruling classes and the "new rich" of the N.E.P.. Seen in this way, the analogy with France holds good.

What had unfolded by stages under Stalin's leadership, first in his bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev, then in his bloc with Bukharin and finally in his consolidation as a single Bonapartist arbiter in 1930-1934, was not a social counter-revolution but, just as in France under Thermidor, a political counter-revolution. Once Trotsky corrected his wrong use of the analogy, the full merit of his analysis of Stalinism was restored and the theoretical premises were created for the programme of political revolution, which will be treated at length later in this article.

But just at this point, the analogy with the French Revolution exhausts itself. The French Thermidor was inevitable. The social and economic **policies** of the Left Jacobins were essential to rally the masses for the war to the death against the Vendée holy counter-revolutionary alliance of the European monarchies, but they were utopian in content. They reflected the egalitarianism of the petty producer, based on respect for small private property. The historic future lay not with this class however, but with the big bourgeoisie, hungry for the spoils of the revolution which the 'small man' had won for it. The proletariat was as yet only embryonic and had still to define itself politically of organisationally.

Utopianism

Thermidor was, at one and the same time, the collapse of Jacobin utopianism and the fulfillment of the main historical tasks of the revolution begun in 1789. It could have been delayed by days, weeks or even months, by different tactics on the part of the "Left" Jacobins. But it was inevitable. The rise of the capitalist mode of production left no room for protracted experiments in petty-bourgeois utopianism.

This was not so with the first workers' revolution. By 1914 the capitalist mode of production had come to the end of its progressive role. The internal contradictions of capitalism, the threat of revolution posed by a world proletariat increasing in size and combativity, and the fetters on accumulation posed by the contradiction between the need for a free field of operation on the world market which capitalism had created on the one hand, and the continued existence of national boundaries on the other - all these could only be surmounted by dragging down civilisation into chaos and mass-extinction. The only way out for mankind was, the proletarian revolution and the establishment of world socialism. So the Russian Revolution was in no sense a utopian venture when we see it as an integral part of this world movement towards a new social order based on international co-operation and planned economy. It can only be depicted as a utopian venture if it is seen as a self-sufficient, national process, as "Socialism in One Country" a project which was and remains a petty-bourgeois utopia.

The Soviet Thermidor, unlike the French Thermidor, was not the result of the collapse of a utopia - this time a proletarian utopia. It was the result of the delay of the proletarian revolution in the West. The Soviet Thermidor and, therefore, Stalinism itself, can be regarded as the legitimate political offspring of the October Revolution only if one argues, as Stalin argued, that a firm orientation towards such a revolutionary rise in the West is also a utopia - an internationalist utopia.

TROTSKY'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANALYSIS OF STALINISM

What thrust Stalin, by stages, to the summits of power in the Kremlin were successive defeats inflicted on the world proletariat, from 1923 with the aid of Stalin, from China, Britain, Germany and France to Spain. (10) The Soviet Thermidor thus had deep international roots.

Central to Trotsky's understanding of Stalinism was the conception that it expressed, on the terrain of the first workers' state, a world-wide process of reaction after the decline of the first revolutionary wave of 1916 - 1923. In Italy and Germany in particular, this anti-proletarian reaction took the form of fascism, since it unfolded on the basis of capitalist property relations and under the social rule of the bourgeoisie. The social rule of the bourgeoisie continued under the political rule of the fascist caste (drawn mainly from the petty bourgeois). Separating out the essential differences in property relations, however, we find that Stalinism and fascism are symmetrical political phenomena, mirroring each other in almost every respect. Each mobilises the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Each proclaims the petty bourgeois utopia of a chauvinist "national socialism". Each dips liberally into the poisonous well of racialism and anti-semitism. Each seeks to crush and atomise the proletariat, while claiming to uphold its interests. Each claims to be 'revolutionary' while upholding the bourgeois world order. Each employs the methods of terror and extermination against the communist vanguard, while it holds the remainder of the proletariat in a vice of steel. Each owed its origins to the ebbing of the revolutionary wave in 1923. Each constituted a liquidation of the democratic liberties gained by the proletariat in the course of its historic struggles for self-emancipation. Stalin crushed Soviet democracy in the U.S.S.R.: Hitler crushed its embryo, the independent organisation of the proletariat, within the shell of bourgeois democracy in Germany. Viewed from this, the international standpoint, Stalinism and fascism constitute twin manifestations of world reaction.

This inner political unity was expressed at its highest level in the reciprocal relations between the rise to power of fascism in Germany, made possible by the criminal policy of the Comintern (11), and the final consolidation of Stalinist rule in the U.S.S.R., after the crushing of the German proletariat by fascism had dimmed for a decade, all hopes of an extension of the Russian revolution into the strategic heartland of the European Continent. Stalinism fed on the German catastrophe as a vampire feeds on human blood.

But an important difference must be brought out. Fascist rule was in each case a political and historical necessity for the bourgeoisie, in order to preserve its social power and its private property. Stalinist bureaucratic rule, on the contrary, has come ever more violently into conflict with the world historic requirements and tasks of the proletariat and the progressive democratic and internationalist tendencies of the planned economies. That is why Trotsky advanced rapidly towards the conception and programme of the political revolution from 1933 - 1934.

Though the property relations remained intact, they were distorted. The proletariat ruled socially through these property relations, but had been, by degrees, expropriated politically. Since the proletariat had lost political power, as a class, to a small fraction, highly privileged, within it, a new revolution was necessary in order to regain it. This would be, not a social revolution, since no new system of property relations would have to be introduced, but a political revolution,

one that would restore Soviet democracy, the self-rule of the workers and their class allies, which had been ushered in by the revolution of 1917. The social content of this political revolution would be proletarian, since it would be carried out on a socialised property foundation and by the proletariat as the ruling class.

It will be recalled that Trotsky regarded the Stalinist leadership of the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern, up to 1934, as centrist, prone to violent oscillations from the adventurist ultra-left to the opportunistic right. (12) What determined Trotsky's decision to abandon the tactic of reform was not the centrist nature of Stalinism, which carried over to 1934 at the earliest. It was rather the failure of the Comintern in the great historical test. The crushing of the proletariat in Germany failed to produce even a whisper of criticism of the political line which had led to this catastrophe, from a single one of the leaderships of its sections.

Shift

The shift in Trotsky's analysis of the Comintern and of the Soviet state began in 1933, but was not consummated until at least three years later.

In October 1933, Trotsky wrote: "We call the Stalinist apparatus centrist because it fulfills a dual role. Today when there is no longer a Marxist leadership and none forthcoming as yet, it defends the proletarian dictatorship with its own methods; but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy tomorrow. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the U.S.S.R. has understood nothing". ("The class Nature of the Soviet State").

Following the German debacle, Trotsky rejected this duality on the world arena. Though the Comintern still had a centrist political character, it performed an entirely reactionary role in the world struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation. Hence the call in July 1933 for the creation of a new, Fourth International. Trotsky made the turn towards building new communist parties, which would constitute national sections of the new International, in the U.S.S.R. as in all the capitalist countries. But this perspective was conducted within the framework of, and indeed flowed from, the unconditional defence of the U.S.S.R. as a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state, its character being determined not by the political nature of the state leadership, but by the planned and collectivist basis of the property relations and the economy.

Whereas up to this time Trotsky had argued for a restoration of party and Soviet democracy by means of peaceful internal political struggle and debate, (at one stage advancing the slogan of a united Central Committee, composed not only of the deposed Trotsky and the disgraced Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, but also Stalin), Trotsky now raised for the first time the necessity for the physical removal of the Stalinist leadership:

"No normal 'constitutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force".

But Trotsky did not at this time, envisage a civil war as being necessary for this purpose, partly because he did not regard the bureaucracy as the main internal enemy of the proletariat:

"As we know, the social roots of the bureaucracy lie in the proletariat, if not in its active support, then at any rate in its 'toleration'." When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in mid-air. Should it still attempt to resist, it will be necessary to apply against

it, not the measures of civil war but rather measures of a police character. In any case, what will be involved is not an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat but the removal of a malignant growth upon it. A real civil war could not develop between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat, but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counter-revolution (i. e. of capitalist restoration, which Trotsky located in the remnants of the old possessing classes: R. Bl.) In the event of there being an open clash between the two mass camps there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade". (ibid.)

Thus the main social struggle was still seen as arising between the proletariat and the Thermidorean restoration with the centrist bureaucracy being trapped between the two camps, being polarised and eventually disintegrated by them. The next three years saw Trotsky progressively revise and then abandon this perspective. By 1936, and certainly by time of the drafting and adoption of the Founding Programme of the Fourth International the main camps had become the proletariat and the Stalinist apparatus: the methods necessary to remove the Stalinist apparatus by the proletariat were no longer those of a police character, but those of bloody civil war against a caste several millions strong.

Counter-revolutionary

Trotsky had definitely abandoned the notion that Stalinism could still be considered a centrist current by 1937, when he wrote of the role of Stalinism in the Spanish civil war:

"I once defined Stalinism as bureaucratic centrism, and events brought a series of corroborations of the correctness of this definition. But it is obviously obsolete today. The interests of the Bonapartist bureaucracy can no longer be reconciled with centrist hesitation and vacillation. In search of reconciliation with the (world) bourgeoisie, the Stalinist clique is capable of entering into alliance with only the most conservative groupings among the international labour aristocracy. This has acted to fix definitely the counter-revolutionary character of Stalinism on the international arena". ("The Lessons of Spain: the Last Warning". December 1937).

But before Trotsky arrived at this final conclusion, his analysis passed through several intermediate stages, which correspond broadly to the increasingly reactionary role played by the Kremlin in world politics and within the U.S.S.R. from 1933 to 1935.

Writing on the political implications of the Kirov assassination (13) Trotsky still held to his conception of the dual role of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. But now the emphasis was changing:

"The role of the Stalinist bureaucracy remains a dual role. Its own interests constrain it to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October Revolution against the enemies at home and abroad. This task remains historically necessary and progressive. In this task the workers of the world support the Soviet bureaucracy, without closing their eyes to its national conservatism, its appropriative instincts and its spirit of caste privilege. But it is precisely these traits which paralyse increasingly its progressive work... the singular position of the bureaucracy, which is the result of definite social causes, leads to an increasingly more profound and irreconcilable contradictions with the fundamental needs of Soviet economy and culture". ("The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Kirov Assassination")

Domestic

As he had done a year previously, Trotsky distinguished between the domestic and the world role of the Stalinist caste:

"As regards the U.S.S.R., the role of the bureaucracy... is a dual one: on the one hand it protects the workers' state with its own peculiar methods; on the other hand, it disorganises and checks the development of economic and cultural life, by repressing the creative activity of the masses. It is otherwise in the sphere of the international class movement, where not a trace remains of this dualism: here the Stalinist bureaucracy plays a disorganising, demoralising role from beginning to end". (ibid)

One must note the new emphasis. The Kremlin came more into conflict with the innermost needs of Soviet society, despite the fact that it defended the property relations created by the October Revolution. It did the latter for its own caste interests and by police bureaucratic methods. But, more to the point, it exploited its function as distributor of the national product in order to preserve and extend inequalities. The apparatus thus became more parasitic on the economy based on socialised property with each passing day.

This, the bourgeois aspect and function of the Soviet state, became more and more the main pre-occupation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and lent to the summits of the new ruling caste a progressively more bourgeois, and not simply a petty bourgeois character. In this period of transition, the ruling apparatus revealed, both at home and abroad, its developed counter-revolutionary role and character. The more the Stalinist caste cut itself off from the masses and oppressed them socially, politically and nationally, (for example, in the oppression of national minorities such as the Ukraine), the more it acted as an agent of imperialism within the isolated workers' state. Stalinism ceased to be centrist. It evolved into a bourgeois excrescence upon the Soviet state, no more progressive than its reformist counter-part in the workers' movement of the capitalist states.

For this reason, among others, Trotsky posed the necessity of the break-up of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and posed it far more sharply than he had in "The Class-Nature of the Soviet State" a year before:

"(The) 'heroic' epoch of the bureaucracy is coming to a close. The bureaucracy has exhausted the internal resources of "enlightened absolutism". Further development of economic and cultural life demands the destruction of the bureaucracy by way of regeneration of Soviet democracy". (ibid).

Bonapartist

Mass purges and terror followed Kirov's murder. The Comintern and the Kremlin took a sharp turn to the right, towards support for the world status-quo (14). Analysing this turn, Trotsky carried his revision of the old "dualist" conception one stage further. He designated the Stalinist regime as "Bonapartist", correcting at the same time the false use of the analogy with the French Thermidor. In "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" he wrote:

"1. The Thermidor of the Great Russian Revolution is not before us but already far behind...

2. The present political regime in the U.S.S.R. is the regime of "Soviet".. Bonapartism, closer in type to the empire (of Napoleon) than the Consulate.

3. In its social and economic foundation and economic tendencies, the U.S.S.R. still remains a workers' state."

It is important to understand that Trotsky had been right to consider the bureaucracy as a barrier to the threat of capitalist restoration up to this point. The 'duality' had a progressive aspect. But with the 'liquidation' of the kulaks in the period of forced collectivisation and the parallel uprooting of the last remnants of capitalist production and trade in the towns in the course of industrialisation, the old restorationist forces had been crushed, albeit by police-bureaucratic means. From 1935 onwards, Trotsky regarded the bourgeois traits and tendencies within the Stalinist apparatus itself as the main restorationist danger:

"The existence of the proletarian dictatorship also remains for the future the necessary condition for the development of economy and culture in the U.S.S.R. Therefore the Bonapartist degeneration of the dictatorship represents the direct and immediate threat to all the social conquests of the proletariat". (ibid)

It was to take Trotsky several more years to round out this analysis. But from early 1935 onwards he considered that the Kremlin caste was performing essentially reactionary functions not only in the world arena but also within the U.S.S.R. Both functions opened up the road to the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R. Internationally it was disarming the proletariat and hence strengthening and emboldening the imperialist enemies of the U.S.S.R. Internally it was strangling the proletarian vanguard and pushing social inequalities further and further. It was demoralising the politically less mature layers of society, thus regenerating restorationist tendencies in every segment of the population.

Rounded-out

This analysis was codified in Trotsky's classic work, "The Revolution Betrayed" (1936).

Completed on the very eve of the first Moscow Trial (August 1936), this Marxist classic describes, both in their broad sweep and their molecular structure, the world processes which drove Stalin to exterminate the Bolshevik Old Guard:

"That period, which to Lenin and his colleagues looked like a short 'breathing-spell', has stretched out to a whole historical epoch. The contradictory social structure of the Soviet Union, and the ultra-bureaucratic character of its state, are the direct consequences of this unique and 'unforeseen' historical pause (i. e. the ebb that began in 1923), which has at the same time led in the capitalist countries to fascism or the pre-fascist reaction".

Here - for the first time but not for the last - is advanced the proposition we anticipated earlier - that fascism and Stalinism are, in origin and methods, identical political phenomena, a proposition ruling out the notion of Stalinism being able to project a revolutionary orientation, and its being capable of self reform in the direction of proletarian democracy:

"In the last analysis Soviet Bonapartism owes its birth to the belatedness of the world revolution. But in the capitalist countries the same causes gave rise to fascism. We thus arrive at the conclusion, unexpected at first glance but in reality inevitable, that the crushing of Soviet democracy by an all powerful bureaucracy and the extermination of bourgeois democracy by fascism were produced by one and the same cause; the dilatoriness of the world proletariat in solving the problems set for it by history. Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social foundations, are symmetrical phenomena. A victorious revolutionary movement in Europe would immediately shake not only fascism but also Soviet Bonapartism".

Stalinism and Fascism

What concerns us here immediately is the harshness of Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as being politically symmetrical with fascism. This judgement was born out of the Stalinist terror of the mid and late 1930's, and has since found fresh confirmation in the savage repression of the German proletariat in 1953 and the Hungarian revolution of 1956. In the last four years of his life Trotsky was to give added emphasis to it as the Kremlin surpassed the Nazi regime in Germany in its bestial persecution and slaughter of the proletarian vanguard.

In February 1937 Trotsky wrote:

"Blind confidence is demanded by totalitarian regimes with the infallible leaders at their head. This is equally the case with the fascist Hitler or the former Bolshevik, Stalin".

In June of the same year, he again wrote:

"Stalinism has become the scourge of the Soviet Union and the leprosy of the world labour movement... No one, not excluding Hitler himself, has dealt socialism such deadly blows as Stalin".

And in November 1937:

"...Stalin in Spain... executes the functions of Hitler (in their political methods they generally differ little from one another)".

Again

"In its intermediatory and regulating function, its concern to maintain social ranks and its exploitation of the state apparatus for personal goals, the Soviet bureaucracy is similar to every other bureaucracy, especially the fascist". ('Revolution Betrayed')

In March 1939:

"In reality, the political methods of Stalin are in no way distinguished from the methods of Hitler".

In his polemic against the Burnham - Shachtman Opposition in the S.W.P. (15) Trotsky conceded nothing to them when he wrote that the U.S.S.R. minus the social structure founded by the October Revolution (i. e. its nationalised property relations and planned economy; R. Bl.) would be a fascist regime'. In the founding programme of our movement is to be found this characterisation of Stalinism, morally as well as politically devastating:

"As in fascist countries, the chief strength of the bureaucracy lies not in itself, but in the disillusionment of the masses, in their lack of a new perspective. As in fascist countries, from which Stalin's political apparatus does not differ save in more unbridled savagery, only preparatory propagandistic work is possible today in the U.S.S.R. As in fascist countries, the impetus to the Soviet workers' revolutionary upsurge will probably be given by events outside the country".

THE PROGRAMME OF THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Trotsky arrived at a fully developed perspective for the political revolution in his "The Revolution Betrayed". There is no other way out for the U.S.S.R. but the violent overthrow of the bureaucracy by the masses, led by the proletariat:

"All indications agree that the further course of development must inevitably lead to a clash between the culturally developed forces of the people and the bureaucratic oligarchy. There is no peaceful outcome for this crisis. No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution... the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force".

Trotsky established certain historical precedents for a new revolution in the U.S.S.R., such as the political revolutions in France (1830 and 1848) and in Russia (February 1917). Each involved a shift in political power within the existing ruling classes, on the basis of the already established capitalist mode of production. None created new systems of property, nor did they restore those of a previous epoch. If they had done so, they would have been social, counter-revolutions. The political revolutions in France had a bourgeois social content. But in the U.S.S.R. the political revolution would have a proletarian content, since its aim would be to strengthen the existing socialised property relations, restore the political rule of the proletariat and revitalise all the healthy forces of Soviet society.

The necessity of the political revolution flows from the irreconcilable contradiction between the parasitic rule of the Stalinist caste, anti-democratic, anti-proletarian by its very nature, and the proletarian, democratic and international tendencies of the property relations upon which the Kremlin stands. The programme and methods of the political revolution are not inventions, but rather the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process, as it unfolds on the terrain of the Stalinist-ruled states.

The programme of the political revolution constitutes those steps and measures which the proletariat, and all the other layers which it attracts to its side in the course of the struggle against the apparatus, will have to take to regain its control of every aspect of Soviet society; from the power of the Soviets to management of production, from the administration of the planned economy to the military defence of the workers' state, from the unfettering of culture to the re-establishment of the political and organisational links of the Soviet proletariat with the working class of the world.

Trotsky outlined some of these measures:

"Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy. A restoration of the right of criticism and a genuine freedom of elections, are necessary conditions for the further development of the country. This assumes a revival of Soviet Parties, beginning with the party of the Bolsheviks (i. e. the Soviet section of the Fourth International: R. Bl.) and a resurrection of the trade unions. The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interests of the toilers... Bourgeois norms of distribution will be confined within the limits of strict necessity, and, in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to socialist equality. Ranks will be immediately abolished. The youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticise, make mistakes and grow up. Science and arts will be freed of their chains. And, finally, foreign policy will return to the traditions of

revolutionary internationalism".

This programme was not intended as a blue-print for the political revolution in the U.S.S.R.. Trotsky emphasised that the precise stages and order of events within that process could not be predicted in advance. But each and every one of the measures advanced by Trotsky was and remains necessary, not only for the revival of the U.S.S.R. as a healthy proletarian state, but its survival. Even more than in Trotsky's day, the Kremlin (or, more specifically, its dominant upper crust) is the main restorationist threat to the remaining conquests of October - planned economy, nationalised property, monopoly of foreign trade. (16)

Democracy

Democracy is of the essence of the programme of the political revolution - the re-conquest of those deep-going liberties and powers which the world proletariat gained in the course of the struggle to build its organisations under capitalist rule, the revolution itself and in the military as well as the political struggle to defend it in the years of the civil war.

The political revolution, proletarian in social content, has as its main characteristics proletarian democracy of the broadest and deepest possible type and internationalism. It makes possible the re-establishment of the international unity of the world working class. At the same time it flows from the unity of the working class struggle.

Within this framework, Trotsky attached enormous importance to the national question and to national-democratic demands as components of the political revolution. The Georgian question figured prominently in Lenin's final struggle against Stalin - just as the cause of the Ukraine, nationally oppressed by Stalin, was taken up by Trotsky in the last years of his life. Self-determination up to and including total independence was a right inscribed on the banner of the Bolshevik Revolution, though at that time its central thrust was directed against Tzarist, Great-Russian national oppression of the minorities of the former Empire. When Trotsky raised this demand with increasing insistence in the last years of his life, the main target was the Kremlin, the oppressor of the same national minorities as had rallied, two decades earlier, to the October Revolution as their sole means of national emancipation.

All these constituent components of the programme of the political revolution, as advanced by Trotsky in the course of 1933 - 1936 and codified in the Transitional Programme, have been filled out with a profoundly rich content since the revival of the working class struggle since 1943. This new upsurge has followed in broad outline the course anticipated and prepared for by the Fourth International before the war, but has inevitably exhibited features, moved at a rhythm and developed methods of struggle that simply could not have been foreseen.

It is the relationship of the general perspective to the actual course of the political revolution in the U.S.S.R., Eastern Europe and China to which we must now turn.

THE BUFFER STATES AND THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Trotsky never lived to see his perspective for the U.S.S.R. confirmed by the events of the post-war period in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China. He did not see the Soviet state extend to the Eastern half of Europe, the dualist function which he understood it as performing within the U.S.S.R. None the less, all the basic problems raised by the post-war extension of socialised property relations in Eastern Europe, and the movement towards the political revolution in the workers' states in general, were anticipated in Trotsky's last writings on the questions of Finland, Poland and the Ukraine.

Poland

The Stalin - Hitler Pact was signed in Moscow towards the end of August 1939. German imperialist forces invaded Poland, thus beginning the Second World War. Under the terms of the secret protocol to the pact, the Red Army began to move into Eastern Poland as Polish resistance to the Nazis collapsed in the West. Much of the territory allotted to the Kremlin was in fact Ukrainian, having been annexed from the Soviet portion of the Ukraine in 1920 after the end of the war between the Soviet Union and Poland.

When the tanks and troops of the Kremlin began their push into Eastern Poland and the Western Ukraine, that aspect of the Soviet state which still performed a historically progressive function, the defence of the nationalised property relations and planned economy, lent an impulse to the struggle of the oppressed masses in Poland. The landowners and the bourgeoisie fled abroad, but workers, poor peasants and the mass of the Jews seized upon the opportunity provided by the Red Army invasion to settle accounts with their oppressors. Workers instituted workers' control in the plants; peasants seized land; the Ukrainians and the Jews (many fleeing from Hitler's army in the West) made a bid for freedom from national and religious oppression. The Kremlin invasion evoked an echo of the same social, political, national and economic processes that had brought about the October Revolution of 1917, even though that invasion was conducted purely as an extension of the reactionary, profoundly cynical diplomacy of Stalin.

Only weeks before, the Kremlin had been courting the anti-communist Polish regime as an ally of peace and democracy against Hitler. Stalin had to give some encouragement to the initiative of the Polish masses in the first stages of the operation, in order to ensure the military and diplomatic success of the Kremlin's actions. The Red Army leaned on the workers and peasants for just as long as was necessary to eliminate any potential threat to the Kremlin's rule in the occupied territories which might come from the right. This manoeuvre involved not only issuing political appeals to the Polish masses to overthrow the oppressors whom Stalin had befriended for the preceding four years. It involved giving them material aid and enacting legislation directed against the power of the old ruling-classes. This manoeuvre by the Kremlin was a limited, partial and bureaucratically controlled mobilisation of the masses from above. Part of the initial impulse came from the oppression of the Polish masses themselves, and from their desire and their ability to resist it. But at least as important in the concrete given instance was the impulse which the entry of the Red Army into Poland lent to their struggle.

Contrary to the claims of the Burnham - Schachtman opposition in the S. W. P. (15), the Polish invasion established once and for all that the bureaucracy was not a new ruling class. It could devise no new property relations through which to ensure its continued political dominance.

It had no alternative but to invoke the memory and tradition of the October Revolution, and even a little of its programme in order to secure its western flank against any future threat from imperialism.

The occupied territories underwent drastic economic changes. Production was socialised and land collectivised, bringing the property relations into harmony with those of the U.S.S.R.

But political relations also had to be harmonised. Once the Polish gentry and bourgeoisie had been squeezed to death between the triple vices of the Nazi invasion from the West, the Kremlin's drive from the East and the social revolution which it evoked from below, Stalin turned brutally on those whom he had previously been calling to take state power. The proletariat was rapidly brought under the iron heel of the G.P.U. and the bureaucratized trade unions. All independent political activity was crushed, just as it had been in the U.S.S.R. more than a decade before. Now the reactionary aspect of the 'duality' of the Soviet state, expressed through the parasitic nature and role of the Stalinist apparatus asserted itself. This apparatus defended and when there was no alternative, extended the nationalised property relations of the U.S.S.R. in order to further its own social parasitism, in order to give more prominence to its role as a distributor of the social product according to bourgeois norms on the national arena, and to contain the proletariat within the existing world bourgeois order on the international arena.

Finland

Stalin attempted this manoeuvre when he turned against Finland in the winter of 1939 - 1940. He feared that Finland might be used as an allied vantage point for an attack on Leningrad. He accordingly demanded the exchange of Finnish territory in the Leningrad region for an equal amount of Soviet territory to the north. The Finnish government refused, and the Kremlin invaded, hoping that a combination of appeals to the masses and military force would yield the same results as in Poland. In this instance, however, Stalin's cynical attempt to exploit the revolutionary initiative and traditions of the Finnish masses failed miserably. With Eastern Poland and the Jews there had been a national question involved; in Finland there was none. Neither was there an acute, unresolved agrarian problem which the Kremlin could exploit to turn the Finnish peasants against their government. The deep democratic traditions of the Finnish masses had long before turned many workers not only against the Kremlin but, tragically, against the defence of the U.S.S.R. itself. Stalin's armies were thrown back. They met no support amongst the Finnish population. The Finnish armies fought heroically with a secure rear behind them. A new Kremlin offensive had to be mounted. It was enormously costly in men and material and the result was still more humiliating. Hitler quietly noted the fiasco of the Red Army in Finland and brought forward his plans to strike eastwards.

It is important to recapitulate the stages through which Trotsky's analysis of these events and processes passed.

In the discussion inside the S.W.P. on the class nature of the U.S.S.R., Trotsky had re-iterated what is meant by the defence of the U.S.S.R. and what is not meant by it:

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

We are not a government party: we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but also in the U.S.S.R. Our tasks, among them the 'defence of the U.S.S.R.' we realise not through the medium of bourgeois governments, and not even through the government of the U.S.S.R., but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow.!!

What follows is essential to an understanding of the tasks of socialists not only in relation to the U.S.S.R. but especially in relation to the problem of the national question in Germany, given its strategic importance in the European and world class struggle:

"The defence of the U.S.S.R. 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 U.S.S.R. 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". ("In Defence of Marxism")

Here Trotsky did not give an absolute character to the property overturns in the occupied territories, to which all other factors were then subordinated. He viewed the events in Poland (and later in Finland), from the standpoint of the advance of the world struggle for socialism.

Priorities

The part, however important, is subordinate to the whole. At the very birth of Soviet power, when the bureaucratic deformations of the Stalinist period were not only non-existent but unthinkable and unforeseeable, Lenin stated bluntly that he would willingly exchange the Russian Revolution for one in Germany, and that it was the duty of every revolutionist to be prepared to make such a sacrifice should the occasion warrant it. For Lenin the Russian Revolution was subordinate to the conquest of power by the most advanced section of the world proletariat, just as, in its turn, the German revolution was subordinate, on a higher level to the world revolution.

Trotsky said the following of the specific weight and overall character of the expropriations and socialisation of property:

"It is...likely...that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the U.S.S.R. the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large landowners and statification of the means of production. This variant is the most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist programme, but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power and the privileges which the latter entails, with the old ruling class in the occupied territories...Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private property 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 U.S.S.R."

"This measure, revolutionary in character, 'the expropriation of the expropriators', is in this case achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to the 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 with 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 here 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 U.S.S.R. and in the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganisation of the ranks of its own Communist International".

Trotsky faced the questions posed by these events squarely. Did the overthrow of capitalism in Poland involve a revision of the proposition that the Kremlin was a counter-revolutionary factor in Soviet and world politics? More specifically what weight should be given to the nationalisations carried out in the wake of the invasion of Poland by the Red Army? What attitude should revolutionaries adopt, towards the new system of property established by the Kremlin in the occupied regions?

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important they may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution. Our general appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the particular fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure. We must recognise this openly. Were Hitler on the morrow to throw his armies against the east to restore 'law and order' in Eastern Poland, the advanced workers would defend against Hitler these new property forms established by the Bonapartist Soviet bureaucracy".

Opposition

Thus the new socialised property forms in Poland were subordinate to the world revolution. But at the same time, through the prosecution of the class struggle on the basis of the orientation towards the world revolution, it was necessary to defend these new property relations, which are a necessary foundation of a democratically ordered socialist society. Trotsky was anxious that his position on the occupied territories should not be misunderstood as implying even the slightest concessions to Stalinism. He emphasised the overall reactionary nature and impact of the invasion of Poland by the Red Army:

"The statification of the means of production is, as we have said, a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum total of all the other forces. Thus we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autonomy and parasitism, cloaked by 'socialist' measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic manoeuvres. This evil far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that the nationalised property in the occupied areas, as well as in the U.S.S.R., become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say, socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy..."

Trotsky went even further. He declared himself opposed to the seizures of Polish territory by the Kremlin, even though upon it Stalin carried out measures which were historically progressive in themselves.

Trotsky implicitly opted for the capitalist status quo rather than the Stalinist overturns:

"We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and re-

main against seizures of new territory by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and, if the Byelo-Russians wish themselves, of Soviet Byelo-Russia".

Defence

The territorial seizures were, however, an accomplished fact. They had engendered the reactionary illusion which Trotsky feared, that the police-military actions of the bureaucracy can substitute themselves for the independent revolutionary action of the proletariat. Given that the expropriation of capitalism had been carried through in the newly occupied countries, the Fourth International though it had opposed territorial seizures, was obliged to defend the new property relations against imperialism, not because they came from the actions of a government of the workers' state, but because they were necessary to the final victory of socialism. This was so not only in Poland but also on a world scale:

"... 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 workers' committees and soviets, etc. While doing so, they must preserve their political independence. They must fight during elections to the soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust toward the Kremlin and its local agencies".

Trotsky then introduced another element into the situation, one that became a reality a little more than a year later:

"...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 to Hitler... 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".

Trotsky then summed up the whole discussion on the occupied territories:

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

Strategy

How is this order of priorities to be understood? The political revolution is subordinate to the defence of the planned economy, precisely because the necessity of the political revolution flows from the objective development and requirements of the workers' states - first the U.S.S.R. and then, after the post-war overturns, in all the buffer states (and then China after 1949). Workers' democracy - for that is what the political revolution establishes in the workers' states - is as necessary in the longer historical view to the survival, as well as the development of the U.S.S.R. as is its economic foundation in collectivist property relations. Unless the grip of the bureaucracy on Soviet society and on

the international working-class is broken, the restorationist tendencies will continue to grow in the U.S.S.R. Imperialism will be strengthened and encouraged to engage in its own restorationist ventures by the counter-revolutionary role of the Kremlin on the world arena.

The struggle for democratic liberties in the U.S.S.R., the buffer states and China, Korea and Indo-China and the expression that they are given in the workers' movement of the capitalist countries, constitute components not only of the political but of the social revolution in the sense that they expose to the workers the counter-revolutionary role of the Kremlin in the capitalist countries no less than in the workers' states.

In its turn the defence of the U.S.S.R. (and since the war, of the deformed workers' states) is subordinated to the world revolution; the world revolution is not simply a projection of the struggle to defend the U.S.S.R.

Great risks attach themselves to an orientation that subordinates sectional, national interests to the strategic goal of world revolution and world socialism. But from its inverse, flow even greater risks, in fact the iron certainty of defeat. It begins with the defence and consolidation of the domestic status quo, and ends with the deliberate preservation of the capitalist world order. Such was the progression of Stalinism from "Socialism in One Country" in 1924, through to the capitulation to Hitler in 1933, the betrayal of the Spanish workers to Franco in 1939, the pact with Hitler in the same year and the agreements of 1943 - 1945 with imperialism to divide Europe and smother the new revolutionary wave.

THE BUFFER-STATES: THEIR ORIGINS AND NATURE

The "buffer-states" are so called because that was the role chosen for them by the Kremlin as buffers against imperialist pressures. The process which led to the creation of the "buffer-states" of Eastern Europe has an international setting. They differ from each other in certain important respects, though they possess common features and origin. The differences have, in their turn, influenced the course towards the political revolution in each country concerned and lent special emphasis to this or that aspect of its overall programme.

The buffer-states have in common, first of all, their origin in the revival of the revolutionary struggle of the working class that began early in 1943. As in Poland in 1939, though in an infinitely more revolutionary setting, the westward advance of the Red Army lent a powerful impulse to the national and class struggles already underway in Nazi-occupied Eastern and Central Europe. In Yugoslavia and Albania which together with Greece had been allotted to the imperialist zone of influence by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, the indigenous struggle against axis occupation began as a predominantly national war, and went on to transform itself into a social revolution directed against the domestic class allies of the fascist occupiers. These national-civil wars were already far advanced when the Red Army arrived on the scene, and had gone beyond the Kremlin's attempts to contain them at a level acceptable to its imperialist allies.

Yugoslavia

The Kremlin's policy in the early post-war years was to continue the wartime alliance of the "Big Three". Yugoslavia and Albania were born deformed after a period of protracted dual power, in which the Stalinist leaders sought a

modus vivendi with the remaining elements of the old ruling classes. These countries acquired a special character in that they came into being mainly as a result of the independent mobilisation and actions of the workers and peasants. The advance of the Red Army did not carry the same weight as in some other Eastern European states, for example, Bulgaria and Rumania, or Poland in 1939, though it gave tremendous moral support to the anti-Nazi partisan struggle.

The break by Tito from the Kremlin in 1948 was, at base, the expression of this independent mobilisation of the Yugoslav masses under the leadership of the Communist Party, delayed by some years. So was the break of Hoxha from the Kremlin more than a decade later, *mutatis mutandis*. The cases of Yugoslavia and Albania thus differ not only in degree, but partly in kind, from the Polish experience of 1939. There the property overturn had been carried out on the initiative of the Kremlin, even though this measure met with considerable support from the masses. In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, Tito's decision to carry over the national war into a civil war against the Yugoslav bourgeoisie and landlords, forced upon him by the dire necessities of the struggle for survival against the Nazi occupiers and their quisling allies, clashed directly with the grand strategy of the Kremlin.

Yet this development also had been anticipated by Trotskyists a full five years before it happened, though in a highly conditional manner. The Transitional Programme says:

"One cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie".

But this prognosis was of a theoretical and highly conditional character. We can safely assume that it was not envisaged to what extent this exceptional variant in the historical process could be transformed into an entire phase in the class struggle, not only in Europe but in Asia. The extreme and justified caution with which this possible variant was advanced was further limited by the following clause:

"In any case, one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality, and the 'workers' and farmers' government" in the above mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat".

With the benefit of hindsight - an asset to be used in this case with all due humility - one can see that this 'episode', and the extent to which the indicated variant became a 'norm' for all the post-war overturns, has carried greater historical weight than the Transitional Programme of 1938 projected as possible. Yet the basic contours of the overall process are correctly outlined.

Status-quo

What arrested the movement towards the dictatorship of the proletariat - that is, towards genuine workers' and peasants' governments resting on sovietic institutions regulated according to the norms of workers' democracy - was not an inner weakness of the revolutionary upturn itself. The anticipated "episode" became frozen into a protracted historical stage entirely as a result of the joint intervention of the Kremlin and the imperialist allies against the movement towards the United Socialist States of Europe, through the division of Europe and the class-collaborationist policies of the national

Communist parties. The arrest of the revolutionary wave of 1943 - 1947 at the stage of bureaucratized "buffer-states" represented not a new revolutionary lease of life for Stalinism but, on the contrary, a renewed confirmation of its counter-revolutionary role on a world scale. The historic choice was not between bureaucratically deformed workers' states and the capitalist status-quo, but between governments of the dictatorship of the proletariat, challenging both the Kremlin and imperialism, and the beheading of this movement by co-operation between the Soviet bureaucracy and imperialism. The latter was what actually occurred, though not without the Kremlin first having to exert enormous political, moral and physical pressures on the revolutionary movement throughout the continent of Europe, East and West. As it was, Yugoslavia successfully resisted much of that pressure. It stood securely on an independent revolution carried through with little outside aid. In the years following the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, Yugoslavia stood out against the joint pressures of the Kremlin and world imperialism. Even today, the amazing resilience of the Yugoslav revolution asserts itself against Tito's new waves of purges and repressions. It bears eloquent testimony to the immense power generated in the course of the revolutionary upsurge that began in 1943. It also helps to explain why Stalin was only able to arrest the revolutionary upsurge by breaking up capitalist regimes throughout Eastern Europe and progressively collectivising their economies.

Purges

All the evidence indicates that Stalin had at first, no plans to "sovietise" the occupied territories. In Rumania, for example, the Kremlin kept the monarchy going until 1948. Only gradually, when all attempts to secure a firm alliance with the old propertied classes and capitalist politicians had failed, did Stalin undertake large-scale nationalisations and purges of the old ruling classes. By this time the initial thrust of the revolutionary wave had been largely spent. The workers were more firmly contained within the strait-jacket of the national Stalinist parties and their various front organisations. The forced merger of the old Social-Democratic Parties with the dominant Stalinist apparatus in East Germany, Hungary and Poland, and their banning in Czechoslovakia after the Prague coup of January 1948, were measures to force the subordination of the proletariat to the Kremlin, politically and organisationally, through its various national agencies. The presence of Red Army forces in all the "buffer-states" (with the important exception of Yugoslavia) was an added guarantee that the policies of the Kremlin would prevail, and that the regimes in the buffer-states would correspond with that of the U.S.S.R. in every sense.

Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary

These countries are in the category of buffer-states brought into existence more by the actions of the Red Army than of the masses, in contrast to Yugoslavia or, to a lesser extent, Poland. The Red Army was the predominant agency for dislocating the old regime. In each of them the arrival of the Kremlin forces was greeted by enthusiasm by the masses - the former regimes had aligned themselves with Nazi Germany during the war. So how can the progressive drift of Rumania away from the direct control of the Kremlin since 1964 be explained, especially when Bulgaria, which unlike Rumania has no common frontier with the U.S.S.R., remains an ultra-loyal member of Comecon and the Warsaw Pact? Here again, the national question intrudes. One of the terms of the Stalin-Hitler pact was that the Kremlin

should receive the provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina - the Eastern region of Rumania bordering on the U.S.S.R. - as part of the general reshuffling of territories brought about by the agreement.

After the war Stalin again laid claim to these two provinces and, of course, secured them. From the two provinces, each with its own special traditions and culture, he created the bogus Soviet Republic of Moldavia. The rulers of Rumania did not raise the question of these annexed territories during Stalin's lifetime or for several years after. But they began to do so in the last years of Krushchev's rule. The invasion in Czechoslovakia had aroused fears in Rumania - fears not confined to the bureaucracy - that because of its independent stance it could be next in line for a Warsaw Pact invasion. Bucharest had maintained, in the interim, friendly relations with both China and Yugoslavia, and had extended its trade links with the West.

In the days and weeks following the invasion of Czechoslovakia there was a growing mobilisation of workers and peasants, only partially initiated and controlled from above. Rallies and mobilisations took place like those in Yugoslavia, with the latter's memory of the Stalin blockade of 20 years earlier. In both countries, workers demanded arms with which to fight a possible Kremlin invasion. No better example could be given of the diverse and unexpected routes the process of the political revolution must take, especially in its initial stages.

Poland again

In Poland the process was different again, though also because of the intervention of profound national factors. The Warsaw uprising of 1944 was primarily directed against the retreating Nazi occupiers, but those who took part in it saw it also as a measure necessary to secure national independence against any other threat to it. So did Stalin, which is why he allowed the vanguard of this movement to be killed off before he sent in the Red Army. The Poles' fears were entirely justified. Four partitions of Poland - three under the Czars and one under Stalin - had left their scars on Poland's national consciousness, and not least upon its highly class-conscious proletariat. Stalin achieved the subjugation of Poland, involving the above-mentioned leaning on the Nazis, with the greatest difficulty.

As with Yugoslavia, the subsequent repeated uprisings and the more localised acts of opposition to the Stalinist regime have their roots in the independent mobilisations which took place from 1943-45, before the Kremlin came into the scene. In 1943 the rising in the Warsaw ghetto occurred. The following year saw the Warsaw rising already mentioned. After 1948 there was a pro-Tito current in the Polish Communist Party, for which Gomulka was made the scapegoat. In 1956 came the Polish 'October', which brought the former Gomulka to power. In 1968, there was a massive student mobilisation for freedom of the arts and against anti-semitism. There were the Baltic strikes and the 1970-71 revolt against Gomulka's increases in food prices. As recently as June 1976 similar struggles, even more widespread and equally successful, were organised to halt the price rises of Gomulka's successor, Gierek. Poland, though less strategically important than Germany, has occupied a special place in the European class struggle from the earliest days of the First International, when its oppression by Czarist Russia was an international cause celebre. In 1864 it was the weakest link of Czarism. Today the regime in Poland could well prove to be the weakest link in the chain of Stalinism.

Germany (17)

This leaves, in Europe, divided Germany. Here we have a unique 'species' within the 'genus' of 'deformed workers' states'. East Germany cannot be put on the same plane as Poland, or even Czechoslovakia, This is not because the working class played no part in the 'overturn'. The same revolutionary wave as swept through the other states of Europe also passed through the whole of Germany. East Germany is different for the following reasons:

1) East Germany is not a national state in any sense. It is in this respect unlike Poland, Hungary or Rumania (with the proviso of its Soviet-annexed regions). There is a German state which corresponds historically, politically, socially, culturally and economically with the German nation, with a whole range of profound deformations and limitations, viz. the Federal Republic of Germany - "West Germany". "East Germany" is nothing more than a rump state, severed from the main body of the German nation by the joint action of the Kremlin and imperialism, carried out without any mandate from the people of Germany before or after the fact.

2) The ruling apparatus in "East Germany" is purely an agency of a foreign apparatus - the Kremlin - imposed from outside in 1945 by the most barbarous means, and maintained in power by methods no less brutal, epitomised by that foulest of all Stalinist monstrosities, the Berlin Wall. Only insofar as the Pankow regime (who are aided in their work of oppressing the workers of East Germany by a liberal leaven of ex-Nazis and not-so-ex-Nazis) exercise the purely repressive functions of a state, can the East German regime be so-called. In all other respects - national, historical, political, economic, social - it is not a state in the sense in which socialists use this term, in the sense that it can be applied, with a number of reservations, to the state of Poland.

3) The socialised property in East Germany suffer from all the deformities of those in the workers' states as a whole. They cannot, however, be equated with those in the other buffer states and even less so with those of the U.S.S.R. since they are a necessary condition of the division of Germany, a division which in its turn was necessary to arrest the revolutionary wave not only in Germany but throughout the continent of Europe. That does not mean that we are indifferent to the fate of these property relations, but, rather, that in the spirit as well as the letter of Trotsky's remarks on the Polish question in 1939, we see their progressive character as not only being highly conditional, but as being subordinate to the resolution of the national question in Germany, without which there can be no question of the successful advance of the European revolution from its present positions.

World War

Trotsky did not at all exclude the possibility of Germany becoming an oppressed and divided nation after its defeat in the second world war, a situation which would require certain important adjustments in the orientation of the German and European proletarian vanguard. In the wake of the Munich deal of September 1938, an agreement which helped to clear the road to the Second Imperialist War, Trotsky wrote:

"...if a new war ends only in a military victory of this or that imperialist camp; if a war calls forth neither a revolutionary uprising nor a victory of the proletariat; if a new imperialist peace, more terrible than that of Versailles, places new chains for decades upon the people; if unfortunate humanity bears all this in silence and submission - then not only Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria, but also France can be thrown back into the position of an oppressed nation. The same hypothesis may be drawn in regard to Germany.

In this eventuality the further frightful decomposition of capitalism will drag all peoples backward for many decades to come. Of course, if this perspective of passivity, capitulation, defeats and decline comes to pass, the oppressed masses and entire peoples will be forced to climb anew, paying out their sweat and blood, retracing on their hands and knees the historic road once travelled".

Some five months after the outbreak of the war, Trotsky returned to this theme, although from a slightly different angle:

"France seeks a way out of its crisis in the dismemberment of Germany. As if it were possible to turn the clock of history back to the epoch preceding 1870! The unification of the German nation was an inseparable result of its capitalist development. In order to dismember the present Germany, it would be necessary to break the back of German technique, destroy the German factories and exterminate a significant part of the population. It is easier to say than to do".

But it was done, jointly by the Kremlin and the imperialist allies, in every detail described here by Trotsky. Germany was cast back to before 1870 in relation to its national tasks, at the precise moment when the proletarian revolution was rising once more in Europe. This unique combination of problems and struggle posed tasks for socialists that were overwhelming in their enormity and complexity. Only today are we beginning to unravel them. That is why the German question is not a secondary matter, but a focal point of our national and international activity. The real course of events proved to be very different from those outlined in the first of the two quotations above.

It was the most pessimistic variant which Trotsky would permit himself to advance, even in a highly conditional form. But in one sense the suggestion of such a variant illuminates the nature of the German problem - Germany has been forced back an entire era. And not because its proletariat was passive, for its proletariat fought like the rest of the working class in Europe to establish its own power, but because of the treachery of the Kremlin.

Democratic tasks

The national tasks solved in the main as long ago as 1870 under Bismark were posed anew in the fifth decade of the twentieth century, because of the unique form of the barrier erected against the advance of the proletariat, namely partition. In this limited sense there is a necessity for Germany and its proletariat to 'climb anew' (though not on hands and knees) 'the historic road once travelled'. This carries enormous political weight not only for Germany but for the whole of Europe.

It was possible, though only just, for Bismark to unify Germany "from above" in the pre-imperialist era of capitalism. The process was never completed, for Austria remained outside the Reich. It was carried through in a manner which stoked up sufficient national resentment in France to feed the war of 1914 - 1918. The theory and programme of permanent revolution, as stated by Trotsky, (14) holds that in the imperialist epoch, such national democratic tasks as the re-unification of Germany can only be achieved under the hegemony of the proletariat, establishing its own dictatorship and, in doing so, going beyond the accomplishment of democratic tasks to the fulfillment of purely socialist ones, such as the collectivisation of property.

What Bismark precariously achieved in 1870, with only an infant workers' movement at his back, the German imperialist bourgeoisie cannot possibly hope to achieve a century and more later, except as the outcome of a general war of conquest by world imperialism directed against the U.S.S.R. and only incidentally against East Germany. With the present balance of class forces such an

such an undertaking is entirely excluded, but if it were possible, the German bourgeoisie would be a junior partner in it. Such a war could not be considered as a 'national war' to re-unify Germany, though a national slogan could be used to conceal counter-revolutionary aims.

So there is no sense the slogan of German unity and the right to national self-determination can be considered a potentially reactionary demand - unless one is a dupe of Kremlin propaganda. It is true that the German bourgeoisie would fearfully love to win back the lost eastern portion of the country, though this would involve the re-conquest not only of the present 'state' of East Germany, but Western Poland and even a large slice of the Soviet Baltic coast, but this is excluded for the foreseeable future and beyond.

Unity and Independence

Why not advance the slogan "for a united socialist Germany", or "for a German workers' government", if only the proletariat can unite Germany? Because this would at once give to the slogan precisely that conditional character which must be avoided. In relation to national tasks Germany has been cast back, as Trotsky feared it might be. The German working class has to retrace its steps, advancing towards the proletarian revolution, which in Germany unites the social and political revolution, by way of tackling and resolving the national question. The German national question gives the most concrete expression to the unity of the social and political revolutions, both in Germany and all over Europe. This stage cannot be jumped over, any more than could the national-democratic tasks in the Russian Revolution, though not a single one of them was resolved until after the seizure of power by the proletariat in October 1917.

The precise order of events in Germany (East and West) cannot be predicted with any certainty. But one must have a general prognosis, a perspective, a programme, and one must uphold principles. As socialists fighting in Britain for the re-building of the Fourth International, we set no limits on the right of the German nation, of its people, to both national unification and national self-determination. We say quite openly that the German people have the right to seek these goals, even on the basis of the existing property relations in the West, or putting at risk, or even leaving undefended, the nationalised property relations in the East.

We do not advance this as our perspective, our prognosis. We certainly do not desire or work for this variant. Moreover it is almost completely excluded as a historical possibility especially in the present period of revolutionary upsurge and crisis of the bourgeois state. (18) But that must be distinguished from the right of the Germans to unconditional national unity and independence. If this important distinction is not made, credence is given to the illusion that the German bourgeoisie can play a progressive role in the national question.

The way is open to seeing the demand for the reunification of Germany as advocating the restoration of capitalist property relations in the East. By hedging in and limiting the demand for German unity and independence to what appears as 'acceptable' to 'socialists', help is given to those who want to erect a barrier to the advance of the proletarian revolution East and West.

It is the un-conditional nature of this demand which is its cutting edge.

Workers' Government

This then, is what socialists put forward within the British labour movement. Our German comrades would also be advancing the demand for unconditional German unity and independence, for an all German government and for legalisation of all German parties recognised as such by the German people, and they

would develop within that framework the programme of the workers' government for all Germany, a government which in the given historical and political situation could only be, in its first stages, a government of the S.P.D. (19)

Why lay such stress on the unconditional nature of the national demands? Because the political weight of the expropriations of capital in the Eastern rump of Germany is less than, and subordinate to, the development of the revolutionary capacities of the German proletariat - a development without which there can be no consummation of the revolution in Europe and, therefore, no United Socialist States of Europe. Revolutionary socialists subordinate the defence of these property relations to the advance of the German and European revolution. Trotsky did the same as regards Poland in 1939.

But even more than in 1939, the manner in which the socialisation was carried out is important. It involved, first, pulverising the German proletariat in the later stages of the war. It involved the mass-incineration by fire-bombing of 200,000 civilians and refugees in Dresden by the Allies, a crime no less barbarous than the gassing of the Jews at Auschwitz. It involved the devastation of all the main proletarian concentrations of Germany and the hideous doctrine of "collective guilt". It involved the crowning crime of partition, occupation after the war by foreign troops and, finally, converting East Germany into one vast concentration camp for the workers, complete with mine-fields, barbed-wire, watch-towers, machine-gun posts and border-guards and finally, the Berlin Wall. All these weapons are directed against the East Germans. All for the sake of a property overturn in one quarter, and the most backward quarter at that, of the most advanced nation in Europe!

Bulwark

The mere existence of the East German regime, let alone the method by which it was constructed, is the greatest obstacle to the advance of the proletarian revolution in Europe. The Kremlin and imperialism both wish it to remain so. The East German regime is not a bulwark of socialism, the western outpost of the "socialist camp", as the Stalinists and their apologists claim. It is a bulwark of imperialism, of the capitalist status-quo in Europe, against the rise of the proletarian revolution both in Germany and throughout the Continent. That is why revolutionary socialists unconditionally call for the destruction of the Berlin Wall by the German people themselves, for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from all Germany, for the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact no less than N.A.T.O., and for the break-up of Comecon no less than the E.E.C. Each of these four institutions is an instrument for the oppression of Germany and its proletariat, for maintaining the division of Germany within a divided Europe. The road to the United Socialist States of Europe passes through the destruction of all these organisations, each of which points towards the same target - Germany.

Placing conditions on German unity and independence raises the property relations in the East to the level of a metaphysical absolute. Even in a healthy workers' state this could be quite wrong. There could arise circumstances in which, in the interests of the development of the international class struggle, the government of such a state would subordinate the property question, in a given instance, to the national question. Finland in 1917 is one case in point.

Trotsky made the case for this policy in the following way. To the questions: "What do you think... about the slogan 'self-determination' up to separation?" and "Is there not a danger that in the event of a revolution the bourgeoisie of a province will hide behind this slogan and carry on propaganda for independence, or union with another reactionary country?"

Trotsky replied:

"The danger exists, but it becomes greater with every ambiguity on the question. We say to the masses of that province: 'If you want to leave, go ahead. We won't restrain you by force. But what will you do with the big estates? What about the factories? That is all that interests us'. When by our generosity in respect to nationality, we put the social question into the foreground, then we shall drive a wedge between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Otherwise we would weld them together... the Russian Bolsheviks said 'right of self-determination including separation'. And Russia has become a bloc, despite its forty languages and nations". (A Conversation with Trotsky", dated August 25 1932, in "Writings of Leon Trotsky: 1932", p.176).

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The principals and programme developed above are validated by the actual course of history. In the U.S.S.R. and in all the buffer states the national question has been thrust to the forefront by the powerful, if uneven, ascent of the process of the political revolution.

Germany

The national question in Germany has already been examined in some detail. Germany suffers a double national oppression. It is dominated in different ways and in varying degrees both by the Kremlin and by imperialism. It is also divided by them, unlike, for example, Poland or Hungary. So, whereas in Poland or Hungary a straightforward demand arises for independence from the Kremlin, withdrawal of Soviet troops, withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, these demands in Germany would pose, from the very beginning an organic connection with the economic and political tendency of that part of Germany dominated by the Kremlin to gravitate back towards unity with the Western three-quarters, where, despite a whole range of limitations and distortions, the real centre of gravity of the German nation is located. It cannot be said with certainty in what precise manner this process will unfold. It is not excluded that the move towards national re-unification might take the initial form of representatives of the people of the East (workers' delegates, possibly of the banned S.P.D., cultural figures and even church leaders) establishing links of some kind with their opposite numbers in the West. In the 1953 uprising, workers' delegates from East Germany attempted to win support for their rising from the leaders of the trade unions in the Western sector of the city.

Most certainly, one should not expect the political revolution in the East and the social revolution in the West to mount stride for stride to the summit of a simultaneous transfer of state power to the workers. Nor should one expect two distinct, self-contained revolutions in the two portions of Germany. If that were the perspective then the national question and hence national demands would have no place in the class struggle in Germany, East or West.

A similar sectarian, national-nihilist conception leads sects such as "Militant" to an identical perspective for Ireland: simultaneous but separate revolutions against the Unionist bourgeoisie in the North and the Irish bourgeoisie in the South. In the meantime socialists should denounce with equal vehemence Irish nationalism as well as British chauvinism, and oppose the withdrawal of British troops until the Irish have developed a nation-less (in effect, an English class-consciousness worthy of the "socialist" programme of the 'Militant'. The same reactionary method of thinking can be encountered on the German question, most notably in the W.S.L. (20) which wants the Berlin Wall to remain

until Germany has undergone its miraculous simultaneous social and political revolutions without a brick of the wall being dislodged.

History has already proved the bankruptcy of such notions. The workers of East Germany passed their own judgement on this twenty-three years ago. They demanded, not only a revision of their work-norms, but the withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Germany, the ending of the zones, the legalisation of all democratic parties and free elections in all of Germany.

Nowhere is it written that the overall advance of the proletarian revolution, even the political revolution, will not involve regressions in the area of socialised property relations in this or that region, at some stage or temporary juncture. Such regressions are not to be mechanically equated with a regression in the class struggle as a whole.

In the civil war in Russia this happened not once but many times. The same could well prove to be the case in Germany, where the first stage of the movement towards a genuine workers' government in all Germany could lead to the formation of an S.P.D. government, or a government dominated by the S.P.D. Such a government could be a capitalist regime, but of a special type. It could come under enormous pressure from the masses. It would project a centrist flank to the left and a Noske-Scheidmann wing to the right. (21)

Such a regime, brought about by the revolutionary struggle of the workers in all Germany, could only be a government of crisis and would yield very quickly to a more left formation, resting to some degree on Sovietic or pre-Sovietic organisations.

One must also expect fractures in the Stalinist apparatus of the order that were witnessed in East Germany in 1953 and again in 1956, and in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia at various times. To advance these possible variants, of which there are more, does not indicate a preference for this or that course, nor suggest that any one is the more likely. It is a guard against possible leftist errors on the national question in Germany. Given the wretched record of the British Trotskyist movement on this question, which dove-tails to perfection with the traditional anti-Germanism of the British Stalinists and the left, leftist errors are at the moment the main danger.

There is one development which can be predicted with some confidence. The Berlin Wall will be the first victim of the proletarian revolution, even if the workers have to tear it down in the same way as they fought the tanks of the Kremlin in 1953 - with their bare hands. The Wall will be pulled down from both sides in the heat of passionate struggle against the state machines of West and East alike.

Hungary

In the manifestoes and programmes advanced during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, (16) a prominent place was given to national demands, including the call not only for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops but for the withdrawal of Hungary from the recently formed Warsaw Pact. Another national demand, which expressed directly the class-feelings as well as the national feelings of the Hungarian workers, was for Hungary's right to full control over its mineral wealth, especially its uranium deposits. This in its turn raised the question of Hungarian membership of Comecon, which supplements at the economic level the directly repressive functions of the Warsaw Pact. National feelings in Hungary were all the more passionate and embittered in view of the country's long history of repression at the hands of Austria and Russia. That is why Kossuth, the national-revolutionary martyr of 1848, became the symbol and personification of 1956.

Poland

The national question in Poland has already been examined in some detail. Past events played their part in the upsurge of 1956 here too - all the more so because in the immediate post-war period Poland, like all the other buffer states, had been promised by its ruling Communist Party that it would follow its own "national" road to socialism.

Though the formal similarities with Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" are obvious, the promise had another meaning altogether for the party rank and file, the millions of non-party workers and peasants and even for sections of the apparatus. It meant the freedom to build socialism without interference from the Kremlin and in accordance with the wishes, traditions and needs of the people.

On the basis of this interpretation of the policy, there was in the immediate post-war period a genuine rallying to the regimes in the buffer states. But only in Yugoslavia did this current totally escape the control of the Kremlin for the reasons already advanced. Elsewhere Stalin moved ruthlessly to crush it, especially in Poland. The formation of the Cominform and the promulgation of the mirror image of the Truman doctrine, the "two camp" theory of Zhdanov, emptied the promise of any content it ever had. (22)

The Gomulka wing of the Party was denounced as Tito-ist, and expelled. Gomulka was jailed along with the others. The "Soviet" model became mandatory for all the buffer states. Nothing more was heard of the "Polish" or any other national road to socialism. All roads passed through the Kremlin, with a frequent detour to the headquarters of the secret police. The Polish pattern was reproduced to the letter in all the buffer states - show-trials of "Tito-ites" (also accused of Trotskyism, of links with Western Social-Democracy and with the C.I.A.), forced collectivisation and crash industrialisation. Each buffer state telescoped into a period of no more than four years, the experience of that terrible decade in the U.S.S.R., from the expulsion of the Left Opposition in 1927, through the forced collectivisation and industrialisation of the First Five-Year Plan, to the Moscow Trials of 1936 - 1937 - 1938. This trauma was, in each case, compounded by national oppression by the Kremlin.

Stalin's death in 1953, and then the crisis in the Kremlin leadership leading to the secret speech of Khrushchev in March 1956, was paralleled in Poland by a similar crisis - a ferment among intellectuals leading to a workers' revolt in Posnan in June 1956. Gomulka's return from the shadows to lead the Party proved to be the only way by which the Kremlin could stave off the political revolution.

But before Gomulka could stabilise the situation, with the help of the Kremlin repression of the Hungarian Revolution, the Khrushchev leadership found itself on the brink of military intervention in Poland. On the eve of the plenum of the Central Committee which was to elect Gomulka as its new leader, Red Army forces stationed in Poland under the terms of the Warsaw Pact surrounded Warsaw and the other big cities in an obvious bid to intimidate not only the plenum but the proletariat as well.

The workers' councils then springing up demanded arms to resist a possible Red Army attack. Workers' squads patrolled the streets to keep a watch for any sign of Red Army troop movements against the capital. Meanwhile at the Central Committee, the Gomulka faction, basing itself partly on this upsurge of the masses, ousted its hard-line Kremlin opponents. Only the independent mobilisation of the workers against the Kremlin's military threat enabled this change to take place - an act of solidarity which Gomulka was quick to betray.

So here too, as in Hungary, national as well as class consciousness surged to the fore at the very height of the struggle. When the Kremlin turned its tanks towards Budapest to drown the workers' councils in blood, all of proletarian Poland was in mourning. Tram drivers draped their vehicles with the Hungarian national flag. Even the Party press refused to join the world Stalinist clamour of support for the Kremlin's actions. Alone among world Stalinist leaders, Gomulka found it impossible to endorse openly what had so nearly been done in Poland when it then occurred in Hungary. Students collected for the Hungarian revolutionaries. Workers gave their blood for the wounded. On the day when open resistance in Budapest was finally crushed, red flags flew at half-mast over the factories of Poland. The Polish and Hungarian workers were drawn together by common hatred of Kremlin rule. Their national feeling had a truly international content - infinitely more so than the feelings of those "Trotskyists" of the W.R.P. and W.S.L., who invoke internationalism to defend the Warsaw Pact, instrument of the tyranny of the Kremlin from Berlin and Warsaw to Prague and Budapest.

The national question simmers in Poland to this day. Indeed, it is coming once more to the boil, heated by the workers' struggles against the Gierk price increases and the new law which makes permanent the subordination of Poland to the Kremlin.

Czechoslovakia

Here the national question had a delayed effect for several reasons. First Czechoslovakia itself is not a nation. It is a conglomerate of Czechs (in Bohemia and Moravia), of Slovaks, of Poles and of Ukrainians. Before it was occupied by Nazi Germany there was a large German minority, in the Sudetenland. After the war all the Germans were driven out, anti-Nazis together with Nazis. The external national enemy was seen as Germany. Internally there was a cross-play of national tensions between the dominant Czechs and the other nationalities, principally the Slovaks.

Up to February 1948 the status of Czechoslovakia in the division of Europe was undecided. In that month the Kremlin organised a limited mobilisation, through its agencies in the Czech Communist Party, to oust the pro-bourgeois forces in the Cabinet and install a fully-fledged Stalinist regime. But the state takeover in Czechoslovakia was carried through without the aid or even the presence of the Red Army, unlike those in Poland and Hungary. The "Prague Coup" though it contained elements of a real social revolution with the usual bureaucratic distortions associated with all the other buffer states, was understood and supported by the Czech workers as a "national" movement, and not as an action imposed from the outside by a foreign power.

"Cominformism" thus came late to Czechoslovakia, but it came hard - harder than in most of the buffer states. The anti-Tito purge in Prague coincided with the high point of Stalin's "anti-cosmopolitanism" drive in the U.S.S.R., a campaign which rapidly assumed a character of unbridled anti-semitism. Most of the leaders of the Czech C.P. who were framed, convicted and executed in the Prague trials were Jews. There seems little doubt that the Kremlin was hoping to exploit traditional anti-semitism in the country to divert the outraged feelings of its people away from Moscow.

Because Czechoslovakia is a "multi-national state", the domination of the country by the Kremlin was mediated through the Czech wing of the Communist Party, and its main victim was the Slovak people. Understandably, the first manifestations of "legal" resistance to the Kremlin and its Prague quislings were in the Slovak Communist Party, which from 1963 onwards began to voice

more and more boldly the deeply-felt oppression of the Slovak nation, through what later became the Dubcek wing of the Party. By 1967 this current had merged with that of the dissident writers. The struggle between the Slovak "reformers" (led by Husak as well as Dubcek) and the Czech hard-liners (headed by Novotny) had become an open one, conducted through the publications of the rival party organisations. Once again what might appear to be an "iron law" of the political revolution - the split in the apparatus - had manifested itself - but this time on the basis of the national question. It was not only a split between the respective national parties (Czech and Slovak). There were "reformers" in the former and Novotny supporters in the latter. It was a split which flowed from the national question itself, since one of the issues at stake was the equality, in fact as well as in law, of the two nations within the Czechoslovak state. The rise of the national movement in Slovakia disrupted the old equilibrium of an apparatus based not only on the submission of Czechoslovakia to Moscow, but on the domination of Slovakia by the Czech Party. One expression of this domination was the disproportionately large number of Slovak party members amongst the accused in the Prague Trials.

The Slovak national movement was not the only factor in the rise of the political revolution in Czechoslovakia. There was an intellectual ferment beginning in the early 1960's; a growing demand for the rehabilitation of the purge victims and for the revival of the country's stagnating economy. At one point in this period the growth rate was zero! The problems directly affecting the workers - the independence of the trade unions, workers' democracy in the plants, control over the state plan, were also factors in the rise of the political revolution. Once the "Prague Spring" got under way it might have seemed as if the national question, Slovak or any other, was losing its former importance. The brutal Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968 put paid to that illusion.

Today the Czechs, no less than the Slovaks, are an oppressed nation. Kremlin troops are stationed on their territory without the agreement of the population, "summoned" by quislings without a mandate from either their people, their party, their government, or any other institution. The invasion and the occupation of Czechoslovakia was initially mounted by upwards of a quarter of a million troops, from East Germany, Bulgaria, the U.S.S.R., Poland and Hungary. It was no less reactionary than Hitler's invasion and occupation thirty years before, and a hundred times more demoralising for the world proletariat in that it was carried out under the banner of "proletarian internationalism".

Any individual or group which, in the name of socialism, reinforces the barbaric repressions by the Kremlin in Czechoslovakia and all Eastern Europe by defending, however critically, the Warsaw Pact, is a traitor to the political revolution and to socialism. The time for diplomacy on this fundamental question is over, especially with those who claim to adhere to the programme of the Fourth International but who betray the world proletariat on this question.

Yugoslavia

Like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia is a combination of several nations. Some of them, such as the Albanians and Macedonians, spill over into other states. As in the instance of the Kurds, partitioned between four states - Iran, U.S.S.R., Syria and Iraq - the Macedonian question raises simultaneously the political and the social revolution. The Macedonian nation is divided between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, .. and Greece. The national question is therefore more profound than in Czechoslovakia.

Yugoslavia's chaotic economic system has served to widen the gulf between the

country's poor and more prosperous regions, further augmenting national tensions. Yet all the constituent republics of the country are united in one cause - each will resist to the last man a Kremlin take-over. The Kremlin is renewing its intrigues and pressures against Belgrade as the end of the Tito era approaches. Moscow has discreetly backed the Croatia separatists, speculating with monumental cynicism on the country's national problems. It has backed Bulgaria in the Macedonian dispute. Tito has replied by rounding up real and alleged "Cominform-ists". But for every Kremlin agent jailed, ten or more left-wing critics of Tito's regime are arrested. The anti-Kremlin sentiment of the whole population is profound. A recently-issued film showed the country's entire adult population mobilised against a mock Soviet invasion. If such an invasion should take place, revolutionary socialists would unconditionally support a victory of the Yugoslavs over the Red Army, even if in their desperation they should turn to imperialist countries for military and other assistance. The Yugoslav revolution, which began in the depths of the war, is far from spent. It has served as a beacon for all the peoples of the buffer states struggling against Kremlin oppression. It will do so again in the future. But the nations of Yugoslavia can win their full freedom and independence only if they link their destiny with that of the rest of the Balkan peoples - through a socialist federation of the Balkans and ultimately of all of Europe.

U.S.S.R.

All the problems find their most concentrated expression in the U.S.S.R., because the U.S.S.R., unlike the buffer states, is a degenerated and not a deformed workers' state. The October Revolution inscribed on its banner not only the emancipation of the proletariat, but the liberation and advancement of oppressed nations. Whatever the mistakes and vacillations of the Bolsheviki in carrying out that policy - Poland and Georgia being the two most obvious - no other government before or since has so boldly, yet in such terrible circumstances of civil war and invasion, set about the achievement of this noble goal. The early years of Soviet rule were a period not only of emancipation of the oppressed nations of the former Russian empire, but of nation-building. Caught up in the revolutionary upsurge of the heroic Soviet period, previously backward, semi-nomadic, illiterate and even scriptless peoples travelled in the space of a few years the distance it had taken mankind centuries to cover. The permanent revolution asserted itself here in a most moving way, demonstrating another respect in which the national question is brought to the fore by the proletarian revolution. Up to the 19th century nations were created and liberated by bourgeois revolutions. From 1917 onwards that task has been and can be carried out only in the course of the proletarian revolution. But by very virtue of the hopes and even illusions which the October Revolution engendered among the national minorities, the Soviet Thermidor was tenfold more cruel than had been the repression of nations under the Tzars. As early as 1922 the Stalin faction began to unwind the conquests of the revolution in the national sphere, persecuting the Georgian Bolsheviki for their resistance to Stalin's plan to absorb their nation into the Union. Lenin had advised fusion as equal partners. In the 1930's, Stalin's Russification drive expressed its full frenzy, providing Trotsky with the occasion to write his articles on the Ukraine. The ideological justification for this chauvinist national policy was Russian racism. It was first enunciated in 1934, the year which saw the Kremlin making a decisive turn from its previous centrist course towards support for the world status quo.

The turn involved not only a repressive national policy towards the national republics but a complete re-casting of previous Russian history, both pre-revolutionary and Soviet. Revered historical figures from the national minorities, famed for their exploits against the Tzarist oppressors, became overnight traitors to Russia and, by implication, to the U.S.S.R. The forcible incorporation of the national minorities into the Russian Empire was praised as progressive. Those who had resisted it were denounced as agents of Russia's colonial rivals. Such was the fate which befel Shamil, the legendary leader of Caucasian resistance to Russian colonisation. This glorification of the Great Russians, to the obvious detriment of all the other nations of the U.S.S.R., flowed logically from Stalin's original, messianic doctrine of "socialism in one country". Things went so far as to retrospectively justify defencism in the First World War.

In the Second World War the excesses of this policy were somewhat eased, and the Kremlin belatedly tried to harness the national feelings of the minorities in the struggle against the Nazi invaders. But Stalin's Russification policy continued regardless. No sooner had the Red Army cleared certain areas of invading German troops, than the N.K.V.D. moved in to begin the deportation to Soviet Asia of no fewer than six national minorities - the Chechens, Ingushi, Karachai, Balkars, Crimean Tartars and Kalmuks. The whole operation took no more than a week. Like cattle, every man, woman and child was herded into waiting trains, after the manner of the deportation of the Jews to Auschwitz, and dumped in the wastelands of Soviet Asia. That was how Stalin "solved" the nationalities problem. Yet the problem refused to go away, despite - or rather because of - the Kremlin's massive Russification drive throughout the U.S.S.R.

The signal for the new turn was given by Stalin in a speech to the Soviet High Command in the Kremlin in May 1945:

"I would like to propose that we drink to the health of the Soviet people, and primarily of the Russian people. I drink primarily to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding of all the nations that constitute the Soviet Union...during the war...it has earned universal recognition as the guiding force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country. I drink to the health of the Russian people, not only because it is the leading people, but also because it is gifted with a clear mind, a staunch character and patience".

The racist overtones of these remarks were not lost on the apparatus. Once the swing into Cominformism was under way, with its doctrine of the "two camps" and the resulting attempt to seal off the Kremlin "bloc" from the rest of the world, the pre-war chauvinist excesses were rapidly surpassed. If the Russians were the "leading people" of the U.S.S.R., it soon became clear that the Jews were its pariahs. Their natural internationalism made them obvious targets for racist attacks, disguised as polemics against "cosmopolites without kith or kin". Jewish culture was virtually stamped out. The leading figures were murdered. The Jewish faith was driven underground. The entire membership of the Jewish anti-fascist committee was executed as a fascist agency of U.S. imperialism. At the very end of Stalin's life, at the time of the "Doctors' Plot", (23), the apparatus secured by its usual methods the passing of resolutions in factories, demanding the deportation of the Jews. Only Stalin's death prevented this fascist policy from being carried out.

The tragic fate of the Jews under Stalin only mirrored what was happening to all the national minorities of the U.S.S.R. The blatant anti-semitism of Stalin's last years proved him a worthy pupil of his former ally, Hitler. It was, no

doubt, devised to divert national feelings away from the real oppressors towards the classic historical scapegoat of all reactionary regimes.

Stalin's death re-opened the national question in Soviet politics. At first, under Malenkov, the policy was one of quite rapidly easing the earlier repressive policies. One of the charges later brought by Khrushchev and Bulganin against his ally Beria was that he encouraged Georgian separatism at the behest of imperialism! As in other spheres, Khrushchev initially adopted a tough line, which he then reversed in spectacular fashion with his "Secret Speech" of March 1956. In that report he indicted Stalin for his crimes in the sphere of national policy, even raising for the first time the question of the fate of the deported Soviet nationalities.

Khrushchev's speech was never made public, but millions learned of its contents overnight. It gave an enormous impetus to the already developing anti-Stalin movement both in the U.S.S.R. and in the buffer states. It threw the Stalinist parties into utter confusion throughout the capitalist world. The deported national minorities re-doubled their agitation for the reversal of the infamous verdict that they had been guilty of collaboration, en masse, with the Nazi invaders. This had been the pretext advanced by the Kremlin for their deportation. As in Czechoslovakia, only more so, the apparatus had been constructed on the basis of the subordination of the national minorities to the central Great Russian bureaucracy. Even the slightest shift away from Stalin's Russification policy would threaten the privileges of tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of middle and lower-rank party and state officials who held posts in the national republics mainly because of their Russian nationality. (16)

Having uncorked the bottle, Khrushchev was compelled to force the cork back again. At the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1961 he unveiled as part of his utopian programme of "Communism in One Country" by 1980, a policy of intensified Russification disguised as the merging of nations:

"The boundaries between the union republics within the U.S.S.R. are increasingly losing their former significance... Full scale Communist construction signifies a new stage in the development of national relations in the U.S.S.R., in which the nations will draw still closer together and their complete unity will be achieved".

Liquidation of the national minorities, by 1980 at the latest, was the goal set by the Kremlin in 1961. The new Russification campaign took the form of intensified pressure to make Russian the main language in all the national republics, while less and less pressure was exerted on Russian nationals in the republics to learn and use the native tongue. Journals, newspapers and books in the native language of the republics were steadily reduced in favour of Russian-language publications. Job-preferences went in favour of Russians or Russian-speaking national minority applicants. National culture was persecuted and its advocates were chided for neglecting the positive influence of Russian culture. The deported Crimean Tartars were denied the right to return to their homeland, even though they had been cleared of Stalin's charge of collaboration with the Nazis.

Other aspects of the national question emerged in the middle and late years of Khrushchev's rule. The Jews were once more singled out for special treatment, and used as scapegoats for popular resentment against Bureaucratic corruption. After Khrushchev had restored the death penalty for so called "economic crimes" in 1961, more than two-thirds of those executed were Jews even though they constitute no more than 1% of the Soviet population.

Unrest among the nationalities and in the working class against the Kremlin's low wages policy led Khrushchev to resort to this classic weapon of reaction during this period.

Given favourable overall conditions, repression begets resistance. From the Ukraine and the Baltic Republics in the West to Kazakhstan in the Soviet East, the national movement began to mobilise against the Moscow Russifiers. The movement was not uniform. It ranged from those seeking to return to Lenin's nationalities policy (Chornovil and Dzyuba in the Ukraine, or Grigorenko, who took up the cause of the Crimean Tartars) to the Christian historian Moroz.

The resistance to Russification took many forms - refusal to join the C.P.S.U. or to learn or use Russian; boycott of 'official' national culture and the development of an underground, authentic national culture; secret organisations; demonstrations; Samizdat publications (The Ukrainian Herald, the Lithuanian Chronicle); petitions to the Government and the C.P.S.U. and so on.

It would be very wrong to counterpose this national upsurge to the struggle of the working class against the bureaucracy, if only for the reason that upwards of one-third of the Soviet working class is composed of the various national minorities.

Nor should another salient fact be overlooked. It was in the period of the world revolutionary upturn of 1968 that the national movement in the U.S.S.R. mounted the first open challenge to the Kremlin, when the Tartars' rally was dispersed by K.G.B. men with water-cannon and truncheons on the anniversary of Lenin's birthday in April 1968.

With the exception of the pan-Slav traditionalists, who carry very little weight, all currents in the dissident movement have displayed extreme sensitivity on the national question. Profound works have been written on the subject from a whole range of positions. A careful reading of the Chronicle of Current Events will show that the biggest single issue activating the human rights movement and its allies, and the issue which draws the greatest repressions from the Kremlin, is the national question.

Nor is its scope to be limited to the U.S.S.R. The German minority in the U.S.S.R., dispersed by Stalin during and after the war, is heroically battling for the right to re-unify with its parent nation - a campaign which elicits howls of derision from the W.K.P. because these Germans seek a return to West Germany. Presumably they should apply for citizenship of the German Democratic Republic.

In Lithuania in 1972, scattered revolts broke out in the course of open protests against the Kremlin's double repression of that republic. The oppression is not only national, but also religious. The main faith in Lithuania is Roman Catholic, whereas the Kremlin and the K.G.B. lend their support to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The national question has penetrated even into the armed forces. A human rights group was formed among Lithuanian officers of the Baltic Red Fleet. When the K.G.B. moved to round up the group, one officer sought asylum at the U.S. legation. He was handed back to the tender care of the K.G.B.

The Baltic mutiny of last November was organised by sailors from the Latvian port of Riga. Predictably, the Kremlin has again resorted to anti-semitism to cement together the seething ranks of its armed forces. Victor Fainberg(24) was told by Soviet sailors at Portsmouth that it was a disgrace that Jews should be allowed to demonstrate in such a civilised country as Britain.

"Hitler did not do his job properly" was the comment of one Red Navy officer.

These Black Hundred sentiments represent not only the deepening of the crisis and further degeneration of the bureaucracy in a general sense, but the existence of a fascist current inside the topmost summits of the apparatus. The evolution of such a current was anticipated by the Transitional Programme.

"all shades of thought are to be found among the bureaucracy, from genuine Bolshevism...to complete fascism. 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 un-interruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism".

Like other prognoses of the Fourth International at that time, this perspective has not worked itself out in a unilinear fashion. The fascist and other restorationist elements in the apparatus have been held in check, not so much by their rivals in the Kremlin as by the strength of the Soviet and world working-class, and by the amazing resilience of the socialised property relations established by the October Revolution. The fascist wing is therefore compelled to mask its programme of restoration, and to work for short-term goals that facilitate its final aim. Hence the divisions within the apparatus over the handling of the national question, over psychiatric abuse, over the rights of Jews etc. The bestial hounding of the leaders of the movements of the national minorities, and the "excesses" of the Kremlin's Russification policy, reflect direct imperialist interests and pressures. They in no way differ from the nationalities policy of fascism.

Hence the clash, not only over the Kremlin's domestic policy on this question, but also on the eve of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Hence also the other momentous decisions that have affected the buffer states.

Conclusion

The re-building of the Fourth International in the U.S.S.R. and in Eastern Europe will entail the most rigorous application of principals on the national question, as on all other aspects of the democratic programme of the political revolution. Revolutionary socialists stand full square with the national minorities in their struggle for freedom, up to and including the right to separation from the U.S.S.R., just as they uphold the right of the buffer states to withdraw from Comecon and the Warsaw Pact and to demand the removal of Kremlin troops from their territory. These demands, essential to the advance of the political revolution in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe, must be given expression in the British labour movement and specifically in the Labour Party.

The second and last part of this article, together with appendices, will be published in our next issue.

FOOTNOTES

Stalinism and the Political Revolution --- Part One.

(1) The New Economic Policy is described and analysed in detail, together with the linked danger of bureaucracy, in "The New Course". This pamphlet of Trotsky's is included in "The Struggle of the Left Opposition" (Pathfinder Press)

(2) An extended analysis of the revolutionary events of 1921 and 1923 in Germany, and the role of the Communist leadership in them, is to be found in "Lessons of October" by Trotsky. This pamphlet is included in "The Struggle of the Left Opposition". (Pathfinder Press)

See also "Fascism in Germany" (Volume I) by Robert Black. (Stejne Publications - 2 volumes)

(3) The Trade Union Debate concerned the extent to which the soviet trades unions should be independent of the state on the one hand, or subjected to its discipline (in the manner of military communism) on the other, in the interests of increased production. Lenin took the former position, Trotsky, ironically enough, the latter. Lenin's view won the day at the time, though Trotsky was later to find himself defending Lenin's position against Stalin, when the latter made the trade unions instruments of the bureaucracy. It should be emphasised that Trotsky put forward his arguments against Lenin under conditions of extreme economic and political crisis and only viewed them as a temporary necessity. Today the slogan of independent trades unions and workers organisations in the U.S.S.R. is a central demand for the political revolution.

(4) The Permanent Revolution was the main theoretical contribution to Marxism made by Trotsky prior to his analysis of Stalinism and development of the programme of the political revolution. His two main works on this subject "Results and Prospects" (1905) and "The Permanent Revolution" (1928) are published in a single pamphlet by New Park Publications. In its original form the theory held, in brief, that in countries where the bourgeoisie had proved too weak to carry out the democratic tasks (agrarian reform, democratic rights, the national question, etc.) only the proletarian revolution could carry out such tasks. In practice this meant that the working class, confronted with the realisation of "bourgeois" democratic tasks on taking power, would not be able to limit itself to such tasks but would have to push on to specifically socialist policies. The revolution would thus be a 'permanent' one, and could not result in a period of stable, bourgeois development which "postponed" the socialist revolution and the solution of specifically socialist tasks. It is in this latter respect that the theory differs most markedly from those of Stalin, who held to a 'two-stage' theory of revolution. The first stage was 'bourgeois' and demanded the subordination of communists to their bourgeoisies who were seen as the leaders of this stage of the revolution. The socialist revolution would come later.

The results of the application of this policy in China are analysed in detail in Trotsky's "Problems of the Chinese Revolution" (New Park Publications)

An additional important point is that even in advanced capitalist countries, bourgeois democratic tasks are either uncompleted (as in Britain with its monarchy etc.) or having been completed, are being reversed and treated by the bourgeoisie as 'socialistic' and no longer acceptable (as in France).

There is much material of great interest on why the bourgeoisie has to go back on its own democratic programme in Marx's "Eighteenth Brumaire" (Lawrence & Wishart)

The theory of the Permanent Revolution is thus not limited in its relevance

to countries with retarded bourgeois development.

(5) See "Problems of the Chinese Revolution" by Trotsky (New Park Publications) for the history and consequences of the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the bourgeois nationalist Chiang-Kai-Shek. For Trotsky on the role of Stalinism in the General Strike of 1926 in Britain see "On Britain" (Pathfinder Press).

(6) The Popular Front is the organisational form at government level, of the subordination of the independence of the workers' parties and organisations to the goal of "unity with the progressive bourgeoisie". It involves a coalition between workers' and supposed liberal bourgeois parties, usually though not always under the banner of the main enemy being 'monopoly capitalism (see the C.P.G.B.'s 'British Road to Socialism' draft) or, as in the case of Spain in the 1930's, fascism. For a full analysis of this latter see "The Spanish Revolution", a collection of Trotsky's writings published by Pathfinder Press. Trotsky categorised the Popular Front, together with fascism, as the last defence of the bourgeoisie against the proletarian revolution.

(7) Workers Revolutionary Party. This organisation, founded as a 'party' in 1973 from the former Socialist Labour League, has a daily paper "The News-line" and an apparatus entirely under the control of a combination of petit-bourgeois journalists and entertainers and hardened sectarians. The General Secretary is Michael Banda, who took over from G. Healy in 1975. The latter now devotes his time to slandering Trotsky's colleagues of the 1930's, especially those who remain amongst the leaders of the Trotskyist movement to this day, in particular Joseph Hansen and George Novak of the Socialist Workers' Party of the U.S.A. He also gives lectures on dialectical materialism in, appropriately enough, a remote country house in Derbyshire. For the W.R.P. there is no crisis in the Fourth International - it has been rebuilt, it exists, and the W.R.P. and its tiny group of international acolytes is it. This group of atrophied sects is, according to Healy, Trotsky's "world party of the proletariat". Recently he has been lending the political support of this 'international' to such noted anti-communists as Gaddafi in Libya, and supporting the Kremlin's position on the Eastern European dissidents movement as Carter's Fifth Column".

(8) This pamphlet was aimed against the comrades who were amongst the founder members of the Bulletin Group.

(9) See "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" by Marx (Lawrence & Wishart). This pamphlet compares and contrasts its subject with the Brumaire of the earlier Bonaparte referred to in our text.

(10) In addition to works already mentioned, see "Whither France" (New Park Publications) and the Pelican book of Trotsky's writings on Germany.

(11) See "Fascism in Germany" by Robert Black. (Volume 2) (Steinne Publications).

(12) This is especially true at the stage of "third-period" Stalinism as applied in Germany. An ultra-sectarian attitude to Social-Democracy (including its rank and file) went hand in hand with activities in tacit political liaison with the Nazis, for example the affair of the "Red Referendum".

(13) 1934- Arranged by Stalin - signal for imprisonment of Bolshevik leaders.

(14) The support for Popular Fronts, and the fight to get Communist members into them in order to tie the workers under their influence to the programme of the bourgeoisie is a conspicuous example of this. So is the support given to the League of Nations which Lenin had described as a 'thieves kitchen'.

(15) Following the Nazi-Soviet pact, a faction developed in the American S.W.P. which held that the bureaucracy was a new class. This position led to a questioning of the slogan of "unconditional defence of the U.S.S.R."

One may ask why it is that the British S.W.P. today, formerly the International Socialist Group, does not its theory of "state capitalism" in the U.S.S.R. to similar conclusions, but rather tends to tail end the Stalinists at home and abroad on every issue.

(16) See appendices to this article in our next issue.

(17) Germany. See also Marxist Bulletin no. 4.

(18) See Marxist Bulletin no. 4.

(19) The reformist Social-Democratic party in Germany, member party of the Socialist (Second) International, and main party of the German working class.

(20) Workers Socialist League. This group which publishes the fortnightly "Socialist Press" is the organisational form now taken by a group of former members of the Workers Revolutionary Party who have gathered around them a group of some weight in the revolutionary left. It operates chiefly in the Trades Union movement. Its political positions are vacillating and uncertain, its international affiliations non-existent, though it proclaims the need to rebuild the Fourth International.

The relationship between its present virtual political liquidation into the sphere of trade union work and the platform on which its founders fought in, and were expelled from, the W.R.P. - that of a return to the Transitional Programme - is again quite uncertain.

The main leading group centres around Alan Thornett, renowned for the witch-hunts conducted against him by the capitalist press in relation to his union activities at the Cowley plant of British Leyland.

(21) Noske and Schiedemann led the right-wing of the S.P.D. which, coming to power following the revolutionary rising in Germany in 1918, carried out for the bourgeoisie the task of liquidating the revolutionary leadership of that rising. The deaths of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were part of this witch-hunt.

(22) Two-camp theory of Zhdanov.

(23) January 1953- 15 Jewish doctors framed on attempted murder of Stalin.

(24) Victor Fainberg. A leading representative of the dissidents movement. He lives in England and devotes his life to campaigning on behalf of dissidents throughout Europe. He is particularly interested in developing a campaign in the workers' movement against repression in the U.S.S.R. He spent five years in a psychiatric prison.



Labour Party members lobby the Socialist International bureau meeting on October 23 last year. They were opposing their party's proposals which would have ended observer status for East European Social Democratic parties within the international.

The proposal to change these statutes came from the LP's international committee but it met strong criticism which led to reopening of discussion of the question on the bureau.

At the LP's national executive committee meeting on November 23 the proposals were defeated by 7 votes to 6 on the Chairman's casting vote after protests from Eric Heffer MP.

Had the proposals been accepted and forwarded to the Geneva congress it would have been a severe blow to social democrats and Marxists in Eastern Europe where the Kremlin does not allow independent organisations which might be utilised by the working class in its struggles for democratic and human rights.

Marxists who do not recognise the importance of this demand for the legalisation of other workers parties and who excuse this by reference to the 'counter-revolutionary social democracy' merely become apologists for the counter-revolutionary Kremlin gaolers of working people and intellectuals.

Former KGB man Boris Ponomarev, the Labour Party's guest last autumn, and Polish Stalinist chief Gierak, who invited LP Secretary Ron Hayward to Warsaw about the same time must be disappointed at the decision of the SI! Now the fight is on for equality of East European parties with the Spanish and Chilean parties-for full individual membership status.

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