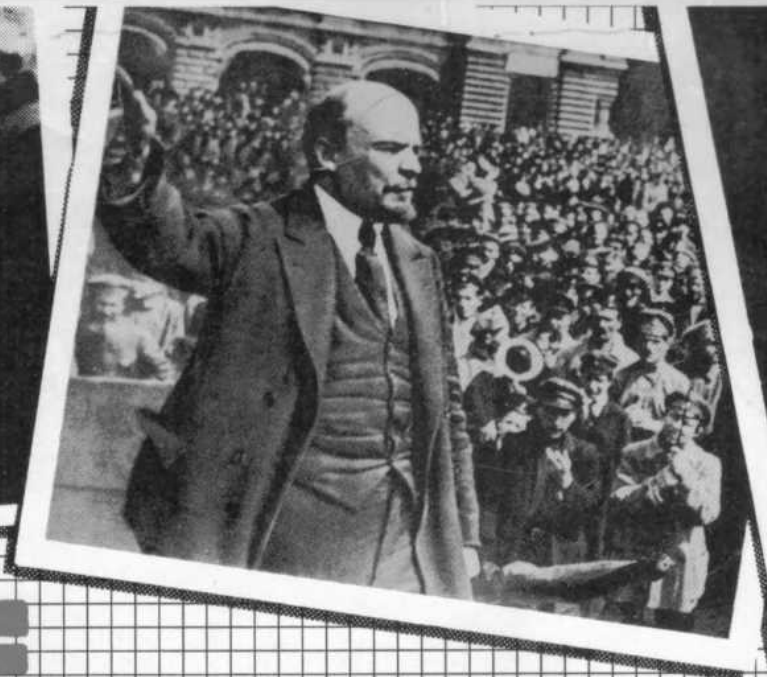






THE DEGENERATED REVOLUTION

The origins and nature of the Stalinist states







Workers Power
Irish Workers Group

The Degenerated Revolution

The origins and nature of the Stalinist States

Workers Power
Irish Workers Group

Published by

Workers Power
BCM Box 7750
London
WC1N 3XX
England

Irish Workers Group
c/o 12 Langrishe Place
Dublin 1
Ireland

© Workers Power and Irish Workers Group 1982

First published 1982

ISBN 0 9508133 0 3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise without the permission of Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group.

Editorial Board

Keith Hassell, Mark Hoskisson, Dave Hughes, Stuart King, Steve McSweeney, Dave Stocking

Technical Editor

Matthew Cobb

Printed by
Spider Web Offset,
14-16 Sussex Way,
London N7
England

THE DEGENERATED REVOLUTION

The origins and nature of the Stalinist states

CONTENTS

Introduction 2

The transition from Capitalism to Communism 4

From Soviet power to soviet Bonapartism - the degeneration of the Russian Revolution 7

The survival and expansion of Stalinism after the Second World War 38

Bureaucratic social revolutions and the Marxist theory of the State 48

Tito and Mao: disobedient Stalinists 52

The Yugoslavian events 52

The Chinese Revolution 54

Indo-China's long revolution - a history of war, compromise and betrayal 60

Vietnam - North and South 60

The case of 'Democratic' Kampuchea 64

Castro's 'Cuban road' - from Populism to Stalinism 69

The Permanent Revolution aborted 75

Stalinism and the world working class 77

The programme of Political Revolution 79

The defence of the USSR and of the degenerate workers' states 84

Centrism and Stalinism - the falsification of Trotsky's analysis 87

The Fourth International after the war 87

Mandel's 'orthodox' revisions 90

Hansen and Cuba 93

The theory of structural assimilation 96

The Spartacist school of Stalinophilia 98

Introduction

Millions of working people now live under regimes whose official title is "Socialist". The world's first workers' state, the Soviet Union, is no longer the world's only workers' state. From Cuba to Kampuchea, the workers of a whole series of countries have witnessed the overthrow of capitalism. "Witnessed" is indeed the right word, for while the property relations in these countries resemble those of the USSR, the manner of their establishment does not. In Russia in October 1917 the Bolsheviks led a genuine proletarian revolution which which resulted in the establishment of Soviet, ie *workers' council* power. The working class, through its own organisations, and led by revolutionary communists, was the direct agent of the establishment of the world's first workers' state. No other workers' state has been established in this way.

The purpose of this book is to explain how and why a series of post-capitalist societies came into being in a way distinct from October 1917, and in a way unforeseen by the foremost revolutionary thinkers of the Marxist tradition. Our starting point is the analysis of the *degeneration* of the Russian Revolution carried out by L. D. Trotsky in the 1930s. The section of this work dealing with the Stalinist counter-revolution in Russia is based on the theoretical insights that Trotsky made, particularly in his book "The Revolution Betrayed". His characterisation of the USSR as a "counter-revolutionary workers' state" and as such one prone to chronic instability, retains all of its validity today, as we seek to prove.

However, Trotsky predicted the imminent collapse of Stalin's regime in 1940. Now, 42 years later, that monstrous mockery of socialism is still with us, even though its principal architect - J.V. Stalin - is long since dead. Does the clear incorrectness of Trotsky's perspective invalidate the fundamental elements of his analysis? In analysing the survival and expansion of Stalinism after the Second World War, we seek to show that it does not. Even though the route to the creation of workers' states may differ, ranging from guerilla warfare in China and Cuba, to administrative decree in Poland and the German Democratic Republic, the essential aspects of these states remain identical. Like the USSR, a workers' state which has degenerated from genuine soviet power to Stalinist dictatorship, all of the workers' states exclude the working class from real political power. Nowhere - neither in the self-management councils in Yugoslavia, nor the People's Committees of Cuba - do genuine workers' councils exercise state power.

Yet capitalism has been overthrown. The economies of all of these countries are both nationalised and planified. In every one, however, the agency of this overturn was either the Soviet bureaucracy itself (as in the Baltic states, before the war), or a national Stalinist party - that is, a monolithic party, led by bureaucrats, not a revolutionary workers' party based on democratic centralism.

The bureaucratic parties, while not extensions of the Soviet bureaucracy are, nevertheless, its replicas. As privileged bureaucratic castes their interests are based on the contradictory reality of the existence of workers' states in which the working class have no political voice and therefore no control over the economies. Thus, like the Soviet Union, these states are counter-revolutionary. However, where the USSR degenerated from a healthy workers' state, these other states have never been healthy. Brought into being by Stalinist parties, they are all degenerate from birth. This work looks at the formation of these states and the implications that this has for Marxist theory on questions such as the state and the role of the working class.

For this reason this work is also polemical. We reject the various theories of the USSR that have so far emerged from the so-called Trotskyist movement. The plain truth is that the elements of the shattered Trotskyist tradition have never fully understood the real nature of the Stalinist regimes. While holding onto the title that Trotsky gave to the first Stalinist regime, they have robbed his analysis of its revolutionary content. Thus leading spokesmen for "official" Trotskyism have dutifully denounced Stalinism in the abstract, only to prostrate themselves before it in practice (Pablo and Yugoslavia, Mandel and China, the SWP(US) and Cuba, etc etc). Or else, elements have fled from Trotsky's analysis to seek refuge in the world of ideal norms in which everything is either perfect or rotten, and never shall there be a permutation (Tony Cliff's theory of the USSR as State Capitalist is but one example of this school of thought).

Our analysis differs from "official" - that is to say, degenerate, Trotskyism, and from those who have rejected Trotskyism altogether. We firmly believe that it is necessary to *start* with Trotsky's basic analysis, but to develop and extend it, not merely with regards to developments after his death, but also with regard to the USSR itself. By developing his analysis and basing that development on the fundamental elements of his own method, we believe we have gone some way to explaining one of the most perplexing problems of this century - how has capitalism been overthrown in a whole series of countries without the *independent* action of the working class playing the decisive role, and what are the implications of this for *revolutionary strategy?* The answers we have developed to this question have enabled us to elaborate an understanding of Stalinism's role within the world labour movement, and a strategy for fighting against it. These programmatic conclusions are summarised in this work in the sections on Political Revolution and Defence of the Workers' States.

While this document deals with the origin and nature of the Stalinist states, it does not deal with their development as degenerate workers' states. Within the left there is much controversy over the dynamics of the Stalinist economies. Do they follow cyclical patterns? What is the nature of their crises? What is the relationship between the plan and the law of value in these economies? What is the exact nature of the bureaucracy - what are its contradictions, layers etc? What is wrong with "new class" / "state capitalist" theories of the bureaucracies?

These questions are vital ones to answer. Vital because they lay the basis for developing *concrete* strategies for political revolution based on realistic, not merely general, perspectives. We have not yet carried out the vast amount of work required before such questions can be properly answered. However, we recognise these gaps in our analysis and intend to carry on the work in order to fill them. We are convinced that our analysis of the creation of these states gives us a firm foundation to conduct this work from.

A final word should be added about the origin of this work. Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group both emerged in the 1970s from organisations with a state capitalist analysis of the USSR (the Socialist Workers Party (GB), and the Socialist Workers Movement (Ireland)). As factions inside these organisations, we had begun to challenge many of the theoretical touchstones that these groups were based on. After our expulsions we committed ourselves to a thoroughgoing re-assessment of the "Russian question". In the case of Workers Power, this re-assessment took place within the framework of a "holding" position of defining the USSR as

state capitalist. It was only in 1980, during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan that we decided such a holding position was wrong, and that Trotsky's analysis provided a correct alternative. Correct, but not fully developed and certainly, as represented by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the then Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, the international Spartacist tendency etc, open to complete abuse.

As organisations we committed ourselves to producing theses that could both develop Trotsky's analysis and apply it to the post-war world, thereby serving as an alternative to the bankrupt versions of Trotskyism on offer. These theses went through a series of conferences and were finally adopted by a joint National Committee of the two organisations in March 1982. After the adoption of these theses, an editorial team of Workers Power members set about elaborating and developing them into the present work,

We submit this book to the reader and request that he or she bear the following objective in mind. Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group believe that no Revolutionary International exists. We believe that Trotsky's Fourth International has been destroyed by his followers' inability to explain the survival and expansion of both Stalinism and imperialism after the war.

The task for revolutionaries is to rebuild a Trotskyist International and the first step in doing this is by re-elaborating the revolutionary programme. What we mean by that is concretely demonstrated by this work. Stalinism, a cardinal question, responsible for endless splits and confusion amongst Trotskyists has to be fully understood. As the recent events in Poland have shown, an understanding of Stalinism is vital in developing *and implementing* a revolutionary communist strategy. A re-elaboration of the Trotskyist position on Stalinism is what this work aims to be. We would justify the necessity for such a re-elaboration in the words of Trotsky when he was planning to "re-elaborate" "The Communist Manifesto":

"Revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol worship. Programmes and prognoses are tested and corrected in the light of experience which is the supreme criterion of human reason ..However, as is evidenced by historical experience itself, these corrections and additions can be successfully made only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of the "Manifesto" itself".

And so with our own analyses and programmes. We have developed Trotsky's position by using his method. We invite wide-ranging debate on our conclusions. For our part, we will seek to use them in the class struggle, Our theory is revolutionary theory. Above all it is a guide to action. It is theory as described by Marx:

"Clearly the weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons, and material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses "

Such theory can and must play its role in the struggle to rid the planet of all the Stalinist bureaucracies who have debased socialism, slaughtered millions, and today extend their doomed life only by accumulating endless contradictions, which they are incapable of resolving, and which will inevitably devour them.

September 1982

The transition from Capitalism to Communism

Against those who asserted the eternity of the state machine and those who made the first act of the revolution its "abolition", Marx and Engels argued that the proletariat could neither inaugurate a classless and stateless society at one blow nor use the existing state machine, but that: **"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*".** [1*] The proletarian revolution therefore inaugurates a new epoch in human history – the attempt to consciously construct a society which can "inscribe on its banners: From each according his ability, to each according to his needs"[2].

The central task facing the proletariat in the transition period is to transform property relations, social life and political power so as to make possible the final consolidation of a *communist society*. In this period not only are the productive forces themselves to be massively expanded, not only are the social relations of production to be revolutionised but the proletariat as a class, and its proletarian state, will themselves wither away. This was one of the earliest insights of Marx and Engels, one from which they never wavered.

"The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonisms, and there will be no more political power properly so called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society" [3]. And again:**"When the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then the proletariat disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property"** [4].

The dictatorship of the proletariat is thus a temporary though indispensable, agency in the final eradication of capitalism and its social and economic laws. It is the *means* to the full realisation of the Marxist programme – *Communism.*

POLITICS IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD

The proletarian dictatorship has a double function. It must ensure the repression and destruction of the former ruling class and the defence of the workers state against internal and external counter-revolution. But it also inaugurates the construction of a planned economy which will allow the proletariat to progressively eradicate the laws of motion of capitalist economy and, on the basis of material abundance, replace all its repressive social norms and institutions. Marx and Engels were clear that the first prerequisite for the opening of the transition was the seizure of political power by the proletariat and the forcible retention of that power.

"But before such a change can be accomplished it is necessary to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose prime condition is a proletarian army. The working classes have to win the right to emancipation in the battlefield" [5].

**Notes for each section will be found grouped at the end of that section*

The purpose of the possession of state power, "the organised power of one class for oppressing another" is to "sweep away by force, the old conditions of production" and thereby lay the basis for the abolition of its own supremacy as a class (Communist Manifesto). The function of the proletarian dictatorship as the *repressive* agent against the bourgeoisie necessitates its dictatorial aspect - ie it is in Lenin's terms "unfettered by any law" in its dealings with the bourgeoisie and their agents.

The attainment of Communism via socialist construction imperatively demands the widest democracy for the toilers. To this end not only must the armed power of the bourgeoisie be taken from its hands but the whole military-bureaucratic machinery of the bourgeois state must be *smashed* and replaced with a state of a new type representing the power of the proletarians themselves. Marx and Engels in their observations on the Paris Commune, Lenin and Trotsky in their concrete assessment of the Soviets of Workers'and Soldiers'Deputies in Russia, isolated the distinct features of the state form that the proletariat must construct if it is to organise itself to rule as a class. Most vitally, this state form must be based on – the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a popular militia, the recallability of all officials who shall be in receipt of no material privileges bar those of skilled workers. Lenin described the features of this semi-state thus:

"The workers after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; the working class will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: 1) Not only election, but also recall at any time; 2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; 3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become "bureaucrats" for a time and that therefore, *nobody may be able to become a "bureaucrat".* **"**[6]

The building of a classless and stateless society cannot be victorious in one country or group of countries. So long as capitalism retains its essential grip on the world's productive forces and its arsenal of destruction, the successful revolution of the proletariat, can only prove ultimately victorious through the world-wide defeat of the bourgeoisie. The transitional period therefore must also be a period of the internationalisation of the proletarian revolution.

ECONOMICS IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD

The immediate task of the proletarian state is to complete the political destruction of the bourgeoisie, to expropriate the capitalists and thus centralise the means of production in the hands of of the state representing the toilers themselves. But the expropriation of the capitalist class does not of itself eradicate the operation of the laws or norms of capitalist production and distribution. The Marxist programme aims to replace the capitalist system of production with production planned consciously to meet human need. This, of necessity, will entail a period of transition within which the working class fights to eradicate the norms of capitalist production, distribution and exchange.

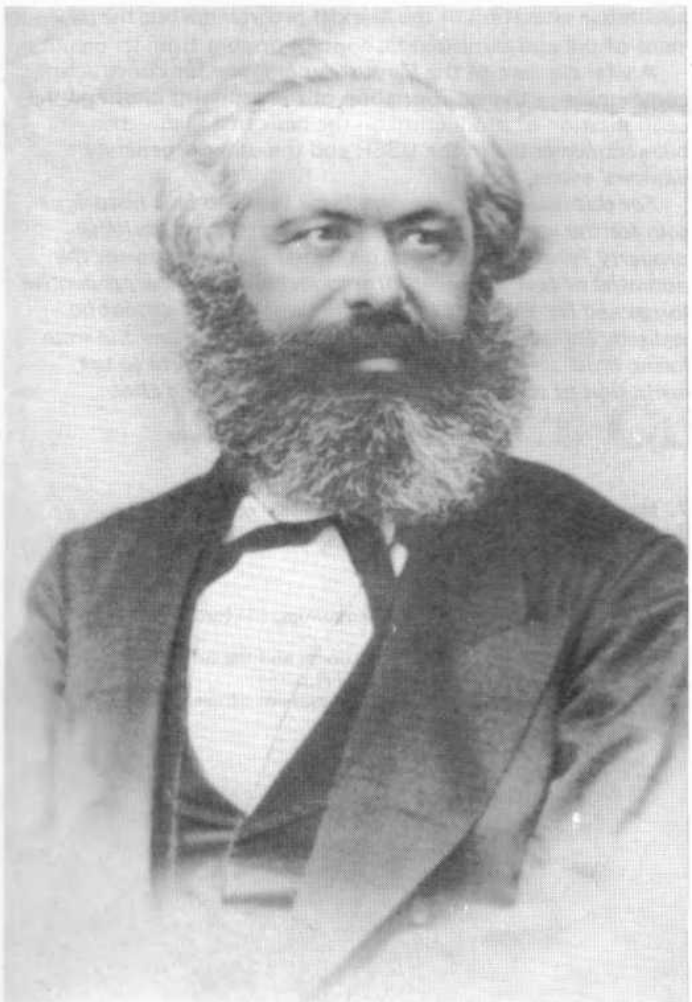
Marx and Engels presumed that in the early stages of the transition considerable remnants of capitalist society would remain in operation. **"What we have to deal with here is a com-**

munist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerged" [7].

Marx presumed, for example, that in the initial stages of transition, remuneration for labour would take place on the basis of a system whereby: "The individual producer receives back from society – after the deductions have been made – exactly what he gives to it . . . . . The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another" [8],

But he pointed out that such a system would necessarily involve the perpetuation of *bourgeois right.* **"But one man is superior to another physically or mentally, and so supplies more labour in the same time, or can labour for a longer time; and labour, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement"** [9] . . . . . **"it is, therefore, a right of inequality, in its content, like every right"** [10] . He goes on; **"But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby"** [11]

The economy in the transition period is characterised by the continuation of the class struggle, but under different circumstances. Class conflict within the boundaries of a workers' state is not principally determined by the opposition between wage labour and capital in the workplace. However the proletariat remains a definite social class. It is not abolished by the revolution but is rather obliged to struggle against the remnants of capitalism within the workers' state and against the continued domination of capitalism on a world scale.



Karl Marx

In this struggle the proletariat in a workers' state is no longer simply a class of wage slaves, but rather toilers consciously eradicating the material foundations of their slavery from the advantageous position of being organised as a ruling class. By continuing the class struggle, by raising the productivity of labour and eliminating scarcity the proletariat does not merely negate the bourgeoisie, it also progressively negates its own existence as a definite social class. This goal is completed by *means* of the transition, but the existence of a transition period implies the continuation of aspects of the "old society" – the proletariat, bourgeois methods of distribution, remnants of the operation of the law of value, etc.

The task of the proletarian state is to progressively subordinate the operation of the laws of capitalist society and economy to the principles of conscious planning. It was E. Preobrazhensky, at the time a supporter of Trotsky's Left Opposition, who, in 'The New Economics' most sharply characterised the essence of the political economy of the transition period as a struggle to subordinate the law of value to the laws of planning. While the bourgeois revolution is itself only *an episode* in the development and emancipation of bourgeois mode of production, the task of constructing a socialist economy only 'begins its chronology with the seizure of power by the proletariat' [12] Neither does that economy grow and develop automatically as the result of expropriation of the capitalists, it has to be consciously constructed by the proletarian state. **" The development of any economic form means its ousting of other economic forms, the subordination of these forms to the new form, and their gradual elimination"** [13]. Statified property in the hands of even a healthy proletarian state does not have, in the immediate aftermath of the proletarian revolution, an automatically socialist character. The socialist, or otherwise, character of this post capitalist property is determined by whether or not the direction of those property relations is *towards* the triumph of conscious planning for the purpose of constructing a society based on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. We know of no better short description of the specific characteristics of socialist property than that advanced by Trotsky himself:- **"The latter has as its premise the dying away of the state as the guardian of property, the mitigation of inequality and the gradual dissolution of the property concept even in the morals and customs of society** [14]."

There can be no progressive mitigation of inequality, no final triumph of the conscious planning principle over the law of value, no withering away of the state except at the hands of the proletariat democratically organised to exercise its own power. "The emancipation of the working class" remains "the task of the workers themselves".

Without direct control by the proletariat, the guarantee against the emergence of a distinct stratum of bureaucrats ceases to exist and the vital force that can revolutionise the productive forces in a rounded and dynamic way in order to meet human need – the creative energy of the proletariat itself – is excluded from the planning process. But what happens in a state where capitalism has been abolished but where the working class has lost or never gained the power to exercise direct political power? It is precisely this question that has faced the Marxist movement ever since the final triumph of Stalin in the USSR.

THE TRANSITION BLOCKED

Can the working class be said to be a ruling class where its political power is not expressed by a revolutionary vanguard linked to the mass of the class by organs of proletarian democracy? Can the dictatorship, the class rule of the workers exist where a bureaucratic dictatorship *over* the working class has been established?

The history of the development of the capitalist mode of production shows us many instances where the capitalist

class either did not exercise, or lost the ability to exercise, direct political power by and for itself. In France, the Napoleonic era, the Restoration period, and the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon all excluded the bourgeoisie from direct access to political power. But such is the nature of the capitalist mode of production and the capitalist class that this in no way hampered the development of the capitalist economy and capitalist relations of production.

Indeed Bonapartism is an inherent tendency of capitalism's political life – one which becomes dominant in the Imperialist epoch. The bourgeoisie's fear of the proletariat, the fact that its position as ruling class was assured by economic laws over which it had no conscious political control made it possible for the bourgeoisie to tolerate, and even desire in certain circumstances, a form of state that had a tendency to autonomy from direct control by the bourgeoisie itself. This is no way altered the class character of that state as long as it presided over and protected capitalist property relations.

But, as we have seen, the Marxist movement had always seen the proletariat's direct control over its own state as an indispensable element without which the transition to communism cannot be effected. Trotsky, for example, in 1931 continued to express the view that the very designation of a state as a workers' state – in this case the USSR – signified that the bourgeoisie would need an armed uprising in order to take power while the workers could revive the party and regime 'with the methods and on the road to reform' [15].

The history of the rise of the bourgeoisie evidences a series of 'political revolutions' where the politically expropriated bourgeoisie struggled to overthrow their political expropriators (after having already sealed the hegemony of capitalist relations of production). This was the case with the overthrow of the Bourbons in 1830 and the Orleanists at the hands of the French Revolution of 1848.

While the bourgeoisie resorted to revolutionary action and attempted to dress up its actions as a social revolution, these events did not signify the passing of social and economic power from one ruling class to another.

Before the work of Trotsky in the 1930s, based on the concrete experience of the political degeneration of the Soviet Union, the Marxist tradition had made no attempt to study the potential situation of a working class that had succeeded in crushing capitalist power and property but failed to prevent the emergence of a distinct bureaucracy, strong enough to deprive the proletariat itself of political power. Trotsky was the first Marxist to develop an analogy between the bourgeois 'political revolution' and the tasks of the proletariat should it *itself* be politically expropriated without capitalist property relations having been restored in a social counter-revolution.

In Trotsky's view the loss of direct political power by the proletariat and its vanguard does not lead immediately or automatically to the re-establishment of the capitalist mode of production. The experience of the USSR, as this document will argue, shows this to be the case. But should the proletariat and its conscious organised vanguard lose political power then the *transition to socialism will be blocked* because the only force with a material interest in that transition, and the ability to effect it, will have been prevented from doing so. The result will be that 'the state' will continue in precisely the form Marxists seek to abolish – set above and against the toilers. Far from a tendency to ever greater equality, inequalities will continue and solidify. The capitalist norms of distribution and exchange that Marxists seek to destroy and replace with conscious planning at the hands of the mass of toilers will continue and even strengthen. Family life, sexual oppression, the deadening cultural void of human relations under capitalism will not be transformed, but will live on in the post-capitalist society.

Such societies – although no longer dominated and determined by the laws of the capitalist system of production – can only advance to communism *after* the proletariat has seized political power again. The oppressive machinery in the hands of the ruling bureaucracies in the so-called socialist states, the jealously guarded material privileges of the bureaucrats mean that the proletariat cannot seize that power through reform. It will of necessity be forced on the road of political *revolution*.

Thus the monstrous bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the duplication of its essential features 'ab initio' in a whole series of revolutions, does not introduce a question unforseen by the founders of communism. It does not require a qualitative alteration of the Marxist programme but the *development* of the anti-bureaucratic content present from its creation.

A vital element of the Marxist programme for constructing communism – the expropriation of the capitalist class and the centralisation of production on the basis of a plan – has been implemented in the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states.

For this reason we recognise these states to be a historic gain for the working class – states based on post-capitalist property forms. But without proletarian political power the potential of that property form to revolutionise the productive forces and lay the basis for a communist society cannot be realised. The political power of the bureaucracy and the state forms which defend it remain therefore an obstacle to the realisation of the historic interests of the working class.

Footnotes

1. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", **Marx and Engels Selected Works,** (Moscow, 1970), 3 vol., vol.3, p.26.
2. Ibid., p.19.
3. Karl Marx, **Marx and Engels Collected Works,** (London, 1976), vol.6,pp.211-2.
4. Marx and Engels, **Collected Works,** (London, 1975), vol.4,p.36.
5. Marx, "Rede auf der Feier zum seibenten Jahrestag der Internationalen Arbeiter assoziation am 25. September 1871", cited in **K.Marx, F. Engels, V.I. Lenin: On Scientific Communism,** (Moscow, 1976),p.244.
6. V.I.Lenin, **Collected Works,** (Moscow, 1964), vol.25,p.481 (our emphasis.)
7. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme" op.cit., p.17.
8. Ibid.,p.17.
9. Ibid.,p.18.
10. Ibid.,p.18.
11. Ibid.,p.19.
12. E. Preobrazhensky, **The New Economics,** (Oxford, 1965),p.79.
13. Ibid.,p.77.
14. L. Trotsky, "The Fourth International and the Soviet Union", **Writings 1935-36,** (New York, 1977),p.354.
15. L. Trotsky, "Problems of the Development of the USSR", **Writings 1930-31,**(New York),p.225.

From Soviet power to soviet Bonapartism - the degeneration of the Russian Revolution

In October 1917 state power in Russia was seized by forces intent on using that state power to effect the transition from capitalism to communism. Never before in world history had conscious revolutionary communists taken state power. The October revolution inaugurated the first attempt to implement and develop the programme of revolutionary communism in the aftermath of a proletarian seizure of power.

State power in Russia lay in the hands of the workers and soldiers organised in workers'councils—the Soviets—and a workers' militia. The politically conscious vanguard of the workers was organised in the Bolshevik party—250,000 strong at the time of the October revolution. That party commanded a majority at the Second All—Russian Congress of Soviets that assumed power after the overthrow of the old Provisional Government. In the first Council of People's Commissars—itself responsible to the Soviet Congress—the Bolsheviks had a majority of posts but shared governmental power with a section of the populist Social Revolutionary party—the Left SR's—who supported the creation of Soviet power.

Enormous material obstacles confronted the Soviet Government's attempt to begin creating the socialist order. The Tsarist regime had developed industrial capitalism in Russia in conjunction with the major imperialist powers and to a large extent economically subordinate to them. As a result Russia experienced extreme unevenness in the development of her productive forces. Developed capitalist industry fostered by imperialism coexisted with under development and pre-capitalist relations, particularly in agricultural production. On the eve of the first imperialist war the national income per capita in Tsarist Russia was 8 to 10 times less than in the United States.[1] Four-fifths of the population earned their miserable livelihoods from agriculture. Although Tsarist Russia was a net exporter of grain, her wheat yield was on a level with that of India and well below that of the European states. Consequently the vast majority of the population eked out a pitiful living in conditions of extreme material and cultural backwardness.

Imperialist capital did however develop pockets of heavy industry amidst the rural squalor of Tsarist Russia. Over half the capital invested in the Donetz coal field in 1914 was foreign, as was over 80% of the capital in iron mining, metallurgy and the oil industry.[2] It was in these industries that the Russian proletariat was formed and grew to political maturity. The Russian working class was small but highly concentrated. In 1914 between 2 and 3 million were employed as factory workers, three quarters of a million in the mines and one million on the railways.[3] But the concentration of that proletariat in giant plants—enterprises employing over 1000 workers employed 17.8% of the American proletariat, but 41.4% in Russia[4]—gave it enormous social weight and political strength.

Taken in isolation the material backwardness of revolutionary Russia was striking. Tsarist Russia had relied on western capitalism for both capital and key manufactured goods—chemicals in particular. Hence the unquestioned unanimity in the ranks of the Bolshevik party, that the construction of the material base for a classless, stateless society i.e. for real socialism, could not be achieved in one country alone, let alone in one as backward as Russia.

The key planks of the Bolshevik Party's programme for transition attempted to relate the programme developed by Marx and Engels to the particular circumstances of Russia and the part to be played by its revolution in the *world* proletarian revolution. All the Bolshevik leaders saw their revolution as but an initial act in the world revolution. They saw the fate of their revolution as being tied indissolubly to that of the world proletarian revolution. This was stated clearly and unambiguously by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky in their commentary on the programme of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks):

"The Communist movement can be victorious only as a world revolution. If the state of affairs arose in which one country was ruled by the working class, while in other countries the working class not from fear but from conviction, remained submissive to capital, in the end the great robber states would crush the workers'state of the first country."[5]

At the heart of the Bolshevik programme for transition, therefore, was the struggle to internationalise the revolution. The Russian revolution was but one gain in the struggle for international revolution. The communist programme is a programme for the eventual abolition of classes and the state. Having smashed the armed power and executive bureaucracy of the old regime, Bolshevism was committed to the struggle to replace the old type of administrative and coercive apparatus with one that mobilised and actively engaged the toilers themselves. In Russia this meant taking sovereign power into the hands of the working class organised in Soviets. But it also meant the struggle to ensure that working class rule was not simply formal. A struggle had to be waged to enable the workers themselves to gain the experience and culture (in the first place) to be able to directly hold the administrative apparatus to account. This was a necessary staging point to being able to directly manage the economy and dissolve the administrative apparatus as a form separate from the working class. In this struggle cultural obstacles as well as material ones confronted the Bolsheviks, not least the problem of illiteracy. The pre-revolutionary census of 1897 found that only 21.1% of the population of the Russian empire (excluding Finland) were able to read and write.[6] As a result the programme for transition in Russia required an increase not only in the social and political weight of the industrial proletarians but also a conscious struggle to raise the cultural level of the masses of Russian society to one commensurate with the tasks confronting them.

The Russian revolution was not, however, simply the work of the industrial proletariat. The proletarian insurrection took place alongside the seizure of land and the break up of the old estates by the peasantry. It combined elements of a land war against the remnants of feudalism with a working class seizure of power. As

a result Russia's arable land was divided into 25 million peasant farms. Not only did the size of these units present an obstacle to re-building agricultural production on a scale and with a technological level sufficient to ensure a qualitative transformation of agricultural production. It also served to strengthen petty-commodity production and primitive capitalist relations in the countryside. The programme of transition therefore, had to win those peasants who had gained least from the revolution on the land—the poor and middle peasants—to an alliance with the proletarian state *against* the rural capitalists and *for* cooperative large scale agricultural production, utilising developed technology. The Soviet Government referred to transition proceeding **"gradually with the consent and confirmation of the majority of peasants following the teachings of their practical experience and of the workers."**[7]

These then were the broad outlines of the Bolshevik programme for effecting a transition to socialism in the aftermath of the Russian revolution. The initial period after the revolution saw an enormous extension of the sovereignty of the masses and, as a result, the break up of the authority and juridsdiction of the apparatus of the old state machine. The October revolution immediately decreed that authority in the factories should reside with the workers committees therefore legitimising 'workers'control' over the capitalists. In December 1917 full power in the army was transferred to soldiers'committees with the right to elect and dismiss officers.

The initial perspective for transition was therefore one of prioritising measures to break the power of the remnants of the old state apparatus, the employers and industrial managers and the officer caste, by subjecting them directly to the sovereignty of the Soviets and factory and soldiers committees. In February 1918 the old courts were abolished and a decree promulgated to ensure the election of judges.

The July 1918 Consitution of the young Soviet republic systematised the achievements of Soviet power. Sovereign power formally resided with the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, whose constitution ensured the predominance of the proletariat's voice within it. Rural and urban bourgeois were not granted the right to vote. The franchise was weighted so as to give one seat in the Congress for every 25,000 urban voters and 125,000 provincial voters. In the provincial Soviets the vote was weighted to one seat for 2000 city voters and one for 10,000 rural voters. The Bolshevik programme aimed at combining democracy for the proletariat with the proletariat's dictatorship over the old exploiting classes and hegemony over the peasantry.

THE FORMATION OF THE RED ARMY AND THE CIVIL WAR

The tempo and nature of the transition was of necessity determined by both the material problems confronting the fledgling Soviet regime and the military/political struggle waged by its internal and external enemies. German imperialism resumed its advance against Soviet Russia until the regime signed the March 1918 Brest Litovsk treaty, ceding the majority of the Ukraine to Germany. Later in 1918, and during 1919, the armies of 14 capitalist states waged a war to overthrow the workers' republic. The Social Revolutionaries and a majority of the Menshevik leaders sided with the White Armies of Yudenich, Denikin and Kolchak in the civil war that ensued. In White-dominated areas, with the backing of the SRs, the Soviets were dissolved and the power of the institutions of the Tsarist state—the Dumas and Zemstvos—was re-instated.

In the face of counter-revolutionary attack the Bolsheviks were compelled to make specific tactical retreats in order to ensure the survival of the workers' dictatorship. The Red Terror exercised by the Extraordinary Commission (Cheka) was an indispensable weapon of the proletarian dictatorship. In order to effectively defend the revolution a standing army was re-created, but now to defend the gains of the working class and therefore in an important sense an army of a 'new type'. "The Workers'and Peasants'Red Army" was created on the 23rd February 1918 and grew to be 5 million strong by 1920. 30,000 of the old Tsarist officers were enrolled into that army so that the workers' state could take advantage of their military expertise.[8] While political supervision of these officers by the workers' state continued, the form that it now took was the appointment of political commissars to oversee their work. In the middle of 1918 the right to elect officers in the Red Army was abolished. Such actions were necessary and justified because the military threat against the young workers's state precluded the peaceful and gradual evolution of a group of *capable commanders* by way of the elective method. The needs of war in defence of the workers' state demanded military expertise immediately. Appointment of officers and the Commissar system alone could achieve this.



Leon Trotsky, founder of the Red Army, addressing soldiers during the civil war.

The refusal of the Mensheviks and SRs to recognise the authority of the Soviet regime led to their expulsion from the Soviets in July 1918. They continued to legally operate outside the Soviets. A left shift by the Mensheviks in October 1918 led to their readmission to the Soviets in November of that year. After an armed attempt to destroy the Bolshevik led regime, the Left SRs were expelled from the Soviets in July. In the factories the move towards workers' management was halted and reversed in favour of the single authority of the director appointed by the workers' state. By the start of 1921 some 2,183 out of 2,483 enterprises were managed in this fashion. All of these measures marked a decisive shift towards the centralisation of political power in the hands of the party that organised the conscious layer of the Russian proletariat. This layer were rightly committed to holding state power *for* the working class as the prerequisite for the transition to socialism. The proletarian dictatorship in Russia took on the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat's political party.

Anarchists denounced the dictatorship of the party without explaining how else counter-revolution could have been defeated. Zinoviev by the early 1920s was laying down theoretical foundations for Stalinism. He idealised the dictatorship of the party, and made it synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Neither position in any way serves the proletariat in the long term. Revolutionaries recognise that exceptional circumstances demand exceptional measures. The dictatorship of the party was such a measure, entirely justified and utilised correctly by Lenin as a *temporary and emergency* method of defending the proletariat's gains against a vicious counter-revolution.

The Civil War had a devastating effect on the industrial base of the Soviet Republic and therefore on the size and morale of the working class. In the proletarian citadel of Petrograd, for example, industrial production in early 1921 stood at only one eighth of its 1913 level.[9] In 1920 and 1921 the giant Putilov works, the symbolic heart of the Petrograd working class was working at only 3% capacity.[10] As a result the industrial workforce of Petrograd dropped from a registered 230,000 in January 1918 to only 79,500 in September 1920.[11] Those workers most committed to the transition to socialism were drawn into the Red Army and the state apparatus, those least conscious were either forced back into the villages or forced to survive in appalling and demoralising material circumstances in the beleagured and economically stagnant cities. By January 1921 there were only 3,462 members of the Russian Communist Party employed in Petrograd's factories,—comprising only 3.2% of the city's industrial workers.[12] No wonder then that the factory committees and Soviets withered as effective, representative and dynamic instruments of the proletarian dictatorship.

In order to deploy and mobilise scarce resources for the battle front of the class struggle, the workers' state made decisive revisions in the schedule for expropriating private property. On June 28 1918 every important category of industry was nationalised. From the spring of 1918 'food detachments' from the towns were sent into the countryside to forcibly requisition grain from the peasants. The system of 'War Communism' was deployed to ensure the survival of a regime that, at the height of the Civil War controlled less than a quarter of the territory of the old Russian Empire. It meant the virtual abolition of money as a means of exchange and the market as a means of distribution. It also necessitated temporary measures to militarise the work force so as to deploy them in the interests of the Red War effort. In November 1919 a decree was issued which placed the employees of state enterprises under military discipline.[13]

The eventual victory of the Red Army in the Civil War therefore had a contradictory character. On the one hand it marked a victory for forces still committed to the transition to communism. On the other it was achieved at the expense of retarding both the material and political prerequsities of that transition. This retardation was compounded by the defeat of the post war revolutionary movement of the European working class. The savage betrayal of the German revolution by the social democratic leaders—a betrayal paid for with the blood of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht—and the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic left the victorious workers' republic isolated in backward and ravaged Russia.



War Communism and international isolation gave birth to several alien and unscientific views of the transition. and false estimates of the relations between present political forms and those required of the workers' state at its existing stage in the transition. Some, like Strumilin who attempted to draw up a plan of production in a moneyless system, and Bukharin, who hailed the collapse of money and the de facto barter economy as advanced forms of the transition to communism, hopelessly overestimated the potential of the regime to effect measures to create an advanced transitional society.

Similarly utopian, and ultimately therefore reactionary, views were in evidence in the struggle of the Workers'Opposition against the party majority in 1920 and 1921. This grouping around Shlyapnikov, Luovinov and Kollontai urged that the party should relinquish its hold over the battered economy and place it in the hands of a Congress of Producers. The reality of the morale, size and organisation of the Russian working class at this time made such proposals utopian in theory and potentially disruptive of the political power of the advanced layers of communists organised in the party.

At the same time,however, there was a definite tendency towards bureaucratism within the proletariat's party and in the relation between that party and the state apparatus. At the Tenth Party Congress the Secretarial triumvirate of Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky and Serebriakov who urged a relatively tolerant and open regime within the party were ousted and replaced by Molotov. The party also agreed to a temporary ban on the right to form factions within the party. While the party at the same time set out to purge indisciplined and careerist elements—24% of the party was expelled during 1921[14]—these measures served to strengthen the potential for the exercise of bureaucratic power in the party itself.

By the end of the Civil War the possibility of continuing the transition to socialism depended on the vanguard and its ability to comprehend the scale of deformation and retreat in the

workers' state, so as to be able to advance. In essence it depended on the commitment of the Bolsheviks to continue a relentless struggle, with the aid of the new Third International, for the international revolution of the working class. Meanwhile inside Russia itself the defence of the revolution and its advance now required a conscious struggle to recreate the working class as a material and politicalforce.

The Kronstadt rebellion of February 1921 and a series of peasant revolts spreading from Tambov to Western Siberia highlighted the problems facing the victorious workers' state. A fuel and food crisis in Petrograd precipitated a strike wave amongst the city's workers in February. The demoralised and impoverished workers were receptive to Social Revolutionary and Menshevik agitators and only emergency food supplies and a declaration of martial law in the region secured a return to work. This revealed that forces who had supported the Reds against White counter-revolution were themselves profoundly dissatisfied with the political and economic regime of War Communism. That dissatisfaction—amongst the peasant sailors of Kronstadt for example—served to increase the potential for counter-revolutionary elements, masquerading as the allies of the toiling masses, to mobilise mass discontent against the revolutionary regime.

THE YOUNG WORKERS' STATE AND THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

It is evidence of Lenin's supremely concrete understanding of the problems confronting the proletarian regime that, in the face of this upsurge, the Party took specific measures both to strengthen its own monopoly of political power and to effect a retreat from the policies of War Communism. The Kronstadt rebellion was crushed. The alternative would have been to tolerate the opening of a new phase of civil war and the opening of a reactionary peasant war against the regime. But at the same time, with the inauguration of the New Economic Policy (NEP), major concessions were made to the private peasantry by the workers' state. War Communism's system of requisitions was replaced by a system of taxing the peasantry on the basis of a fixed proportion of each peasant farm's net produce. The after-tax surplus of the peasants could be traded by the peasant on the free market. In that it legalised the operation of the law of value, NEP represented a retreat by the regime. In that it served to revive agricultural production and won a breathing space for the internationally isolated regime it was a retreat that granted the regime the potential to make future advances along the road of transition.

Under NEP there existed two fundamental and conflicting elements in the economy of the Soviet Union—agriculture and other petty commodity production in which the law of value was absolutely dominant, and the statified economy, mainly heavy industry and transport, in which the law of value could be offset by state direction of investment and which was, therefore, susceptible to the planning principle. In this period the major threat to the workers' state and to its ability to extend its control over the economy through extending conscious economic planning was the spontaneous development of primitive capitalist accumulation in the countryside and the potential alliance between it and imperialist capital. For that reason the state monopoly of foreign trade was an indispensable weapon without which direct imperialist penetration into the economy of the first workers' state could not have been prevented. In the struggle against this threat the young workers'state had accumulated three principle weapons with which to defend itself—nationalisation on the basis of the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie, of the industrial sectory of the economy, the application and extension of the planning principle and the state monopoly of foreign trade. These three measures, taken together, anti-capitalist by their very nature, form the characteristic defining *property relations of a workers' state.*

NEP was a retreat and was recognised as such by Lenin. It made him acutely aware of the need to ensure that it did not pave the way for a rout. In the last two years of his active political life Lenin attempted to concretise and refocus the Bolshevik programme for transition. *First,* it was necessary to construct the mechanisms of economic planning and extend their authority over the Soviet economy. Enormous problems of experience and culture faced the young regime in its attempts to weld together an apparatus of economic planning in the material curcumstances of post revolutionary Russia. In February 1920 a Commission for the Electrification of Russia (GOELRO) was established with the brief to coordinate an all-Russian plan for electricity production. While the party programme called for "one general State Plan" the mechanism for creating such a plan had to be constructed gradually and on the basis of the first ever experience of the attempt to create planning mechanisms in the interests of subordinating and, eventually, extinguishing the operation of the law of value.

A Supreme Economic Council (Vesenkha) was established as early as December 1917. By the end of the Civil War it possessed the authority and experience to draw up plans for particular industries with the assistance of the state planning commission (GOSPLAN) which was established in 1921. It produced a Five year plan for the metal industry in 1922/23 and in 1923 attempted to produce a general plan that would amalgamate Vesenkha's plans for individual branches of industry. But in this period the planning mechanisms simply provided trusts with forecast 'control figures' as dictated by their interpretation of market conditions within NEP. The strengthening and coordination of these mechanisms to a level capable of serious subordinating the law of value remained a prerequisite of effective transitional advance.

But the struggle against the law of value was not simply a struggle between industry and agriculture. Of necessity it involved a conscious struggle to wean the majority of the peasantry away from petty commodity production and from the economic and political dominance of the richer capitalist peasant farmers (the Kulaks). In Lenin's last writings he advanced the programme of cooperation as the means of effecting an alliance (smychka) between the workers'state and the poor and middle peasants on the road to building a socialist system of agricultural production: **"By adopting NEP we made a concession to the peasant as a trader, to the principle of private trade; it is precisely for this reason (contrary to what some people think) that the cooperative movement is of such immense importance."**[15]

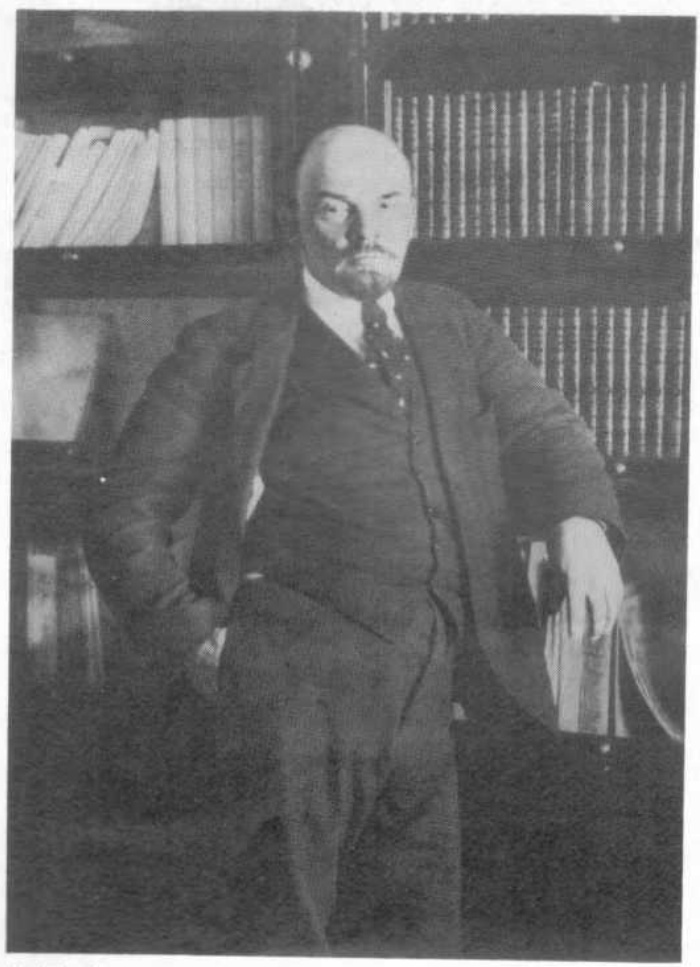
Lenin realised that the small and middle peasants had gained insufficient land from the revolution to guarantee them a secure livelihood and to make possible the application of the labour-saving technologies utilisable only in larger agricultural units. Hence through the provision of equipment to the poorer peasants organised in cooperatives the workers state could *both* raise the technological level of Soviet agriculture *and* cement solid political ties with the mass of the peasantry against the layer of rich labour hiring Kulaks. In 'On Cooperation'[16] Lenin therefore advocated a policy of the ruthless prioritisation of the provision of credits and machinery to those peasants organised in cooperatives as a means of recommencing the transition to socialism in the Soviet countryside. Any other policy would unleash the potential within NEP to strengthen the tendency to social differentiation within the peasantry and towards an increase in the social and economic weight of the anti-socialist Kulaks.

Lenin's last writings also focus on the problem of developing the ability of the working masses to replace the old form of administrative apparatus and to subject the existing state apparatus to the authority of the workers' state. **"Two main tasks confront us, which constitute the epoch—to reorganise our machinery of state, which is utterly useless, and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the past five years of struggle we did not, and could not, drastically reorganise it. Our second task is educational work among the peasants."**[17] Repeatedly in the period after the Civil War Lenin emphasised the bureaucratically deformed nature of the Soviet workers' state and struggled to reform that state apparatus—**"Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not been overcome, has not yet reached the stage of a culture that has receded into the distant past."**[18] . . . **"The most harmful thing here would be haste. The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something, or that we have any considerable number of elements**

necessary for the building of a really new state apparatus, one really worthy to be called socialist, Soviet etc."[19]

But this perspective of renovating the Soviet workers' state and recommencing the transition to socialism in alliance with the poor and middle peasants remained part of a programme for internationalising the workers' revolution. The isolation of that revolution necessarily served to retard the development of the material pre-requisites of socialist construction: **"The general feature of our present life is the following: we have destroyed capitalist industry and have done our best to raze to the ground the medieval institutions and landed proprietorship, and thus created a small and very small peasantry, which is following the lead of the proletariat because it believes in the results of its revolutionary work. It is not easy for us, however, to keep going until the socialist revolution is victorious in more developed countries merely with the aid of this confidence, because economic necessity, especially under NEP, keeps the productivity of labour of the small and very small peasants at an extremely low level. Moreover, the international situation, too, threw Russia back and, by and large, reduced the labour productivity of the people to a level considerably below pre-war ".[20]**

What then were the roots of the bureaucratisation of the workers' state that Lenin perceived and fought against in the early 20s? The functional roots of the bureaucracy lay in the exhaustion and weariness of the internationally isolated Soviet society in the aftermath of the civil war, together with the material backwardness of the country inherited from Tsarism. In this context a series of 'pre-socialist' and 'non-socialist' tasks faced the young Soviet regime. Trotsky correctly outlined this process thus: **"No help came from the West. The power of the democratic Soviets proved cramping, even undendurable, when the task of the day was to accommodate those privileged groups whose existence was necessary for defence, for industry, for technique and science. In this decidedly not 'socialist' operation, taking from ten and giving to one, there crystallised out and developed a powerful caste of specialists in distribution."[21]**



V. I. Lenin

While the armed forces and executive bureaucracy of the old ruling class were *smashed*, the proletarian state was forced to work with significant remnants of the old Tsarist state machine in order to administer the world's first workers' state. Lenin described this process—and its impact thus: **"We took over the old machinery of state and that was our misfortune. Very often this machinery operates against us. In 1917, after we captured power, the government officials sabotaged us. This frightened us very much and we pleaded: 'Please come back'. They all came back, but that was our misfortune."[22]**

As we have seen, the Russian proletariat itself was decimated by the experience of the civil war that it fought to defend the workers' state. Its most conscious element was drawn into administering the state machine, its advanced layers suffered death and privation to secure the victory of the Red Army. Of necessity the advance of the proletarian dictatorship in the direction of planning and equality depended on the small conscious vanguard section of the Russian working class organised in the Communist Party. Political degeneration in their ranks, a slackening of their direct commitment to socialist advance—nationally and internationally—would serve to undermine the proletariat's only guarantee of advance towards socialism.

Enormous objective material factors therefore contributed to the process of bureaucratisation. These were strengthened by the operation of NEP within which the state apparatus was called upon to play the role of arbitration between the interests of the peasantry and the industrial working class. This process of bureaucratisation not only led to the continuation of the old form of administrative apparatus and to a considerable continuity of personnel between the old and new apparatus. It also played an important role in shaping the character and leadership of the Bolshevik party itself. By 1923 less than 10% of the party had pre-revolutionary records and two thirds of the members and half of the candidates were involved in non manual jobs. In Lenin's last years alarming signs of bureaucratic degeneration were apparent in the party's highest bodies.

In the face of these objective and subjective tendencies the key problem facing the workers' state was whether the *vanguard* could regenerate itself and the working class as a whole, in a struggle against bureaucratism, national isolation and complacency. Lenin's last writings show him to have been increasingly aware of bureaucratism in the party apparatus and that this was serving to render the party powerless in the face of the weight of the old state apparatus. In turn this presented an obstacle to building a new state apparatus responsive to the vanguard itself and, thus, committed to the transition to socialism. In fact bureaucratism in the state was positively strengthening the 'old ways' of Great Russian chauvinism, rudeness and bureaucratism within the party itself. In his last battles Lenin concentrated on the regime in the party and the relation between the party and state apparatus as the key problems without the solution to which the transition to socialism would be retarded. Until his death he remained the most astute of all the party's leaders as to the *realities* of Soviet Russia and to the type, nature and tasks of the workers' state. His last testimony itself—*"Letter to Congress"*—contains an implicit criticism of the entire old guard of the party for its failure to grasp the urgency of, and the necessary concrete steps towards, regeneration.

Lenin's eyes were opened to the degree of bureaucratic degeneration within the party by relations between Dzherzhinsky, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze and leading representatives of the Georgian Communist party. The latter were resisting plans to replace the loose federal structure of the young Soviet republic with a more centralised structure under the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. During the controversy Ordzhonikidze struck Kabanidze, a supporter of the Georgian party leader Mdivani. While not in complete solidarity with the political stand of the Georgians, Lenin weighed in against the central leadership. Lenin conceded that perhaps the unionisation plan had been premature: **"There is no doubt that that measure should have been delayed somewhat until we could say that we vouched for our apparatus as our own. But now, we must, in all conscience, admit the contrary; the apparatus we call ours is, in fact, still quite alien to us; it is a bourgeois and tsarist hotch-potch and there**

has been no possibility of getting rid of it in the course of the past five years without the help of other countries and because we have been "busy" most of the time with military engagements and the fight against famine.

It is quite natural that in such circumstances the "freedom to secede from the union" by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that *really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is. There is no doubt that the infinitesimal percentage of Soviet and sovietised workers will drown in that tide of chauvinistic Great-Russian riffraff like a fly in milk."*[23] Lenin urged exemplary punishment for Ordzhonikidze and that: **"The political responsibility for all this truly Great-Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzherzhinsky."**[24] At the same time Lenin urged on the party the strengthening of the accountability of the state machine through raising the political weight of the Workers and Peasants Inspection (RABKRIN). Mindful of the developing bureaucratic regime in the party and Stalin's evident unsuitedness to the post of Secretary that he had quietly assumed in 1922, Lenin urged the removal of Stalin from his post: **"Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings amongst us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary General That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc."**[25] As Lenin's letters to Trotsky published first in *"The Stalin School of Falsification"*[26] show, Lenin urged a bloc with Trotsky against Stalin on these issues.

But the tendency towards bureaucratic arbitrary rule within the party continued throughout 1923. There is evidence of the formation of secretly organised opposition groups within the party which called for a struggle against the new bureaucratism. The most significant—the Workers Truth group—was led by Miasnikov who had been expelled from the party in 1921.[27] In response the party leadership responded to the working class discontent that this evidenced with an attempt to strengthen police dictatorship within the party itself. A special commission headed by Dzherzhinsky **"demanded from communists the immediate denunciation, either to the Control Commission or to the GPU, of illegal groups within the party."**[28]

This crisis coincided with mounting imbalance within the NEP economy to the advantage of the private trader and farmer and to the disadvantage of the proletarian state. By 1922-23 75% of retail trade was in private hands. By 1923 industrial production stood at only 35% of the pre-war level while the marketed agricultural surplus had reached 60% of pre-war totals.[29] This strengthened a tendency towards 'Scissors Crisis'—rising industrial prices and relatively declining agricultural prices—which threatened to result in a drop in peasant marketings if state industry could not provide sufficient manufactured goods at cheap enough prices to encourage the peasants to sell their surpluses. At the 12th Party Congress in 1923 Trotsky showed that industrial prices were at 140% of their 1913 level while agricultural prices stood at only 80%. Only a strengthening of the planned industrial base of the USSR could have provided the material prerequisites of cooperation—for example tractors, manufactured implements—and served thus to isolate the prosperous Kulak layer of the peasantry which commanded the bulk of the surplus. Continued retardation of industry could only serve to strengthen the Kulak and the grip of the law of value within the Soviet state.

THE GROWTH OF BUREAUCRATISM

But 1923 also saw mounting signs of the ossification of the party leadership in terms of its ability to aid and develop the international revolution of the proletariat. Under the direction of Zinoviev the Communist International seriously miscalculated tactics for a revolutionary offensive in Germany in the autumn of 1923. The bureaucratically deformed workers'state remained isolated.

It is in the face of these manifest degenerative processes that Trotsky and the cadre of the Left Opposition launched their struggle against the party leadership in order to reactivate the struggle for socialism. True,Trosky failed to activate the proposed bloc with Lenin at the 12th Party Congress in April 1923. He left Bukharin to fight alone against the bureaucratism of the party's leading Troika of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin, an unholy alliance united by enmity towards Trotsky. In 1924 he was complicit in the decision of the same party leadership to conceal the existence of Lenin's call for the removal of Stalin. To this extent he clearly did not share the sense of urgency felt by Lenin as to the threat to socialist advance in the USSR. But the coincidence of Miasnikov's grouping and Dzerhzhinsky's police tactics stung Trotsky into a war against bureaucratism during the latter part of 1923. In October he wrote to the Central Committee denouncing party administration in general—particularly the demise of the elective principle—and Dzherzhinsky's proposals in particular.

Trotsky had no doubt that bureaucratism had a profound material roots: **"It is unworthy of a Marxist to consider that bureaucratism is only the aggregate of the bad habits of office holders. Bureaucratism is a social phenomenon in that it is a definite system of administration of men and things. Its profound causes lie in the heterogeneity of society, the difference between the daily and the fundamental interests of various groups of the population."**[30] But this bureaucratism posed fundamental problems to the advance of the revolution, **". . . bureaucratism in the state and party apparatus is the expression of the most vexatious tendencies inherent in our situation, of the defects and deviations in our work which, under certain social conditions, might sap the basis of the revolution. And, in this case as in many others, quantity will at a certain stage be transformed into quality."**[31]

For Trotsky only the struggle for democracy in the party could mobilise the vanguard against bureaucratism. The alternative was alienation and demoralisation amongst the ranks of worker communists. **"Not feeling that they are participating actively in the general work of the party and not getting a timely answer to their questions to the party, numerous communists start looking for a substitute for independent party activity in the form of groupings and factions of all sorts. It is in this sense precisely that we speak of the symptomatic importance of groupings like the Workers' Group."**[32] As a result **"The task of the present is to shift the centre of party activity towards the masses of the party."**[33] because **"There is not and cannot be any other means of triumphing over the corporatism, the caste spirit of the functionaries, than by the realisation of democracy."**[34]

The offensive of Trotsky was complemented, in October, by the declaration of 46 Old Bolsheviks including Antonov Ovseenko, Serebriakov, Preobrazhensky and Pyatakov. Taken as a whole the two positions represented a platform of extending democracy in



Antonov Ovseenko

the party as the immediate form of extending workers' democracy in the USSR *and* of developing industrial planning as the means of strengthening the smychka with the poorer peasants against the Kulaks. To this extent it represented an important development and refocusing of the programme of Bolshevism. It contained the key elements, in embryo, of the future programme of the Left Opposition.

The 1923 debate also showed that despite the party's leadership, the careerists who had entered its ranks and the exhaustion of significant sections of its cadre, there remained a solid core within the party committed to the transition to socialism. Despite the campaign against 'Trotskyism' that was launched by the ruling Troika the platform of proletarian democracy received widespread support in the party. It received strong support in Moscow, the Urals and Kharkov.[35] As late as 1929 the Stalinist historian Yaroslavsky was admitting that the opposition won half the votes in certain areas of Moscow.[36] The leadership was forced to concede the demand of the 46 for a special Central Committee meeting on the subject and a declaration in favour of democratising the party's life in return for a Central Committee resolution condemning the activities of Trotsky and the 46. It would clearly be wrong therefore to conclude that the party at this time could simply be described as the property of its central and increasingly bureaucratic leadership.

The death of Lenin in 1924, following on from the first setback for the forces of the Left Opposition (the Central Committee confrontation), served to emancipate the tendency towards revisionism and bureaucratism within the party leadership. Against the struggle for regeneration waged by Trotsky and the Left there were three major groupings all representing specific programmatic revisions and degenerations.

In 1924 and 1925 a definite Rightist tendency increased in confidence and weight within the party apparatus. Represented primarily by Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov, this tendency reflected the pressure of the richer layers of the peasantry on the party/state apparatus. Its programme involved continued and extended concessions to the richer peasants in the name of building a specifically Russian peasant-based form of socialism. As its principle spokesman, Bukharin, put it: **"We have come to the conclusion that we can build socialism even on this wretched technological level. . . that we shall move at a snail's pace, but that we shall be building socialism and that we shall build it."**[37]

During 1925, at both the 14th Party Conference and Congress Bukharin elaborated a specific new content to Lenin's call for **"an understanding with the peasantry."** It was to mean concessions to the peasantry in order to encourage their economy, it was to mean tailoring the pace of industrial development to these concessions. The policies of Bukharin were enshrined in the decision of the April 1925 Central Committee meeting to sanction the right to hire labour and extend the rights of land leasing and thus strengthen the operation of the law of value in the USSR. In April 1925 Bukharin delivered his famous speech to a mass party meeting in Moscow calling on the Russian peasants to "enrich yourselves."

The Right had another social base within the bureaucratised apparatus of the workers' state. An important section of the Soviet Trade Union leaders—particularly Tomsky—craved an unprincipled alliance with the reformist leaders of the Yellow Amsterdam-based International Trade Union Federation. For them potential alliances with the reformist trade union leaders—particularly in Britain—represented a potential road of protection and stability for the Soviet state in its existing bureaucratised form.

In essence the Right was therefore a tendency committed to strengthening capitalist forces within the USSR and securing peace with world capitalism through the medium of the reformist labour bureaucracies. The Right's programme was a narrow nationalist one that sought to preserve the status quo—the bureaucratically deformed workers' state. *Objectively,* however, the Right were in fact a tendency for capitalist restoration. This was the logical end point of their programme of concessions to rich private peasants. In the mid-twenties their reactionary views accorded with the doctrine of 'Socialism in One Country', a creed they shared with Stalin. But the Right's policy of relative freedom for Soviet Trade Union officialdom and compromise with the rich peasant farmers meant that they were not of necessity wedded to the forms of bureaucratic rule later advanced by the group around Stalin.

In concert with this group *against* the Communist Left, but in material conflict with the Right's programme, stood a bureaucratic left centre group around Zinoviev and Kamenev. Their social base was the industrial city of Leningrad and the Communist International. For the Rightists the failed German Revolution of 1923 underlined the fact that the proletariat of Western Europe could not be relied on to solve the problems of isolated and backward Russia. For Zinoviev however, it meant that a serious blow had been struck at the ability of the Soviet state to resist the developing bourgeois forces within its own boundaries. Zinoviev expressed this in the following terms: **"An alliance of a proletarian Germany with Soviet Russia would create a new phase of NEPism. . would nip in the bud the tendency of a new bourgeoisie to assume a controlling position in the economic life of our republican union."**[38]

The 5th Congress of the Comintern, meeting in June and July 1924, reflected a profound disorientation in the strategy and tactics of the Communist International. Zinoviev responded to the German defeat and the appearance of capitalist stabilisation with a call to bureaucratically 'Bolshevise' the Communist Parties and a turn to left rhetoric effectively turning the Comintern against the decisions taken at its fourth Congress on the United Front tactic and the Workers'Government slogan.[39] It was at this Congress that the characterisation of Social Democracy as a wing of fascism was first aired—by none other than Zinoviev himself. In its aftermath Zinoviev probably ordered the abortive uprising in Estonia in December 1924.[40] Victor Serge has described Zinoviev's bureaucratic leftist response thus: **"How could Zinoviev have initiated this imbecile adventure? The man terrified us. He refused to acknowledge the German defeat. In his eyes the rising had been only delayed and the KPD was still marching to power. The riots in Krakow were enough for him to announce revolution in Poland. I felt that he was obsessed by the error in his otherwise sensible judgement which had led him in 1917 to oppose the incipient Bolshevik revolution; in consequence, he had now swung into an authoritarian and exaggerated revolutionary optimism."**[41]

Under Zinoviev therefore the Comintern veered from ultra-left to opportunist tactics to secure success. The base of Zinoviev in Leningrad also served to shape his response to the Right. The April 1925 concessions to the peasantry included a 25% cut in taxation on the peasantry and the freeing of agricultural prices.[42] This caused serious hardship and discontent amongst the workers of Leningrad. But while this bureaucratic left could, on occasion, reflect workers'hostility to the effects of Rightist policies on the working class, they were themselves hostile to the programme of proletarian democracy waged by the Left Opposition. The campaign against 'Trotskyism' was particularly virulent in Leningrad. It was Zinoviev and Kamenev who demanded the expulsion of Trotsky from the party at the January 1925 Central Committee. Stalin opposed them![43] To this extent they were the pioneers of despotism within the party.

Alongside these two groups there existed a centre grouping around Stalin, with its base in the central party apparatus. Its hold on the secretariat of the party made it most wedded to the secretarial form of dictatorship in the party. It stood with the right for concessions to the Kulak to the extent that they presented no threat to the political power and modus vivendi of the central apparatus. The Stalinist group did not oppose industrial planning as such, to the extent that it developed at a tempo and in a form that would not disturb the smychka with the rich peasants. The most important programmatic hallmark of the Stalin group was the theory of Socialism in One Country.

In an article directed against Trotsky in December 1924 Stalin first put forward his theory of the possibility of constructing 'Socialism in One Country.' **"The victory of socialism in one country, even if this country is less developed in the capitalist sense, while capitalism is preserved in other countries, even if these countries are more developed in the capitalist sense—is quite possible and probable."**[44]

The programmatic logic of the 'theory' was that given a sufficient period of peaceful relations between imperialism and the USSR it would be possible to build 'Socialism in One Country'.

The Soviet Union necessarily ceases to be an integral, and necessarily dependent, component of the world proletarian struggle to destroy capitalism. It is capable, from its own resources and in isolation, of building socialism without the assistance of the world revolution. Of necessity this therefore leads to a revision of the Marxist concept of socialism. Socialism—as a programmatic goal—ceases to mean a developing classless and stateless society. It comes to mean the stability, order and interests of the USSR as they are construed by those who have political power in the USSR.

This theory, and its chief proponent, accurately reflected the conservatism of the Centre grouping. It was the conservatism of a still developing bureaucracy keen to defend the marginal, but growing privileges that its role within the Soviet state had provided it with. Stalin and his grouping recognised that through 'Socialism in One Country'—i.e. the abandonment of real socialism which is internationalist by definition, and the development of the Soviet economy under their control—these marginal privileges could be extended and the bureaucracy strengthened. This explains why the Stalin group did not wholly support the programme of the Right, which potentially threatened it with the growth of the Kulaks as a rival for power, or the programme of the Left, which threatened it with the revolutionary rule of the proletariat. Yet it also explains why it could bureaucratically utilise elements of both of these programmes to consolidate its own position and eventually to secure its own victory over both the Right and the Left. The bureaucracy's programme was eclectic, pragmatic and vacillating, guided centrally by the principle of self interest.

In 1923 and 1924 all three groups had a common interest in blocing in order to prevent the implementation of the programme of the Left Opposition. They orchestrated a scurrilous campaign against Trotskyism, introduced new degenerate norms of debate in the party and new levels of caste loyalty between themselves when they conspired to prevent the implementation of Lenin's testimony and to keep it concealed from the party, (an agreement Trotsky, in our view mistakenly, went along with). Further to this they flooded the party with new recruits in the Lenin Levy of 1924. In two years the party's size was increased by more than two thirds.[45] Most of the recruits were either raw or careerists and their presence rendered the party far more suceptible to manipulation by the bureaucratic leaders, against the revolutionary left.

These measures, taken together, represent a systematic and conscious attempt to politically isolate and, ultimately decapitate, the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. However, at this time no faction was, as yet, strong enough to drive it out of the party. This was the beginning of the process of the Thermidorean degeneration of the revolution, first fought under the slogans of 'Socialism in One Country', 'enrich yourselves' and 'fire to the left'.

When we use the term Thermidor in connection with the Russian Revolution we are using it to describe a process *analogous* with that which took place after the great French Revolution of 1789. In 1794 power was seized from the radical democratic Jacobins by the most conservative anti-democratic section of the bourgeoisie which proceeded to dismantle those elements of the first French Republic which made it the most thorough going bourgeois democracy in its time. It marked a shift of power from the democratic and revolutionary to the conservative section of the same class—the bourgeoisie. It was not the transfer of power from one class to another. While the Zinovievites, Bukharinites, and Stalinists all had Thermidorian aspirations in 1923 and 1924 the form and pace of the victory of Thermidor was not determined at that time. Neither was its eventual triumph inevitable.

Alongside the development of Thermidor we do see a partial advance in the strenghtening of the mechanisms of planning. By August 1925 Gosplan was able to produce outline control figures which economic departments were to take into account in structuring their own plans. Trotsky greeted these figures as "the glorious music of the rise of socialism."[46] But the majority of the party leaders could not comprehend the potential of the development of these mechanisms as a means of effecting transition. Bukharinism was committed to a hybridised populist vision of a small proprietor peasant socialism. Neither Stalin nor Zinoviev evinced enthusiasm for the planning machinery and the potential of planning when they were discussed at the 14th Party Congress in December 1925. Only the Left Opposition—and in particular Preobrazhensky and Pyatakov waged an unflinching struggle, at this time, for the planned industrialisation of the USSR as the road to rebuild the proletariat and thus its social and political weight, in concert with the poor and middle peasants.

During 1925 a split occurred in the camp of the Thermidorians between the bureaucratic left centrists and the Stalin/Bukharin bloc. Defending their base in the major workers'city and the Comintern against the nationalist peasant line of the 'majority', Zinoviev and Kamenev began a struggle based on formal opposition to 'Socialism in One Country' and the policies of concessions to the rich peasants. It is evidence of the growing grip of the secretariat in the party that the Stalin group were able—after defeating the Leningraders at the 14th Congress in December 1925—to immediately take the Leningrad organisation into their control through the person of Kirov. Kirov moved in to restore 'order' in the party—that is to consolidate Stalinist control over the local party apparatus. In addition Zinoviev was removed as head of the Comintern.

The defeat of the left centrists pushed them in the direction of an alliance with the revolutionary Left Opposition. At a plenum of the Central Committee and Control Commission in June 1926 Zinoviev openly declared to Ordzhonokidze: **"Yes, on the question of the deviation and on the question of bureaucratic**



Stalin's clique celebrate Kalinin's birthday in 1929. From left to right: Molotov, Mikoyan, Stalin, Kamenev, Voroshilov, Kalinin and Budenny.



Members of the Left Opposition on their way to exile in 1928.
Seated from left to right: Serebriakov, Radek, Trotsky, Boguslavsky, Preobrazhensky. Standing left to right: Rakovsky, Drobnis, Belobordov, Sosnovsky.

oppression by the apparatus, Trotsky proved to be right against you. (that is against the Stalinist Ordzhonokidze—Eds)".[47]
In the summer of that year Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev formed the United Opposition to wage what was to be the final, open campaign inside the party for reactivating the struggle for socialism in 1926 and 1927.

What was the balance sheet of transition in the period of the United Opposition campaign? First, social diversification was well developed in the Soviet countryside, giving an enormous bargaining position to the Kulaks. In late 1925 Zinoviev produced figures to show that 12% of peasant farmers were producing 60% of the grain supply.[48] The United Opposition platform showed—quoting the Statistical Review—that on April 1st 1926 58% of all the surplus grain in the country was in the hands of 6% of peasant proprietors.[49] The obverse of this process was the continued existence of 30 to 40% of horseless and toolless properties.[50] The regime had manifestly failed to raise the cultural and material level of the poorer peasants against the richer peasants through the medium of cooperation. By 1929, only one third of the agricultural population were involved in any form of cooperative movement.[51] They remained rudimentary, underfinanced and underdeveloped.

In the sphere of planned industrialisation with a view to developing the material base of socialism, and subordinating the law of value to the rule of conscious planning, the transition was similarly retarded. Gosplan recommended figures for a five Year Plan to last from 1926/7 to 1930/1. It envisaged only a small growth in capital investment in industry (1,142 million rubles in 1928 and 1,205 million in 1931)—in line with the prevalent Bukharinite orthodoxy of achieving growth through maximising the use of then existing resources. Growth was set at rates between 4 and 9% each year.[52] The Soviet regime hung under the threat that its manufactured goods were too scarce, too badly produced and too expensive (on average 2½ times World Market prices) to encourage the rich peasant to part with his grain. Hence the serious danger of grain strikes and shortages and of increased Kulak pressure to relinquish the state's Monopoly of Foreign Trade and open up the USSR as a market for imperialist-produced manufactured goods. But the Stalin/Bukharin bloc was proposing a state budget for 1931 of 16% of the national income compared with the pre-war Tsarist budget of 18% of the national income.

Wretchedly slow rates of industrial growth were of enormous social and political consequence for the workers' state. Offically registered unemployment in the USSR stood at 1,478,000 in April 1927. [53] Gosplan's projected 5 year plan envisaged cutting that total by 400,000! Real wages increased until 1925 but decreased in 1926. The Trade Unions were relatively moribund with decisions in the plants being taken by the appointed director and the chief Trade Union and party officials. The Soviets continued to be lifeless bodies usually subordinated to their executive bodies, meeting rarely for plenary sessions and with the period between elections increased in the mid 1920s. At a time when the working class was once again of pre-war proportions and industrial production was back to its pre-war tempo only the Left Opposition espoused a programme for reactivating Soviet democracy in the USSR and thus recommencing the battle to construct a state apparatus of a new form.

The process of degeneration and stagnation was evident in the party too. The party underwent a process of deproletarianisation during 1925 and 1926. The 1927 Party Census [54] showed that of those leaving the party in the first half of 1925 60% were manual workers, a figure that reached 77% by 1926. The census showed that as of January 1927 42.8% of party members recorded themselves as office employees, 30.0% as factory and transport workers, 1.5% as hired farm workers and 8.4% as private farming peasants. Alongside this tendency for the party to remain predominantly an organisation of officials there also existed a marked tendency to bureaucratisation against the workers' vanguard within the party.

The campaign against the Opposition signalled a new and decisive phase of the Thermidorean degeneration of the Bolshevik Party. The bureaucrats and pro-Kulak elements in the party, that is the majority of the party, were separated by their privileges and interests from the authentic representatives of the proletarian vanguard. To them the Opposition's fight for democracy and industrialisation inevitably meant a curtailment of their privileges and restrictions on the Kulaks. They were not prepared

to allow that threat to become a reality. They adopted methods of "debate" that opened a period of qualitative degeneration of the Communist Party and laid the basis for Stalin's later regime of terror.

In the place of the honest debates characteristic of Lenin's party the Stalin/Bukharin bloc stifled the voice of the Opposition. Articles submitted by Trotsky to the party press were rejected. The Opposition's platform was declared to be "illegal information" and the Politburo refused to allow it to be printed. When the Opposition tried to print it themselves the OGPU raided the print shop on October 12th 1927 and the leading Oppositionist, Mrachovsky, who was overseeing its production, was arrested and expelled from the party. The technique of associating the Opposition with the outside counter-revolutionaries, later to become infamous at the Moscow trials, was initiated. One of the printers of the Opposition platform, it was falsely claimed, was in contact with a former member of the White army, Baron Wrangel, who was in turn in contact with a counter-revolutionary group. This whole story was an OGPU fabrication as even Stalin later admitted.

In addition to slander and bureaucratic repression, the Stalinists introduced into the debate that other barbarous hallmark of theirs - violence against the working class and its vanguard. Evoking anti-semitic sentiments - Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky were all of Jewish origin- Stalin ordered hand-picked gangs of hooligans, rightly denounced as "Black Hundred" gangs by Trotsky, to physically smash up Opposition meetings. When the Opposition took their case to the factories the hooligans followed them, beating up speakers and inciting backward elements amongst the workers to denounce the Opposition and join in the campaign of physical intimidation against them. After one factory meeting the hooligans left Preobrazhensky beaten almost lifeless, at the factory gates. At the same time the Opposition's public demonstrations were set upon by police squads.

Indeed one crucial development in the debate was the extension of police rule *within* the party. Lenin's Extraordinary Commission (the Cheka) had under the direction of the Stalinist Dzerzhinsky been transformed into the OGPU (Unified State Political Administration) in 1923. The extension of the secret police, in itself, was inevitable in isolated Russia. Sabotage and espionage were real dangers. However this extension was carried through under the direction of a Thermidorian, free from any meaningful workers' control. In these circumstances the Thermidorian leadership of the party were able to reverse the role of the secret police. From being a weapon *of* the state against counter-revolution, the OGPU was transformed into a weapon of the Thermidorians against their opponents within the party. Dzherzhinsky's Thermidorian project for a police dictatorship over party oppositions was at last being fully implemented on the orders of General Secretary Stalin.

This process of Thermidorian reaction had major implications for the foreign policy of the Soviet State. In 1926 the British Communist Party tailed behind the TUC lefts of the Anglo-Soviet Committee who fêted Tomsky and betrayed the General Strike of that year. The Chinese Communist Party was ordered to enter the nationalist Kuomintang as a *subordinate* partner to Chiang Kai Shek. It was thus disarmed when Chiang ordered a wholesale massacre of Communist Party led workers in Shanghai on April 12 1927. The international friends of "Socialism in One Country" were given full license to betray and slaughter the advanced guard of the world working class. That the Soviet bureaucracy had not freed itself from the threat of armed imperialist intervention was demonstrated in May 1927 when the British Conservative government raided Soviet trading offices in London and broke off diplomatic and trading agreements with the USSR.

On every front of the struggle for Transition, the Thermidorian bloc of Stalin and Bukharin was poised to plunge the economy of the USSR into dislocation at the hands of restorationist forces, and to weaken and isolate the USSR in the face of a renewed anti-Soviet war drive. Hence the bitterness and venom with which the Thermidorians moved against the forces of the United Opposition during 1927. The leaders of the Opposition were hounded by the secret police, their supporters threatened with dismissal and reprisal on the grounds that they were fostering disunity in the face of danger. In November 1927 Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the party. Further expulsions followed at the 15th Party Congress in December. The leading figures were exiled from the major centres of the USSR. In driving out the section of the Old Guard still committed to an internationalist programme for transition the Thermidorian elements in the party had completed their task. With the defeat and expulsion of Trotsky, Preobrazhensky, Antonov-Ovsenko, Piatakov, Zinoviev and many other key figures in the Party's heroic history, the Russian revolution experienced its own Thermidor. It was carried through by a bloc of the bureaucratic centre and rightist proto-restorationists presiding over a severe national and international crisis within which the Right and Centre could still agree to take joint action to politically expropriate the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

No sooner had the final triumph of the Thermidorians been consolidated than the Thermidorian alliance began to split apart. The rock on which this unity foundered was the Kulak danger of which the left had warned in 1926. In the winter of 1927/28, grain sales to the state agencies slumped. The Kulaks hoarded grain, trying to force up prices by starving the cities. From December 1927 through the early months of 1928 the party repeatedly passed resolutions for extraordinary measures against speculators and launched a purge against pro-rich peasant local communist cadres - part of the Bukharin faction's social base.

The evident danger of Kulak-inspired economic warfare against the Soviet state co-incided with renewed imperialist pressure against the Soviet Republic. In 1927, Britain broke off all diplomatic and trading links with the USSR. Bukharin's policies of conciliating the rich peasants, 'snail's pace' industrialisation and right opportunism in international policy, had all suffered shipwreck. Stalin, an unoriginal man in all respects except as a brutal practitioner of repression, had been totally complicit in these policies. But the Stalin group acted swiftly to place the blame for the Soviet Republic's crisis on Bukharin's shoulders.

On 15th February 1928 Pravda published an article by Stalin entitled "The Kulaks raise their heads again." Ten thousand urban cadres were dispatched to the countryside to carry out procurements in the style of war communism. By the spring it was becoming obvious that a clash was brewing between Stalin, Kuibyshev, Molotov, Rudzutak and Voroshilov on the one hand and Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky on the other with the Stalin group moving towards a total break with NEP on the industrial and agrarian fronts.

With the bureaucracy and, for different reasons, advanced workers, spurred on to defend the workers' state against its internal and external foes, the Stalin faction turned violently to the left. It committed itself to rapid industrialisation and the end of NEP in the countryside. But this sharp turn in the direction of policies advocated by the Left Opposition carried with it enormous dangers for the Stalin group. An admission of past errors would have immeasurably strengthened the Left. It would have necessitated opening the highest bodies of the state and party to the revolutionary Left Opposition. Such a course was impossible for the Stalinists. Instead their policies of break-neck industrialisation and collectivisation were carried out by bureaucratic dictat and massive police repression. This required the construction of the Bonapartist Stalinist form of state alongside the industrialisation and collectivisation drives. Stalin's left turn saw the *centrist* Stalin faction transformed into a bureaucratic caste committed to a political programme of counter-revolutionary Bonapartism.

The defeat of the Right proved relatively easy. They were already disorientated and demoralized by the collapse of the whole world of NEP. The only further step that they could have taken in pursuit of their own political line was to appeal directly to the Kulak, ie. directly embrace the bourgeois counter-revolution. Since Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky and the leading Rights were neither subjectively prepared, nor objectively well-placed, to go this far, they were doomed unless the Kulaks and external counter-revolution came to their aid by routing the Stalinist bureaucratic offensive.

As co-authors of Thermidor in the party, freshly implicated in the destruction of proletarian democracy in all these organs and centrally involved in the expulsion and persecution of the Left Opposition, they dared not and could not appeal to the proletariat inside or outside the party. Thus they surrendered position after position without a fight.

Firstly at the Sixth Comintern Congress held in mid 1928, Bukharin's Comintern Policy was implicitly criticised and replaced with that of the 'Third Period', an adventurist pseudo-left policy of refusal of the united front 'from above' ie. with the reformist leaders. In Germany this policy with its 'red days', 'battles for the street', its apeing of right-wing nationalism, was eventually to prostrate the strongest party of the Third International under the Nazi jackboot.

By 1930, the Stalin Faction of the Thermidorians had triumphed over all their rivals. Kaganovich, Kirov, Rudzutak, Voroshilov, Molotov, Kuibyshev, Kalinin and Kossiov dominated the commanding heights of the party apparatus, the state bureaucracy, the army and the police. The repression meted out against the Right was, however, much milder than that aimed at the Left Opposition.

In February 1929 Trotsky was deported to Turkey. In March 2,000 Bolshevik-Leninists were arrested and deported to the Siberianisolators. In December 1929 Stalin opened what was to become a 'river of blood' between his regime and the Left Opposition. Jakob Blumkin, a prominent Bolshevik since the civil war and an important official in the GPU, visited Trotsky in exile in Istanbul and returned with a political document. On his return he was arrested and shot. Two other Oppositionists, Silov and Rabinovich, were shot for 'sabotage of the railroad system'. From 1929/30 the Left Opposition conducted its debates and published its manuscript organs in the isolators of Verkhne-Uralsk, Suzdal and Yaroslavl. The hunger strike was its principal form of struggle against the mounting Stalinist repression. From 1929 to 1932 a smuggled exchange continued between Trotsky in Turkey and the imprisoned Oppositionists. Then the repression severed the links.

Whilst the Bolshevik-Leninists were subjected to the full rigour of the OGPU, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky retained their seats on the Central Committee and their followers (albeit demoted from positions of command) retained their status as functionaries as well as their party membership. Bukharin was put in charge of the research department of the Commissariat for Heavy Industry in 1932 and later edited the official government paper Izvestia.

Stalin's 'Brumaire' was possible only on the basis of the Thermidorean destruction of the party and merely completed its transformation into a party of functionaries. The weakness of the Bolshevik-Leninist resistance was partly due to the almost complete changeover of party membership since the heroic days of the Bolshevik Party. By 1929, only 8,000 had been members before February 1917 and only 130,000 out of one and a half million had joined before the end of the civil war. [55] In these circumstances the overwhelming bulk of the party had known no other regime than that of the Stalinist apparatus.

Helene Carrere D'Encausse has noted that **"From 1923 onwards, the field of action of the Police Apparatus extended to the party".** [56] The Security Apparatus - renamed GPU in 1922 and OGPU in 1923 [57] - became an instrument of Thermidorean persecution and violence against the Left Opposition. The collectivisation and industrialisation drive that we will discuss below was accompanied by a massive increase in the role, powers and size of the OGPU. In 1930 Yagoda took over an expanding apparatus with its own network of transportation and labour camps - the GULAG. [58]

In D'Encausse's words "the most profound change in the status of the police within the political system took place in 1929 with the economic revolution". [59] The Shakhty trial of bourgeois experts in July 1928 (5 were executed) marked the onset of terror against 'wreckers'. Whilst some outright sabotage by bourgeois experts was possible, the main purpose was to silence all objections to the Stalinists' arbitrary and adventurist economic targets and to prevent realistic reports being drawn up. Realistic and accurate reports could have served as a means of holding the Stalin faction to account. Stalin, in 1930, launched a campaign to terrorize and silence any potential source of criticism. Having defeated the Right and Left factions of the party, Stalin set out to crush all 'neutral' expert elements whose testimony might be raised against him. In April 1929 he announced that "Shakhtyites are now ensconced in every branch of our industry". [60] In 1930, OGPU reported the discovery of an illegal "Toiling Peasant Party" (TKP) under the leadership of the famous economist N.D. Kondratiev. In the Autumn a plot to disrupt the food supplies was 'discovered'.

In November/December 1930 the OGPU unearthed a so-called "Industrial Party" (Prompartiia), responsible for "wrecking" in industry and in direct personal collusion with Raymond Poincare, the President of France! In March 1931 the members of a so-called "Union Bureau of the Central Committee of the Menshevik Party" were put on trial. In all these cases the accused confessed to the crimes. The OGPU and Stalin began to strike at prominent non-factional theoreticians and intellectuals. The economist I.I. Rubin and the director and founder of the Marx-Engels Institute, D.B. Riazanov, were expelled from the party, tried, imprisoned and exiled. In these cases the OGPU utilized the full range of their repressive measures, including endless interrogation, torture and the seizure of relatives as hostages in order to extract confessions. As leader of a factional clique that absolutely dominated the party and the state apparatus by administrative and repressive means, Stalin himself became the object of an obscene personality cult. The Bonapartists had to embellish and glorify the person of their Bonaparte. On Stalin's 50th birthday the State Publishing House published a laudatory anthology wherein one could read that Comrade Stalin was Lenin's **"single most reliable aide, who differed from others by never faltering, by always moving hand in hand with Vladimir Ilyich at all the crucial stages of the revolution."** Historians now had to revise and shamelessly falsify their works. Even long-time opponents of Trotsky, like M.N. Pokrovsky, fell in the wave of persecutions. By 1934, the torrent of glorification had mounted





From left to right
Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky.

to obscene and ludicrous proportions. Pravda carried in January of that year a two page article by none other than the capitulator Radek which in Medvedev's words heaped "orgiastic praise on Stalin". [61] "Lenin's best pupil, the model of the Leninist party, bone of its bone, blood of its blood...as far sighted as Lenin." With this article the river of adulation burst its banks. The cult of the "all-seeing, all-knowing, wise, father of the peoples" Stalin put even the Hitler self-glorification into the shade.

It was between 1927 and 1930 that all the essential elements of the Stalinist system were assembled in their own particular Bonapartist form. The events of 1927 to 1930 saw the establishment of a Bonapartist regime on the ruins of Lenin's party, the soviet structures of the workers' state *and* the ruins of the Thermidorean party and the state of the mid 1920s.

Stalin's "Eighteenth Brumaire", like its preceeding "Ninth Thermidor" was not a single act. [62] It was carried out not by an insurrectionary coup d'etat, but by a series of blows that, having already definitively driven the revolutionary communist vanguard out of the party, drove the rightist wing of the Thermidoreans out of the leadership and subjected the entire Thermidorean bureaucracy to a one-man dictatorship. That dictatorship rested, of necessity, on a dramatically increased police apparatus able to intervene within the party.

THE COLLECTIVISATION OF AGRICULTURE

As we have seen, the Stalin group had co-existed with the restorationist wing of the party tolerating the growth of Kulak farming, low industrial growth targets and an ineffective planning machinery. At this stage in its development it was defined as a political tendency by its committment to holding political power within the isolated Russian state on a programme of politically expropriating the most consciously revolutionary layers of the working class. But it differed from the right in that in certain exceptional circumstances, should its political grip on the Soviet state be threatened, it was capable of bureaucratically moving against private property and of developing and extending a *form* of economic planning in conflict with the operation of the law of value. Its interest in developing forms of planning flowed from its need to hold on to the political power it had usurped, not from a committment to socialism. During 1927 the Soviet state faced difficulties in procuring grain from the peasants to the same level that it had achieved in 1926. [63] Similar problems faced the state procurement agencies in 1928. The Thermidoreans were reaping the bitter fruits of under-industrialisation and concessions to the Kulak. The centrist Stalin group made its decisive turn against the Bukharin wing and against the policies of late NEP. The prerequisite of the Stalin group being able to make that left turn was that the revolutionary left had been decisively ousted from power.

In December 1927 local Communist Party organisations were ordered, with little success, to step up their efforts to procure grain. At the same time Stalin was still declaring **"The way out is to unite the small and dwarf peasant farms gradually but surely, not by pressure but by example and persuasion, into large farms based on common, co-operative cultivation of the land."** [64] The draft five year plan accepted in 1928 contained 15% as an optimal target for collectivisation of agriculture in its duration.

Forcible collections of grain were carried out under the guidance of key Stalinists - Stalin himself, Zhdanov, Kossior and Mikoyan - during January and March 1928. The inevitable response of the peasants was to cut back on their sowings of wheat and rye in 1928. Either the Stalinists could face a threat to their political power by conceding to the private farmers by raising prices and importing cheap consumer goods from the West *or* they could move to break the hold of private property in the countryside. It was in order to preserve their bureaucratic power, rather than because of any long-term plans for collectivising agriculture or expected immediate beneficial results in the agricultural sector, that the Stalinists decided to collectivise Soviet agriculture. The material base of the Soviet economy was hopelessly ill-prepared to provide the required resources to supply collectivised agriculture with the facilities needed to make it capable of achieving qualitatively higher yields. In 1928 the USSR possessed only 27,000 tractors compared with the 200,000 it needed. [65]

The collectivisation of agriculture was undertaken without any formal discussion or decision making in an official party body. It was the work of the triumphant Stalin faction and a measure of their grip over the party at this time.



The official version of collectivisation: "All in favour of the Kholkhoz" !

On November 7th 1929 the press carried an article by Stalin in which he hailed the "spontaneous turn of the broadest mass of poor and middle-peasant households towards collective forms of agriculture." In December Stalin launched a campaign for the liquidation of the Kulaks 'as a class' which was underwritten by a decree of January 5th 1930 proclaiming the State's committment to 'total collectivisation.'

Within seven weeks of the decree over 50% of the Soviet peasantry were members of rudimentary and ramshackle collectives. Active resistance automatically led to protesting peasants receiving the designation 'Kulak' from the party organs. By July 1930 320,000 Kulak families had been expropriated and deported - a number that far exceeded the number of Kulaks claimed by Stalinist statisticians on the eve of collectivisation. Collective farm membership figures for 1930 show quite how spurious were the Stalinists' claims that collectivisation represented a spontaneous movement of the mass of the peasantry. A brief hint of relaxation from Stalin in a March 1930 Pravda article entitled "Dizzy with Success" precipitated a dramatic exodus from the collective farms. By early March 1930 58% of the Soviet peasantry were enrolled in collectives. That figure had dropped to 23% by June! In the highly fertile Central Black Earth Region membership dropped from 81.8% to 15.7% over the same period.

The uprooted peasantry found no resources or equipment in the new collectives. Neither the tempo of industrial development throughout the 1920s nor the targets of the First Five Year Plan made it possible for collectivisation to do other than simply generalise the want, squalor and backwardness of Russian agriculture. Peasant resistance to this process took on the character of a civil war. To the extent that the peasants were incapable of resisting collectivisation they slaughtered their own livestock as their sole means of thwarting the agencies of the central state. This is evidenced by the dramatic drop in Soviet livestock between 1929 and 1934. In those years the number of horses and pigs declined by 55%, of cattle by 40% and sheep by 66%. While 1930 was blessed with a good harvest, agricultural output dropped considerably in the first years of collectivisation. In 1932 cereal production was 25% down on the average NEP years and famine re-appeared in the Soviet countryside on a horrific scale.

Faced with this resistance and the disastrous effects of collectivisation on agricultural production, the Stalinists did order a temporary retreat in 1930. But the collectivisation drive was resumed in 1931 as the means by which the Stalinists took a tight grip on the productive forces of Soviet agriculture. They were prepared to retard the productive capacity of the Soviet countryside in order to achieve this desired effect for the Bonapartist regime. By 1932,61.5% of cultivated land was collectivised; there were 211,100 co-operative farms (Kholkhozes) and 4,337 State farms (Sovkhozes). [66] While the Kholkhozes were formally established as co-operatives the local party organs appointed their secretaries and leading committees. In 1935 the Kholkhoz system received a definitive form. Agricultural machinery, agronomists, mechanics, educational, veterinary and training personnel were all to be concentrated in state machine tractor stations (MTS). Party and Security (NKVD) supervision of the countryside was also to be based in the MTS. The Kholkhozes, in their turn, were to hire machinery and expertise from the local MTS. In this way a definite layer of privileged MTS workers was crystallised in the countryside alongside the perfection of an apparatus of repression and scrutiny over the mass of the peasantry.

Peasant income was made dependent on the income of the Kholkhoz after the state had purchased its crops and collected its tax tribute from the Kholkhoz. In 1935 the average household earned 247 rubles a year for Kholkhoz work - the cost of a pair of shoes!

In addition the peasants were now to be allowed a small plot of no more than half a hectare from which the mass of the soviet peasantry gleaned the essentials of their miserable life. The reintroduction of an internal passport system for the Kholkhozniki in 1933 effectively tied the peasants to the Kholkhoz. A law of 17th March 1933 stipulated that a peasant could not leave his Kholkhoz without a contract from an employing enterprise that had received the sanction of the Kholkhoz management.

The Soviet peasantry therefore experienced collectivisation as the loss of their "gains of October." The Bonapartist bureaucracy had preserved its political power and material privileges by destroying the petty-commodity production base of the Kulak and the NEPman. In this way the ability of the peasantry to challenge the political rule of the bureaucracy through a grain strike was effectively destroyed. But the result was not only the agricultural stagnation and inefficiency which haunts the Soviet bureaucracy to this day. It also created a sullen and rebellious peasantry held down by savage repression. The Stalinist victory over the peasantry created an enormous explosive charge in the very foundations of the workers' state and necessitated a huge apparatus of repression - including the slave labour camps which grew alongside collectivisation - to keep the peasantry in the collective farms.

BONAPARTISM AND INDUSTRIALISATION

The left turn of the Stalinists in 1928 also marked the beginning of their drive to industrialise the economy of the Soviet Union. Throughout the period of the First Five Year Plans, up to the outbreak of war with Germany, the Stalin faction grappled with the problem of consolidating and extending their political control of Soviet society at the same time as they attempted to build a modern industrial economy. At all times their guiding objective was to retain their political power and privileges and only in this context can the zigs and zags of their economic policies be understood. Like all non-revolutionary forces their policies were empirically determined as they searched for a way both to prevent the re-assertion of proletarian control over the soviet state, and to fend off the attacks of imperialism. As such it was this period which was to provide Stalinism with its formative experience and furnish it with its characteristic methods and politics. The defining feature of Stalinist state power, the attempt to create a bureaucratically planned economy on the basis both of the destruction of capitalist property relations and the political expropriation of the proletariat, took shape in the period of the first two Five Year Plans. As with all other situations where Stalinists were later to expropriate private capital and organise production on the basis of centralised planning, decisive measures against the remaining power of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were only taken *after* the revolutionary leadership of the working class had been politically expropriated. Up to that moment Stalinism sided with the Rightist pro-capitalist forces against the working class until it could guarantee that the working class did not have the resources to create organs of a healthy revolutionary workers' state. However in order to defend its own privileges and political power it moved to defend and extend non-capitalist property relations but in a manner that ensured, and extended, the destruction of the remaining rights of the toilers themselves. While programmatically opposed to the Marxist programme for the planned construction of socialism in the aftermath of destroying the bourgeoisie, Stalinism can expropriate bourgeois property and create planning mechanisms for its own non-socialist purposes.

As a bureaucratically controlled overturn of capitalist property relations the First Five Year Plan /Collectivisation pre-figured the post-second world war overturns in all its essential features save that the first workers' state had as its direct origin the proletarian insurrection of October and the expropriations and nationalisations of 1918.

As politically degenerate a regime as that represented by Stalinism standing on post-capitalist property forms must possess a highly contradictory character. The property

relations, the potential of plannification itself, are stifled and distorted. The fact that the property relations of the USSR remained post-capitalist and that economic policy was the result of central planning, not the working of the law of value, did not mean that this statified property in the USSR had a socialist character. In the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy the statified economy was not being utilized to construct a society implementing a programme of socialist construction - a programme directed to the withering away of inequality and of the state itself. The bureaucracy's means of administering the planned economy, and the goals they set for it, flowed from their interest in maintaining their rule and privileges. The massive cost of the repressive state machine built up to protect the bureaucracy constituted, in and of itself, an enormous burden on the property relations of the USSR.

The Stalinist form of planning is only possible after the proletariat has been politically expropriated. This means that the self activity and democratic initiative of the toilers themselves - the very force that is *indispensable* to planning and developing the productive forces on the road to socialist construction - cannot be harnessed by the bureaucracy. Because the Stalinists deny the masses all political rights, they must also deny them access to the decision making machinery of the central plan. In that the plan guarantees the privileges of the bureaucracy it must, in concealing these privileges, shroud the workings of the plan in a veil of secrecy.

As the bureaucracy denies the masses elementary rights and material needs so the toilers conceal the real workings of the economy from their bureaucratic overlords. Low labour productivity, high absenteeism and labour turnover evidence this. At each and every stage in the bargaining process that precedes agreements on plan targets, the bureaucrats and managers themselves conceal their real productive potential from their superiors in order to gain maximum leeway from the central state apparatus. These aspects of the bureaucratic plan were all in evidence in the First Five Year Plans.

They have been present in every plan since. Their cumulative effect is to periodically slow down growth rates, disrupt the economy, create shortages, in sum, throw the economy into crisis. Enthusiasm of the masses, evoked by promises of socialism, recedes as does the possibility of socialism or even of real and lasting economic improvement. The bureaucratic plan expends its potential as it increases inequality and fosters disproportionality in the economy. It cannot achieve sustained *qualitative* growth in the economy. That is, while it has been able to modernise the USSR by copying capitalism's highest achievements, it has not, in a rounded and developed way, ever been able to outstrip the economic achievements of the major imperialist powers.

Within the Stalinist regime, planning is necessarily crude and blind. The existence of that regime based on bureaucratic power means that the transition to socialism in the USSR is blocked. Although post-capitalist property forms remain in existence the Stalinist regime from its inception prevents them being consciously developed as a means of implementing the programme of revolutionary Marxism.

Many attempts have been made to challenge the Trotskyist characterisation of the property relations upon which the Soviet state is based. There certainly has been no shortage of pedantic intellectuals who use the published evidence of the non-fulfillment of plan targets as verification of their own heavily ground academic axe that the Soviet economy is planless - and always has been so. The journal Critique invests its credibility, and that of its lead editor Hillel Ticktin, in this thesis. After rummaging in the academic bargain basement for what regularly exchange as new ideas freed from the "stale orthodoxy" of the past, the leadership of the British Revolutionary Communist Party have decided they can plug a gap in their own theoretical dyke by opting to attempt to convince us of this same sophistry.

Seizing on the evident expansion of producer goods production at the expense of consumer goods and fortified by the manifest deterioration in the living standards of the working class, the founder of the British Socialist Workers' Party Tony Cliff has deduced that the inauguration of the First Five Year Plan, taken in conjunction with the collectivisation of agriculture, signifies the re-introduction of capitalism - albeit in a bureaucratic state capitalist form - in the USSR. [67]

Other observers purporting to stand in the Trotskyist tradition- notably E. Mandel - have sought to prove the non-capitalist nature of the property relations extended and fortified by Stalinism by reference simply to their statistically evident growth in comparison with world capitalism. [68]

None of these schools begin to tackle the fundamental problems presented to Marxists in defining the property relations presided over by Stalinism in the USSR. Whether non-capitalist property relations exist in the USSR depends on whether the fundamental law of capitalist production - the law of value - determines the nature of production, remuneration and exchange in the USSR. Even the healthiest of workers' states, would - in a situation of blockade and encirclement - be forced to subordinate the consumption of the masses to the production of producer goods to survive in the face of imperialism. Whether the economy is planned or not depends on whether the fundamental laws of capitalist production have been subordinated as the principal laws governing production by a system of rules emanating from the centralised decision making apparatus of the USSR.

It flows from the *fact* of the political expropriation of the working class in the USSR that the norms of planning in the USSR will not conform to those for which revolutionary Marxists fight. However, the non-existence of the programmatic norms of socialist planning is not sufficient evidence to deduce the non-existence of planning *per se* in the USSR.

It is impossible to talk of Soviet planning as if the outcome of every productive operation was, or is, simply the execution of the will of the central planning bureaucracy. The periods of fastest growth have been during the First Five Year Plan and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. In both cases relatively primitive tasks of construction and reconstruction had to be fulfilled, growth took place primarily in the producer goods sector and the bureaucracy could rely on a significant degree of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice from large sections of the working masses.

However, in general - for example at the end of the First Five Year Plan and increasingly in the post-war period - the Stalinist bureaucracy has desperately searched in vain for rational methods of administering the plan, of co-ordinating its various branches and measuring needs and output. Under the capitalist system of production these decisions are taken by the laws of the market itself. In a healthy workers' state they are the result of the conscious rule of the toilers themselves deciding on their tasks and needs in order to establish a socialist order. Neither the anarchic laws of capitalism nor the rules of transition are *determinant* in the USSR. The historically illegitimate bureaucracy has to attempt to make order out of property relations that historically only have validity as the means by which the working class constructs socialism. Hence the particular gross absurdities, irrationalities and failures of Soviet planning.

THE STALINIST MODEL OF PLANNING

The Stalinists sought to expand their industrial base through a drive to both increase the USSR's heavy industrial base and to extend the operation of centralised production planning in every major sphere of Soviet industrial production. Planning was, therefore, a vital means for asserting and maintaining the hold of the Stalinists over Soviet society as a whole.

The Stalin group proceeded, at first, to revise the plan targets upwards in a particularly adventurist fashion and then to call, in December 1929, for the completion of the 5 Year Plan in 4 Years. The target growth rate for 1931 was to be



Soviet steel production compared with that of Britain at the time of the Depression.

nearly double that originally intended. Over the four and a quarter years from October 1928 to December 1932 actual investment in heavy industry nearly doubled the original estimates. The Stalinists, breaking with the Right, attempted to establish a dynamic industrial economy through centralised planning.

It is necessary to understand the term "planning" as it can be applied to this stage of the development of the Soviet economy. At least in the early years of the First Five Year plan the targets were arbitrary to a large extent and played an exhortative rather than an immediately prescriptive role. For example the maximum variant of the First Five Year Plan called for a quadrupling of investment in state industry, an 85% in consumption expenditure, a 70% increase in real wages and a 30% increase in peasant incomes! [69] In the realm of consumption expenditure, real wages and peasant incomes in reality bore no resemblance to these figures by the end of the First Five Year Plan.

The results of the first major round of Stalinist planning were uneven. For reasons we have already discussed agricultural production fell far short of planned targets. Similarly the production of consumer goods failed to reach planned targets. Even bourgeois commentators, however, are forced to accept that the production of producer goods increased considerably and on a scale beyond that envisaged by the plan formulators. Alongside this there were significant advances in the construction of an operative apparatus of planning in the USSR. A balance sheet of the achievements and short comings of the First Five Plan can be drawn from the following table:-

	1927-8	1932 Plan Target	1932 Actual
Producer goods (in millions of rubles)	6.0	18.1	23.1
Consumer Goods	12.3	25.1	20.2 [70]
Agricultural Production	13.1	25.8	16.6

(Source: A. Nove: **An Economic History of the USSR** p191)

Stalinist planning did achieve notable successes during the First Five Plan period. Achievements were recorded primarily in the sphere of heavy industry, which received 80% of total investments. 1500 new factories were built with metal plants being established at Magnitogorsk, Kusnetsk, Zaporozhe. A new coalfield was built in Kazakhstan. The biggest hydro-electric station in Europe was built on the Dneiper. At a time when world capitalism was reeling under the effects of severe recession the First Five Year Plan increased Soviet production by 250%. In the heavy industrial sphere this momentum was continued, albeit at a slightly slower pace, in the 2nd Five Year Plan. As a result coal and pig iron production increased five fold between 1928 and 1940, steel fourfold, and chemical production tenfold.

But to what extent can these achievements be attributed to planning? The drafting of plans was the joint responsibility of the Party and Government with the State Planning Commission - Gosplan: They were responsible for drawing up both a prospective plan for the Five Year period and a series of current plans which, initially, took the form of annual control figures. In 1931 an annual plan was produced for the first time and henceforth an annual plan was produced yearly. During the 1930's mechanisms were developed with a view to both maintaining an account of what was being proproduced and a material balance between quantities produced by various branches of industry. It was not until the very late 30's that the planning mechanisms were sufficiently well developed to draw up a general balance of the economy of the USSR as a whole [71]. During the Second World War Gosplan was resorting to monthly plans as its means of organising and directing production. The execution of plans was the responsibility of the various Commissariats and other economic authorities under the Supreme Economic Council.

Targets were set in quantitative terms and, in the sphere of heavy industry, were generally fulfilled in the period of the First Five Year Plan. The Stalinist system showed that it could use the potential of a centralised planned economy to direct resources to the front of heavy industry. Figures



Magnitogorsk: a new metal plant being built during the First Five Year Plan.

for consumer goods production demonstrate the bureaucracy's ability to ensure that available resources were primarily made available to its priority projects.

But quantitative successes should not blind us to the qualitative failures of Stalinist planning during this early period. Alongside the Stalinists' adventurist upping of all plan targets, productivity was due to rise by 42.1% in 1931 but rose by 20.5%. Production costs in that year rose by 6% rather than a planned 8% reduction. By the admission of the Stalinists themselves the quality of goods produced deteriorated during the First Five Year Plan. Hence Molotov could declare on January 1933,

"In the course of the Second Five Year Plan we must focus our efforts not on the quantitative growth of production but on improving the quality of production and on the growth of labour productivity in industry". [72]

Periodic breakdown of planning occured particularly in the light industrial sector. Textile production, for example, fell in certain years of the First Five Year Plan.[73] Rakovsky showed that for light industry during May and June 1931 "the plan was little more than 50% fulfilled".[74]

The Stalinist planners faced mounting problems both of maintaining proportional balance between the various sectors of the economy and in devising rational means of measuring production, needs and the rate of exchange between goods. These were not simply problems of the consumer goods sector. 16,000 kilometres of new railways were planned for the First Five Year Plan period - the materials were only made available to build 5,500 kms.Bureaucratic planning, as the plan proceeded, faced mounting problems of distributing produced goods to the institutions most in need of them. 1932 and 1933 saw the planning mechanisms in a state of considerable strain and disorganisation. The adventurist targets of the Stalinists were only an additional contributory factor rather than the root cause of the disorganisation of the Soviet economy by the end of the First Five Year Plan.

Consistent with the reactionary programme of socialism in one country the Stalinists aspired to the building of an autarchic planned economy seperated from the operations of the world capitalist economy. In a manner that prefigures the projects of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, Stalinist planners theorised a transition to communism in the USSR through the achievement of complete autarchy and the utilisation of the USSR's own resources. But as Trotsky had warned in "Towards Capitalism or Socialism" in 1925, this attempt to create a planned economy in isolation proved a utopia. Despite the enormous resources of the USSR both the workings of the world market and imperialism's hostile designs against the USSR periodically and inevitably disrupted the Stalinists' goal of establishing an autarchic planned economy. During the First Five Year Plan, for example, declining world prices for raw materials occasioned by world capitalism's recession, obliged the Soviet planners to export more raw materials in order to purchase machinery and import less, for example, cotton and wool than had been planned. The targets and priorities of the Second Five Year Plan were to be severely disrupted by the increasing obligation on the Soviet planners to prepare the military defense of the USSR.

Having attempted to send the mechanisms of the market "to the devil" the Stalinists faced insurmountable problems in devising rational pricing mechanisms within their economy. In 1930 and 1931 Soviet economists were again heard to rationalise the pricing chaos in the USSR as a symptom of the withering away of money! Bread rationing was re-introduced in 1929 and was extended to most other manufactured consumer goods during 1930. In addition the same commodity could be purchased at 5 different prices - commercial prices in special restricted access shops for luxuries, open model stores with prices above 'commercial' prices, special shops in workers' districts that in theory sold goods at between commercial and ration prices, Torgsin stores selling in exchange for precious metals and foreign currency as well as the 'free prices' of the private and black market. Prices paid by the state to the Kholkhoz were planned on the basis of the state's revenue requirements not determined on the basis of the law of value. For example, in the mid 1930's the peasants were paid 5.70 rubles for a centner of rye by state provincial agencies which sold it to state flour mills at 22.20 rubles a centner. The pricing mechanisms made possible a large revenue to the central state in the form of the 'turnover' tax.

Failure to raise labour productivity in line with plan targets posed major problems to the Stalinists as to how the industrialisation was to be financed. The heavy taxation tribute extracted from the peasantry provided half the turnover tax yield to the state budget in 1935.[75] But increasingly during the First Five Year Plan new investments were

funded from the massive and inflationary expansion of the supply of printed money. In 1928 1.7 milliard rubles were in circulation - the figure had reached 8.4 milliard by 1933. As the Left Opposition tirelessly pointed out this inflationary spiral made it all the more impossible for the Soviet planners to measure, compare and judge achievement in the Soviet economy. The Stalinist bureaucracy did not have its own alternative rational measuring criteria with which to replace those of the law of value.

These contradictions within the Stalinist system took on an increasingly dramatic form in the last period of the First Five Year Plan occasioning a serious crisis in the planning system in 1932 and 1933. There were serious shortfalls in target achievement for electricity, pig iron, coal and oil in 1932. Steel production which had overfulfilled its 1928-9 target figure was below the 1930 level in 1932 and the 1933 target was set at 7% below the 1931 target. Steel production suffered from a major failure to set new facilities into operation. 1933 saw a 14% drop in investment. In addition to the famine that struck the Soviet countryside in 1933 there was a serious transport crisis and gross industrial production, which had been rising at 20% per annum, rose by only 5%.

The Soviet crisis of 1932 and 1933 had its roots not in the operation of the law of value on an internal or international scale. It was a crisis of a system based on consciously challenging the laws and dictates of market mechanisms by a Bonapartist bureaucracy which could not develop and sustain a planned and balanced growth of the productive forces at its disposal. It represented a crisis of Stalinist planning in a form that pre-figures the crises of proportionality and stagnation that have regularly interrupted the development of bureaucratic planned economies. The very existence of this form of crisis was predicted and analysed by Trotsky in his writings on the Soviet economy. Writing in 1931 in "Problems of Development of the USSR" Trotsky evidenced the tendency to crisis that lurked behind the facade of success,**"- the industrial successes of recent years in themselves do not at all assure an uninterrupted growth in the future. Precisely the speed of industrial development accumulates disproportions, partly inherited from the past, partly growing out of the complications of the new tasks, partly created by the methodological mistakes of the leadership in combination with direct sabotage."**[77] He envisaged the principal elements of the form that the crisis of bureaucratic planning would take,**" the substitution of economic direction by administrative goading, with the absence of any seriouscollective verification, leads inevitably to the inclusion of mistakes in the very foundation of the economy and to the preparation of 'tight places' inside the economic process. The disproportions driven inward inevitably remain at the following stage in the form of disharmony between the means of of production and raw materials, between transport and industry, between quantity and quality, and finally in the disorganisation of the monetary system."**[78]

He developed this method of analysis with greater clarity during 1932.**"The whole trouble is that the wild leaps in industrialisation have brought the various elements of the plan into dire contridiction with each other. The trouble is that the economy functions without material reserves and without calculation. The trouble is that the social and political instruments for the determination and effectiveness of the plan have been broken or mangled. The trouble is that the accrued disproportions threaten more and greater surprises. The trouble is that the uncontrolled bureaucracy has tied up its prestige with the subsequent accumulation of errors. The trouble is that a crisis is impending with a chain of consequences such as the enforced shutting down of factories and unemployment."**[79]

There was definitely a tendency for the Left Opposition in the early 30's to envisage a complete collapse of the planning machinery and Stalin's industrialisation project. Rakovsky's 'The Five Year Plan in Crisis' written in 1936 is built on a perspective of impending collapse drawn from a sharp and clear analysis of the tendency towards crisis. As the Critique editorial board gleefully points out Rakovsky and the Mensheviks envisaged a developing and progressive "planlessness" in the Soviet economy. A similar telescoped perspective can also be found in some of Trotsky's writings on the economy of the USSR in the early 1930s.

"In the sphere of money inflation, as in that of bureaucratic despotism, is summed up all the falseness of the policy of centrism in the field of the Soviet economy as well as in the field of the international proletarian movement. The Stalinist system is exhausted to the end and is doomed. Its breakup is approaching with the same inevitability with which the victory of fascism approached in Germany."[80]

Reality was, however, to show these perspectives to be too starkly drawn. History allows us, with Trotsky, to recognise that the planned property form did survive the 1932-3 crisis only for the general tendencies towards crisis that we have discussed to re-occur at the latter end of the Second Five Year Plan. In the face of crisis the Stalinists dramatically re-drafted their plan targets during 1933. The plan targets for 1934-6 were relatively well fulfilled. In steel production, for example, 35%, 22% and 28% targets were consecutively met and marginally over fulfilled.[81] 1936 saw cotton cloth production rise 22.3% over its 1935 level.

Again it would be difficult to attribute the relatively stable expansion of the USSR's productive forces in this period either to the operation of the law of value or to the work of "planlessness". While the tendency towards planlessness was always part of the Left Opposition's theory of the roots of crisis they never attempted, of course, to characterise the system as permanently "planless". *Neither can one seriously begin to explain the relatively stable mid-1950's in the Soviet economy without recognising the existence of and strengthening of , planning mechanisms during this period.*

1935 saw the most rounded and even fulfillment of plan targets. It also saw the planning agencies relatively free from the adventurist pressure of the Stalinists chastened by the 1932-3 crisis. To this extent it was a period where the planning mechanisms had the greatest opportunity to prove their real potential. In this year quantitative growth targets were fulfilled, for the first time, by every all-union Commissariat. Labour productivity in heavy industry actually rose more than its planned target. 1936 was even more satisfactory than 1935 in most regards.

How then do we explain this relative success? Firstly it is necessary to state that it demonstrates the superiority of, and potential of, planned production itself. It pays tribute to the potential of the socialist organisation of production. This was recognised by Trotsky in 1936,**"With the bourgeois economists we have no longer anything to quarrel over. Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of Das Kapital, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth of the earth's surface not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity."**[82] On the basis of material experience Trotsky's estimate of the achievements of Soviet planning - but not of its deformations and tendency to breakdown - had been developed in the light of previously unobtainable experience. This has led the supporters of Critique to "accuse" Trotsky of changing his position in the mid 30's and breaking with the "correct" perspective that he and Rakovsky held to in the early 30's.[83] They are right to suggest that Trotsky modified his estimate of the achievements of Soviet planning. But it was Trotsky who was correct to modify his view of planification in the USSR on the basis of learning from the unique and concrete experience of the USSR in the 1930's. Revolutionary perspectives are of necessity tentative and in permanent need of being tested and re-assessed. Academics can afford the luxury of orthodoxy and of 'never changing their position' whatever may happen in the material world. Unless revolutionary marxist perspectives are permanently tested and re-assessed on the basis of living experience the door is open to dogmatism, to schematism and the collapse of the revolutionary programme as an instrument of intervention.

An explanation of the relatively stable mid 30's period must also base itself upon an understanding of the operation of other contributory factors. A number of the major projects of the First Five Year Plan - including Magnitogorsk - only became

fully operational during this period. The proportion of machinery imported from the West declined during this period as a result of the achievements of the First Five Year Plan. A relaxation of rationing was accompanied by an increase in Labour productivity which continued through to 1937. Again it was the achievements of planning and not the operation of the laws of capitalism or the lawlessness of the USSR as viewed through the eyes of the Critique editorial board that explains this relative stability.

The last year of the Second Five Year Plan in 1937 experienced the onset of significant disequilibrium and stagnation. Steel production rose by only 4% compared with 28% in the previous year.[84] It grew by only 2% in 1938 and fell by 4% in 1939. The effects of the disastrously bad harvest of 1936 were felt throughout the USSR in 1937. The Third Five Year Plan - prepared in 1937-8, inaugurated in 1938 and ratified at the 1939 18th Party Congress - was in the process of being fulfilled only in an extremely uneven and unsatisfactory manner at the time of Hitler's invasion of the USSR in 1941. Sugar production declined, oil production was stagnant leading to a serious fuel shortage alongside the miserable performance of the steel industry.

How do we explain this second major crisis of planning in the USSR? Once again we are confronted with the major features of mounting disproportionality and developing stagnation towards the end of a planning period. Again the planning mechanisms were failing to sustain balanced growth and target figures were becoming increasingly fictional. With trade with the West diminishing and the market effectively subordinated within the USSR the root of this crisis cannot be found primarily in the effects of the spontaneous operation of the law of value. However we are once again faced with a tendency for the planning processes of Stalinism to breakdown.

Contingent and particular factors can be advanced as an explanation of the stagnation of the Soviet economy in the last period of the 1930's. The period saw the dramatic re-organisation of Soviet production to meet the mounting war threat presented by imperialism. While defense expenditure as a percentage total of the Soviet budget stood at only 3.4% in 1933, it grew to 11.1% in 1935, 16.1% in 1936 and 25.6% in 1939.[85] This had the effect of forcing the operative planning agencies to divert investment and goods earmarked for consumer good production into prioritised heavy industry and military projects. This has been aduced by Cliffite theorists of 'State Capitalism' as evidence of the 'Permanent Arms Economy' that propelled the USSR to become locked in ever larger rounds of arms production in order to produce 'use values' to survive in further rounds of arms based competition between state capitalist Russia and the West. But this arms production was organised by the Soviet bureaucracy - by its own methods- as a means of defending the planned economy of the USSR (and the privileges of the bureaucracy that depended on it) against the designs of German and Japanese imperialism to turn the USSR into a semi-colony once again. Even the healthiest of workers' states would act far more decisively to this end than did the Stalinist bureaucracy that placed its hopes for defence on alliance with one, or another, of the camps of imperialism.



Stakhanov - pioneer Stalinist shock-worker.

The purges of the mid 30's, which we will discuss later, had a devastating effect on the personnel and morale of the planning apparatus. Similarly relative success in the field of planning saw the recrudescence of the adventurist, arbitrary and bogus norms of Stalinist planning. Increases in labour productivity encouraged the Stalinists to inaugurate a major drive to storm production targets. This was the context of the Stakhanov movement launched in August 1935.

In August 1935 Stakhanov bust his work norm by mining 102 tons of coal in six hours. He did so with the help of a hand-picked team and special training and provisions. His "achievement" was, however, to set the pace for Soviet labour in the next period. In October 1935 Makar Lashtoba fulfilled his work norm by 2,274% when he mined 311 tons of coal in one day! At the first all-union conference of Stakhanovites the ex-Oppositionist Pyatakov gave voice to the crude adventurism of the Stalinists when he declared, **"We will smash the devil himself and attain unheard of production results of which no one has ever dreamed....One must simply shout "the devil take it!"**[86] Competing for favour from the central planning agencies, local management showed a definite tendency in this period to keep their acclaimed 'Stakhanovites' fully supplied while shortages and bottlenecks kept the majority of the workforce idle. In its own peculiar way the Stakhanovite movement testified to the inability of the Stalinists to genuinely mobilise the working class to utilise the 'gains of October' and the inability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to effect rational and long term methods to raise the productivity of labour.

But seperated from these contingent factors the crisis of the late 30's stands as evidence of the fundamental contradictions that are to be found at the heart of planning under Stalinist bureaucracies.

THE PLANNED ECONOMY AS A "STATE CAPITALISM"

It is not possible within the confines of the present work to deal with all aspects of Cliff's analysis of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratic state capitalism. It is necessary, however, to point up the inadequacies of his fundamental thesis concerning the creation of this, 'state capitalism' and to draw out the most important political ramifications of his method.

Cliff interprets the creation of the bureaucratically planned economy of the USSR as a social counter-revolution that inaugurated bureaucratic state capitalism in the USSR. In this analysis the newly emerged ruling bureaucracy is seen as having been transformed into a collective capitalist by virtue of the fact that it undertook the 'bourgeois' task of accumulation. In his attempt to make this theory stick, Cliff has to falsify both the realities of the Soviet economy in the 1930's and, indeed, the Marxist definition of capitalism itself.

Cliff wishes to prove that, at the same time as the working class lost political power, the bureaucracy which replaced it was in the process of developing into a capitalist class because of the economic measures that it was forced to take. Therefore, alongside data establishing the fact that the proletariat lost all semblance of control, direct or indirect, we find in his book (Russia – A Marxist Analysis, T.Cliff, London, 1970) a constant emphasis on the parallels between the *tasks* the bureaucracy undertook and those undertaken by the nascent bourgeoisie. For Cliff the significance of this lies in the fact that, " Under capitalism the consumption of the masses is subordinated to accumulation."[87] He has no difficulty in presenting figures to show that the First Five Year Plan witnessed a significant change in priority from consumption to accumulation. Within the use to which Cliff puts these figures (which are not themselves in dispute) lies a most important element of Cliff's method, the use of the

syllogism; under the First Five Year Plan consumption was subordinated to accumulation, under capitalism consumption is subordinated to accumulation, ergo, the First Five Year Plan was capitalism !

The syllogistic method of formal logic is no substitute for dialectics in the analysis of social phenomena. Being formal it ignores the content of such phenomena, i.e. the class content. This is the tell-tale weakness of Cliff's analysis. The accumulation of the bourgeoisie is the accumulation of **capital** which can, of course, be expressed in the accumulation of the means of production such as factories, railways and power stations. However, whether such things are capital in any given circumstances is not determined by the mere fact that they are accumulated. Indeed, this point was one of the first advances made by Marx in his analysis of capitalism. In, 'Wage Labour and Capital', for example, he argued, **"Capital consists not only of means of subsistence, instruments of labour and raw materials, not only of material products; it consists just as much of *exchange values*. All the products of which it consists are *commodities*. Capital is, therefore, not only a sum of material products; it is a sum of commodities, of exchange values, of *social magnitudes*. "** [88] He further argued that, **"Capital does not consist in accumulated labour serving living labour as a means for new production. It consists in living labour serving accumulated labour as a means of maintaining and multiplying the exchange value of the latter."** [89]

The accumulation of the means of production in the Soviet Union in no way squared with this definition of capital. Neither the factories, mines, power stations and machinery nor the products made with them were commodities, they were not produced for eventual sale on the market. They were not built in order to, " multiply the exchange value" of accumulated labour but rather because they were necessary for the implementation of the industrialisation programme. In other words they were not capital but use-values.

A workers' state must, necessarily, accumulate use-values, in particular the means of production, since its task is to expand production on a massive scale. Whether this accumulation preponderates at any given time over consumption cannot be a test of the class nature of the state that presides over the economy. Production of munitions and materiel for the Red Army was an absolute priority during the wars of intervention against the young Soviet republic, and quite rightly too.

The same formalist method is extended by Cliff to 'prove' that the bureaucracy is a collective capitalist. Basing himself on Lenin's description of the historic task of the bourgeoisie, " increase in the productive forces of social labour and the socialisation of labour", Cliff explains why the First Five Year Plan was the point of transformation of the bureaucracy into a collective capitalist, **" It was now, for the first time, that the bureaucracy sought to realise the historic mission of the bourgeoisie as quickly as possible. A quick accumulation of capital on the basis of a low level of production, of a small national income per capita, must put a burdensome pressure on the consumption of the masses, on their standard of living. Under such conditions the bureaucracy, transformed into a personification of capital, for whom the accumulation of capital is the be-all and end-all, must get rid of all remnants of workers' control, must substitute conviction in the labour process by coercion, must atomise the working class, must force all social-political life into a totalitarian mould... Thus, industrialisation and a technical revolution in agriculture (collectivisation) in a backward country under conditions of siege transforms the bureaucracy from a layer which is under the direct and indirect pressure of the proletariat, into a ruling class..."** [90]

Leaving aside the claim that collectivisation, i.e. the expropriation of all rural capital, big and small, was a mere 'technical' question, the bureaucracy that undertook it and directed the Stalinist form of industrialisation on the basis of command planning now somehow becomes the most perfect example of a capitalist class because, **"The fact that the bureaucracy fulfills the tasks of the capitalist class, and by so doing transforms itself into a class, makes it the purest personification of this class. Although it is different from the capitalist class, it is at one and the same time the nearest to its historical essence."** [91] That any social grouping should be defined as a class because it undertakes a task 'normally' associated with a class, let alone a particular class, is incompatible with Marxism. In the greater part of the world the task of industrialisation will fall to the proletariat. In many countries the proletariat will face the problems of economic dislocation and political isolation that were encountered in the Soviet Union in the Twenties, if not on the same scale. The implication of Cliff's analysis of Russia in the years before the First Five Year Plan is that progress, indeed survival, will be determined **solely** by external factors. Internally, all policies must lead to the restoration of capitalism in one form or another. In the Twenties, says Cliff, there were only two realistic economic programmes, **"One solution to the conflict between state industry and individualist agriculture would have been to make the development of industry depend on the rate at which agricultural surpluses developed. "Alternatively, the conflict between industry and agriculture might have been resolved by rapid industrialisation based on 'primitive accumulation' by expropriating the peasants and forcing them into large mechanised farms thus releasing labour power for industry and making agricultural surpluses available for the urban population."** [92] In other words Bukharinism and Stalinism were the only choices that faced the Russian workers, revolutionaries could have had no alternative programme.

For Cliff there was no way forward for the Russian working class other than reliance on the European revolution which never came. The policies of the Left Opposition, designed to re-generate the proletariat via planned industrialisation and the siphoning of a surplus from the rich peasantry to pay for it, were a utopia for Cliff. He singles out Preobrazhensky as an example, **" Actually the implementation of Preobrazhensky's 'socialist primitive accumulation' would logically have led to a very different state of affairs from that which he envisaged. Any attempt to 'squeeze' the peasants would be likely to be met by a deliberate reduction in production, so that if the 'terms of trade' between agriculture and industry were in favour of the latter, the amount of trade would fall. There would be only one way to deal with such a strike and that would be to use violence against the peasants, to expropriate them, and to concentrate them on such large farms that it would be possible for the state to control their work and output."** [93] Thus, the logical outcome of the policies of the Left Opposition would have been – Stalinism! No doubt Preobrazhensky and the other capitulators developed similar justifications, that is no reason for today's revolutionaries to argue that Stalin carried out the rational kernel of the Left Opposition's programme.

This tacit acceptance that the proletariat cannot use state power to maintain and extend its interests in an underdeveloped country, that is to say, this rejection of the strategy of Permanent Revolution, is the consequence of Cliff's revision of the nature of capitalist accumulation. It has a Menshevik logic that would leave communists in today's imperialised countries as incapable of charting a way forward for the working class as Cliff believes the Left Oppositionists were in the Twenties.

Cliff's characterisation of the Soviet Union as a state capitalism is founded upon a rejection of what, for Marxists, constitutes the defining feature of capitalism. He develops an economic model in which military competition between industrialised nations takes the place of generalised commodity production and the law of value as the dynamic of social production under capitalism. The model itself is based on a false extension of Bukharin's theoretical prognostications (which themselves suffer from a characteristic one-sidedness) concerning the development of finance capital. In order to see clearly the scale of Cliff's revisionism on this point it is first necessary briefly to outline the Marxist analysis of the defining characteristics of capitalism.

Capitalism is the mode of production in which both the pre-requisites for production, including labour power, and the products themselves take the form of commodities, it is generalised commodity production. That is to say, all goods are produced for the market. On the market they are exchanged, in the last analysis, on the basis of the amount of socially necessary labour contained in each commodity. This is the law of value. It is a law that finds expression in the competition between individual capitals on the market. Through the operation of the law of value, capital tends constantly to flow to those sectors of production which will yield the greatest return on investment. Thus, production is not undertaken to satisfy human need but to create ever greater masses of capital. Within capitalism the division of the total labour of society, that is the determination of what shall be produced and in what quantities, is effected by the operation of the law of value.

It is in the nature of capitalism that on the basis of its own laws of motion, it tends towards the creation of ever greater formations of capital. Success in competition for one capital can only be at the expense of other capitals. Through a process of concentration and centralisation, capital tends towards monopolisation of whole branches of production. The creation of such a monopoly, in which every step of production is controlled by one capital, takes place on the basis of the law of value through a process of competitive destruction of other capitals, thereby removing competition within its own sphere of operation. However, even the greatest monopoly is itself dominated by the law of value in that its products are destined for the market. The law of value now expresses itself in the competition between monopolies. Despite any rationalisation of production within the monopolies, the anarchy of capitalism dominates between them.

As monopolies develop and merge into an ever smaller number of ever greater capital formations they are able to exert greater and greater control over the societies out of which they develop. By a process of fusion, banking capital and industrial capital create finance capital. So powerful within modern captalist society is finance capital that its requirements dominate the activity and policies of the state, itself the machinery of oppression which protects bourgeois property relations. The stage at which finance capital reaches this degree of pre-eminence in society is the imperialist epoch of capitalism. The economic order of the imperialist epoch is rightly called, 'state monopoly capitalism'.

To conform to his model, Cliff has to prove that, as a result of its relationship to the world economy, the Soviet Union acts as a single block of capital,'USSR Ltd' which is, therefore, subject to the laws of capitalism. The problem for Cliff is that there is, effectively, no competition between 'USSR Ltd' and other capital blocks on the world market and, therefore, no means by which to 'execute the inner laws of capital' upon the Soviet Union. It is at this point that Cliff substitutes military competition for capitalist competition in order to provide the vital missing link in the chain between world capitalism and the Soviet economy.

It is worth reproducing the argument used by Cliff, if only to reveal most clearly the sleight of hand method by which logical contradiction masquerades as dialectics. **"If Russia traded extensively with countries outside her empire she would try to produce commodities which would fetch a high price on the world market, and to buy as cheaply as possible commodities from abroad. Thus, she would be aiming, like a private capitalist, at increasing the sum of use-values at her disposal by production of some use-value or other, regardless of what it would be...**

"But, as competition with other countries is mainly military, the state is interested in certain specific use-values, such as tanks and aeroplanes and so on. Value is the expression of competition between independent producers : Russia's competition with the rest of the world is expressed by the elevation of use-values into an end, serving the ultimate end of victory in the competition. Use-values while being an end, still remain a means." [94]

The first of these paragraphs is a complete red-herring – all trading implies the attempt to get the best price possible for one's own goods and to pay as cheaply as possible for those goods that have to be imported. This would be equally true of a healthy workers' state and was, indeed, a central element in the economic thinking of the Bolsheviks and the Left Opposition. For them the state monopoly of foreign trade was a device for increasing and manipulating contacts with the world market, not a means to the reactionary end of economic autarchy that it became under Stalin.

The fact that the Soviet state, as a consumer, is interested, among other things, in tanks and aeroplanes is not because of the workings of some ahistorical category called competition but because without these things the state would be unprotected from its enemies. Again, this is, and always has been, a feature of all states, capitalist or not.

In order to equate military competition with capitalist competition, Cliff has to resort to a completely meaningless scrambling of Marxist categories. Value is *not* the expression of competition between independent producers. It is the measure of socially necessary labour time congealed within a commodity. By definition a commodity is a product made for exchange and it is through exchange that the owner of the commodity realises its value. The law of value, as discovered by Marx, is a codification of the fact that the exchange of commodities takes place on the basis of the amount of value contained in the commodities to be exchanged, like exchanging with like. In its most simple form this does not involve any competition between the producers. This only arises where we are dealing with the realisation of the value of commodities in which there is contained surplus value, that is to say, commodities produced by proletarians but owned by capitalists. The competition consists in the various capitalists attempting to increase the proportion of surplus within their commodities which they can realise through sale. The successful capitalist is able to realise a greater amount of surplus value than his competitors and, as a result, increase his capital for the next cycle of production. Thus, the struggle to amass greater volumes of capital is the only way in which the law of value can express itself.

When Cliff argues that, **"Because international competition takes mainly a military form the law of value expresses itself in its opposite, viz. a striving after use values." [95]** he is again equating the accumulation of use-values with the accumulation of capital. "Striving after use-values" is only another way of saying, " striving to accumulate material wealth" something which has been a feature common to all societies save the most primitive.

This is not to say that there is no kernel of rationality whatsoever within Cliff's argument. The pressure of military competition does exercise a distorting effect on the soviet economy, as it will on the economy of any workers' state, healthy or unhealthy. Certainly a degree of symmetry in the matter of military technique is imposed by this imperialist pressure and the limits of this pressure are related to the functionings of the law of value within, most importantly, the US economy. Again, this would be the state of affairs if we were examining quite the healthiest workers' state and how its economy was affected by imperialist blockade. None of this means for a moment that military competition can take the place, or have the same results, as *capitalist* competition.

THE FIVE YEAR PLANS

The working class grew considerably as a result of Stalinist industrialisation. During the first Five Year Plan the cities grew by 44%. In 1931 alone 4,100,000 peasants joined the city population. But this swelling army of proletarians was subject to severe dictatorship. The triangle arrangement of managment, party and union administration in the plants, that had developed during NEP, was abandoned in 1929 for fierce managerial rule. The Stalinist Kaganovich declared "the earth should tremble when the director walks around the plant" [96].

The First Five Year Plan initially saw an enormous turnover of labour. During 1929 the Soviet worker changed jobs, on average, every 2 months. This figure was down to 4 months in the coal and iron ore mining industries. [97] In conditions of an acute labour shortage, Soviet workers resorted to defending themselves and their bargaining power through this labour turnover. The trades unions had been transformed into transmission belts for the directives of the Bonapartist state.



New proletarians arriving from the countryside.

During the 1930s the bureaucracy acted to curtail this route of self-defence for the working class. From 1930 labour exchanges were instructed to keep lists of those who had "arbitrarily" terminated their employment. By September 1930 such workers were to permanently lose their rights to unemployment benefit. During 1931 every worker was issued with a wage book including details of every change of job and discharge from work.

By 1932 all employees had to show an internal passport to obtain work and had to have their place of work entered in their passport. Employees were obliged to discharge workers guilty of truancy ("Progul") with one days absence from work being sufficient to justify dismissal. "Truants" were to be deprived of all food and merchandise ration coupons and to be evicted from any dwelling that went with the plant.

In December 1938 - at a time of serious disequilibrium in the Third Five Year Plan - new disciplinary provisions were introduced to the Soviet Labour code. Arriving more than twenty minutes late for work was to constitute "unjustified absence". Full sickness benefits were only to be made available after six years employment at a given plant.

Taken together these measures constituted the means by which the Bonapartist bureaucracy consolidated its political dictatorship over the Soviet working class. They were, however, accompanied by the development of forms of remuneration and retail outlets that enabled the Stalinists to stimulate the crystalisation of a distinct layer of skilled workers in the USSR who had a material interest, through their relative privileges compared with the unskilled, in the maintenance of the Stalinist regime.

The Stalinists have always made sure that a significant section of Soviet society has a material interest in not challenging the rule of the central bureaucracy.

In 1932, Stalin explicitly disavowed the Marxist goal of the gradual progressive abolition of inequality. **"Equalitarianism owes its origin to the individual peasant type of mentality, the psychology of share and share alike, the psychology of primitive communism. Equalitarianism has nothing in common with Marxist socialism. Only people who are unacquainted with Marxism can have the primitive notion that the Russian Bolsheviks want to pool all wealth and share it out equally. That is the notion of people who have nothing in common with Marxism."** [98]

For the mass of the Soviet workers, the First Five Year Plan led to a serious drop in their real wages. The doubling of Labour productivity on which the achievement of the targets depended was not achieved. In industry as a whole, labour productivity grew by 41% by 1934. [99] As a consequence the working class suffered a severe drop in income to pay for the achievement of targets. The fall in living standards was around 40% between 1929 and 1932.[100] At the same time the range between salaries was increased and the old party maximum which prevented a party member earning more than a skilled worker was abolished.

Alongside Stalin's critique of egalitarianism, wage differentials between skilled and unskilled workers were increased to a ratio of 3.7 : 1. In addition, "Cadres" were to receive higher pay and privileges. "Shock workers" and management personnel were given access to closed shops, to special clothing allowances, and to top priority in housing lists.

The general dearth of consumer goods highlights the significance of these privileges. In the entire period prior to 1940, the urban population increased by 79.2 %, and the urban housing stock by a mere 27.6 %. Hence the importance of the seemingly marginal privileges that Stalinism was able to bestow on a skilled aristocratic layer of the Soviet working class.

The Stakhanov movement of 1935 represented a further attempt, on the part of the Stalinists, to create a privileged layer of workers seperate from the mass of the working class and beholden to the Stalinists for their distinct and relatively luxurious lifestyle. By 1935 this layer of Stakhanovite "shock

workers" in the industrial and agrarian work force was receiving on average between 500 and 2000 rubles a month compared with an average wage of 150 rubles. In 1933 20% of urban workers received 40% of the available wage fund.[101]

THE STALIN TURN IN FOREIGN POLICY

Up until the victory of Nazism in Germany in 1933, the Comintern, under Stalin, had pursued the ultra-left policies of the ' Third Period". Adventurism at home was reflected by adventurism abroad. The Third Period was designated the final period of capitalism. Communism was around the corner. As such all bourgeois parties - social democrats and fascists alike - were equal enemies of the the working class. The Comintern characterised social democracy as "Social Fascism " and refused to unite with reformist workers in a struggle against the growing fascist danger. The tactic of the United Front, developed by Lenin and Trotsky, was abandoned in favour of the Red Front. Fascism, as the last phase of bourgeois rule, was even to be welcomed since their victory would simply mean "our turn next"!

These policies produced tragic results. Hitler came to power in March 1933, and proceeded to butcher the flower of the strongest working class movement in the world. Even the Kremlin bureaucracy could not fail to recognise that his ascension to power represented a dire threat to the USSR. In foreign policy, as in internal affairs, the Stalin group would admit of no mistakes. The Comintern sections continued to affirm the correctness of their line. However, the line was changed in typical bureaucratic fashion. The Comintern, a subservient tool of Soviet foreign policy, received new directives from the USSR.

In order to ward off the Nazi threat, Stalin now attempted to engineer a bloc with those "democratic" imperialisms that were likely to clash with Germany - principally Britain and France. In accord with the new diplomatic needs, Stalin flipped 180° from ultraleftism to the right opportunism that was to become so central to Stalinist strategy.

The united front was embraced only to be turned into a popular front - an alliance between the workers and liberal, anti-fascist elements of the bourgeoisie in the democratic camp. This alliance could only mean the subordination of the workers' interests to those of the bourgeoisie. The Stalin-Laval pact of 1934 was the first codified operative agreement to maintain peaceful coexistence between the Stalinists and a section of world imperialism - "democratic" France. That this bound the French working class hand and foot to the bourgeoisie became clear in 1936. In that year the Stalinists connived in the defeat of the biggest strike wave that had ever gripped France, in order to maintain the Popular Front.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION'S ANALYSIS OF STALINISM

Faced with the monstrous growth of this bureaucratic tyranny, raising itself above the working class and reducing its already heavily bureaucratised party, trade unions and soviets, to empty ciphers the Bolshevik Leninists (led by Rakovsky within the USSR and by Trotsky abroad) had to analyse these events and the conclusions for strategy and tactics that they held.

Trotsky, Rakovsky and the expelled Left Opposition were faced with the task of analysing the results of their own defeat, of assessing the Stalinist "Left" turn, the debacle of the Bukharinites, and the increased bureaucratic tyranny of the early 1930s. They were subjected to pressure from "Left" sectarian positions within the Opposition (the Democratic Centralists) and to right-opportunist forces (the capitulators to Stalinism - for example Radek, Preobrazhensky and Pyatakov).

In arguing with the Democratic Centralists, who claimed that the counter-revolution was victorious and that capitalism had been restored, or the capitulators who argued that Stalin had adopted the Left Opposition's policies, Trotsky, Rakovsky and their co-thinkers were obliged to re-examine both the concrete



Christian Rakovsky and Leon Trotsky

stages in the development of the bureaucracy and the terminology and analogies they had used throughout the 1920s. Central to this process was the discussion of the question of Thermidor and Bonapartism.

The Left Opposition had operated with an analogy with the French Revolution of 1789-98. The Left Opposition, in combatting the Stalin-Bukharin bloc in the years 1926 to 1928 had characterised the threat which the rightist policies posed to the workers' state as one of concealed capitalist restoration. This danger they named *Thermidor.*

"What does the right danger signify in the present period? It is less the danger of an open, fully-fledged bouregois counter-revolution than that of a *Thermidor,* that is a partial counter-revolutionary shift or upheaval which, precisely because it was partial, could for a fairly long time continue to disguise itself in revolutionary forms but which in essence would already have a decisively bourgeois character, so that a return from Thermidor to the dictatorship of the proletariat could only be effected through a new revolution".[102]

Trotsky argued that a "strongly advanced process of dual power" existed in the Soviet Union. That power had slipped out of the hands of the proletariat "to a considerable degree, but still far from decisively".[103] The *decisive* question for Trotsky in 1928, and indeed to the end of his life was, had state power passed to the agents of the bourgeoisie, was capitalism being restored? His answer was a categorical "No". **" - the bourgeoisie could seize power only by the road of counterrevolutionary upheavals. As for the proletariat, it can regain full power, overhaul the bureaucracy and put it under its control by** *the road of reform of the party and the soviets".* [104]

The retreat of the proletariat on the one hand and the advance of the Kulak and NEPman on the other, in his view, gave the room for the "monstrous predominance of the bureaucratic

apparatus oscillating between the classes".[105] However, in his and the Lefts' use of the analogy, Trotsky mistakenly identified Thermidor with a social counter-revolution. **"Why do we speak precisely of Thermidor? Because, historically, it is the best known and most complete example of a counter-revolution which is masked, which still retains the outer forms and the ritual of revolution, but which changes irreversibly the class content of the state".[106]**

Trotsky saw Thermidor and Bonapartism as differing types of social counter-revolution. In 1931 he expressed it thus: **"By *Thermidorean* overthrow the Left Opposition always understood a decisive shift of power from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, but accomplished formally within the framework of the Soviet system under the banner of one faction of the official party against the other. In contrast to this the *Bonapartist* overthrow appears as a more open, "riper" form of the bourgeois counter-revolution, carried out against the Soviet system and the Bolshevik party as a whole, in the form of the naked sword raised in the name of bourgeois property".[107]**

Thus for Trotsky the expulsion of the Left Opposition in 1927 was only a "party rehearsal for Thermidor"[108]. Moreover since "In the Soviet Union only the peasantry can become a force for Thermidor"[109] Trotsky looked to the Bukharinites with their openly pro-Kulak policy as the principal agents of the coming Thermidor even after their defeat in 1924. The Stalinist faction he saw as playing an auxiliary role to the Right.

However, despite the errors of this use of the analogy, Trotsky (and Rakovsky) did methodically analyse, step by step, the growth of Stalin's *Bonapartist* power.

In late 1928 Trotsky pointed to the Bonapartist element in the position of the Stalin regime. **"The Master** (Stalin - Eds) **says: "These cadres can be removed only by civil war" Klim** (Voroshilov, Commissar for War - Eds) **adds "If you workers make too much fuss, remember that a great power stands behind me". Both these statements are elements of Bonapartism. In the first case speaks the party-state apparatus, which considers itself higher than everyone else, higher even than the army. In the second case speaks the military apparatus, which tomorrow will feel compelled to "put the civilians in their place"**

A bloodless victory of the centrists' party apparatus over the right would not do away with the Thermidorean-Bonapartist perspective but would only change and postpone it".[110]

Whilst for Trotsky, the Bonapartist regime could only be fully actualised as an instrument of social overturn, he described and analysed its "preparation" in such a way that his self-revision was no sudden or ill-prepared leap. By 1931 Trotsky was talking of the "plebiscitary degeneration of the party apparatus (which) undoubtedly increases the chances of a Bonapartist form (of counter-revolution - Eds)".[111] He referred many times in these years to the "Bonapartist features of the regime in the Soviet Communist party".[112] Furthermore he noted that "The party, as a party does not exist today. The centrist apparatus has strangled it".[113]

Here it might be observed that there was a contradiction. Trotsky and the Bolshevik-Leninists insisted that the bureaucracy could be ousted on the road of reform and that no new party was necessary. This paradox was more apparent than real. Trotsky clearly regarded the Left Oppositionists as representing the nucleus of the Bolshevik party. He held that the **"relation between the Left Opposition and the centrist apparatus (...) is a substitute for the party and holds the right in check"**[114] Trotsky advocated that the Left Opposition mount a clear and independent defence of the interests of the working class in line with the platform of the Opposition. This was to include the leading of struggles, wage struggles for example, *against* the bureaucracy. This being so, why did Trotsky hold back from the view that a new party was necessary?

The answer to this lies in essence in the international nature of the Opposition's platform. The Russian party remained a section of the Comintern, an alliance of subjectively revolutionary mass parties albeit subjected to centrist misleadership. The years 1929 to 1933 were years of acute crisis in all capitalist countries. The mass CPs, especially the German Party faced the question of fighting for power point blank. Indeed the latter faced the question of victory or destruction. The Comintern's tactics, forced on the German Party, were disastrous. A united front with the Social Democracy was vital to obstruct the fascist onslaught.

The Comintern's proscription of the united front except from below, its ludicrous characterisation of the reformists as "social fascists" created a situation of enormous political tension throughout the communist movement. If the German party managed to adjust its tactics in time - ie rallied to the Left Opposition's tactics, then the domination of the Stalin leadership within the Russian party and state would have been called into question. Before the German revolutionary crisis was resolved it was impossible to abandon the Comintern as dead for the revolution. Therefore it was impossible to abandon the CPSU. Thus it was that Trotsky's change of analysis hinged not upon events in Russian but in Germany, "the key to the international situation".

The crushing defeat of the German Communist Party (KPD) in early 1933 demonstrated that the road of reform of the Comintern, the KPD and the CPSU was at an end. Trotsky, by October of this year, was drawing decisive new conclusions.

Firstly, he asserted the importance of the German debacle for the Soviet workers. In "The Class Nature of the Soviet State", he wrote: **"The Soviet workers would have settled accounts with the despotism of the apparatus had other perspectives opened before them, had the Western horizon flamed not with the brown colour of fascism but with the red of revolution".[115]**

He concluded that with regard to the internal political situation a decisive shift had occurred, but that this did not extend to the social roots of the proletarian dictatorship: **"the bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order to guard its social conquests with *its own* methods. The anatomy of society is determined by its economic relations. So long as the forms of porperty that have been created by the October Revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the ruling class"[116]**

Moreover, here for the first time Trotsky began to re-examine the Thermidor/Bonapartism analogy: **"If Urbahns wants to extend the concept of Bonapartism to include also the present Soviet regime, then we are ready to accept such a widened interpretation - under one condition: if the social content of the Soviet "Bonapartism" will be defined with the requisite clarity. It is absolutely correct that the self-rule of the Soviet bureaucracy was built upon the soil of veering between class forces both internal as well as international. Insofar as the bureaucratic veering has been crowned by the personal plebiscitary regime of Stalin, it is possible to speak of Soviet Bonapartism. But while the Bonapartism of both Bonapartes as well as their present pitiful followers has developed and is developing on the basis of a bourgeois regime, the Bonapartism of Soviet bureaucracy has under it the soil of a Soviet regime. Terminological innovations or historical analogies can serve as conveniences in one manner or another for analysis, but they cannot change the social nature of the Soviet state".[117]**

Alongside this re-examination of the analogy, Trotsky changed his position on the question of the new party and the possibility of peaceful reform. **"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*"[118].**

Trotsky insists that "it will be necessary to apply against it, not the measures of civil war but rather measures of a police character".[119] In essence Trotsky here presents for the first time the programme of political revolution, though he does not explicitly call it such. His programme is for a programme of political revolution because he continues to insist that no social overturn has occurred. But it remains a *revolution* nonetheless because no peaceful process of reform will remove the bureaucracy. The full elaboration of this position however took place only in February 1935 in Trotsky's essay "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism", and in 1936 in "The Revolution Betrayed".

It was in these works that Trotsky finally came to terms with the contradictory nature of Stalin's Russia. That it remained a workers' state was evidenced by the fact that the fundamental property relations of the USSR were those created by a workers' revolution which had expropriated the capitalists. The Soviet Thermidor and Stalin's Bonapartism had developed on the basis of these property relations and had not overthrown them.

In July 1935 in "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism", Trotsky fully revised his earlier position on Thermidor. He recognised it as a form of *political* counter-revolution that had taken place on the social foundation established by the revolution. The working class had been politically expropriated by the Thermidorian bureaucracy but that bureaucracy still rested on the planned property relations of the USSR.

Trotsky recognised that 1924, and the triumvirate's campaign against himself and the Left, marked the beginning of Thermidor and that, once triumphant, the bureaucracy had resorted to a form of Bonapartism to exercise its rule: **"In the former case** (Napoleon I - eds.) **the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case** (Stalin - eds.) **the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international programme, its leading party, its soviets.....What else should this regime be called, if not Soviet Bonapartism?"** [120]

From this point on Trotsky is no longer ambiguous about the nature of Soviet Bonapartism or the tasks of revolutionaries in relation to it. In **The Revolution Betrayed** Trotsky analyses the material roots of the Soviet Thermidor: **"No help came from the West. The power of the democratic soviets proved cramping, even undendurable, when the task of the day was to accomodate those privileged groups whose existence was necessary for defense, for industry, for technique and science. In this decidedly not 'socialist' operation, taking from ten and giving to one, there crystallised out and developed a powerful caste of specialists in distribution"** [121]

In this situation **"The young bureaucracy, which had arisen at first as an agent of the proletariat, began now to feel itself a court of arbitration between the classes."** [122]

For Trotsky the roots of Soviet Thermidor were to be found in the crystallisation of this agency into a distinct bureaucratic stratum with its own privileges and conservative interests seperate from those of the proletariat: **"The leaden rump of the bureaucracy outweighed the head of the revolution. That is the secret of the Soviet's Thermidor."** [123]

The Soviet Thermidor - spearheaded by Stalin and Bukharin - had a Bonapartist logic from the start: **"The Bonapartist rule grew out of the fundamental contradiction between the bureaucracy and the people, and the supplementary contradiction between the revolutionists and the Thermidorians within the bureaucracy. Stalin rose by supporting himself primarily on the bureaucracy against the people, on the Thermidorians against the revolutionists. But at certain critical moments he was compelled to seek support among revolutionary elements, and, with their assistance, among the people against the overprecipitate offensive of the privileged ones. But it is impossible to support oneself on a social contradiction that is turning into an abyss. Hence the forced transition to Thermidorian 'monolithism' through the destruction of all vestiges of the revolutionary spirit and of the slightest manifestations of political self-activity on the part of the masses."** [124]

This led Trotsky to finally reject the term 'bureaucratic centrism' as in any way applicable to the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1937. [125]

If Trotsky was now no longer ambitious about either the 'centrism' of Stalinism or the reformability of the Soviet State, he still had to grapple with the problem of developing a characterisation of, and perspective for, a state where post-capitalist property forms remained but where all vestiges of proletarian political power had been destroyed by a Bonapartist bureaucracy. Despite its enormous privileges and power, Trotsky rejected the designation of the bureaucracy as a ruling class for reasons which we consider valid.

The Soviet bureaucracy does not have the characteristics of a ruling *class* in the Marxist sense. Within the Marxist tradition, classes are defined *not* within the relations of distribution or authority of any given society but by their position in the *relations* of *production* themselves. A class - be it a ruled or ruling class - has a distinct, necessary and identifiable relation to the productive forces within the social relations of production. Layers of administrators are not classes in the scientific Marxist use of the term.

While the bourgeoisie under capitalism is a *necessary* component of the relations of production, the Soviet bureaucracy is not such a necessary element in the planned property relations of the USSR. On the contrary, its monopoly of political power, its control over distribution is, and always has been (even during the most dynamic phases of Soviet economic development) an obstacle to the full realisation of the *potential* of the property relations of the USSR. In all hitherto existing societies the property relations, and the class structures that necessarily flowed from them, became a brake on the development of the productive forces of mankind. In the USSR it is not the property relations but a layer of administrators and distributors who block the development of the productive forces.

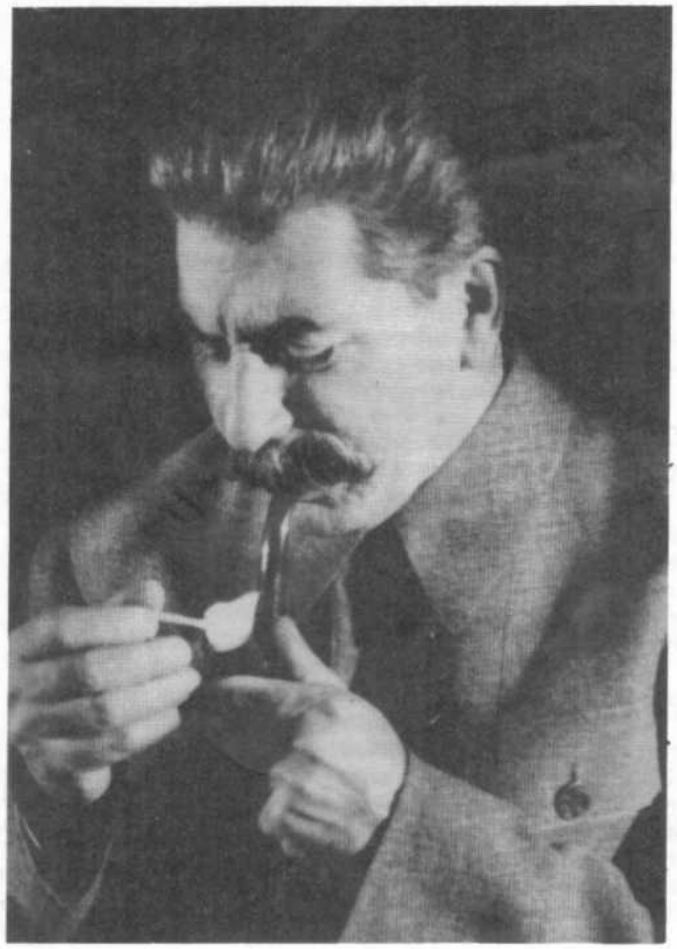
The fundamental contradiction of hitherto existing societies on the eve of social revolution - that between the forces of production and the class relations of production - does not exist in the USSR. The bureaucracy is in fact unnecessary for the rational and progressive development of the productive forces within the system of planned property relations. The contradiction at the heart of the Soviet Union is the contradiction between a system of property relations and a layer of administrators and distributors (the bureaucracy) who stand in the way of the working class dynamically developing the productive forces in its own ie. socialist interests.

Because it is therefore a parasite on the property relations, not an indispensible part of them, we reject the view that the bureaucracy is the ruling class in the USSR.

For these reasons it remains the case that even in Stalin's Russia the working class remained the ruling class because the property forms in existence were those that the working class requires in order to build socialism. The working class had, however, been politically expropriated by a *caste* of bureaucrats analagous to the caste of bureaucrats in the trade union movement under capitalism.

Along with Trotsky we say that the USSR **"can be called a workers' state in approximately the same sense - despite the vast difference of scale - in which the trade union, led and betrayed by opportunists, that is, by agents of capital, can be called a workers' organisation. Just as the trade unions under capitalism are workers' organisations run by class collaborationist bureaucratic castes in the working class, so the USSR remains a state where the working class is the ruling class but where power is in the hands of a reactionary bureaucratic caste."** [126]

It follows however, that this parasitic bureaucracy - as long as it retains power - blocks the transition to socialism in the workers' states. Trotsky was adamant that in designating the USSR a 'workers' state', albeit in a bureaucratically degenerated form, did not mean that the USSR could be characterised as socialist. In "The Fourth International and the Soviet Union" written in July 1936 he explicitly rejected the attempt to describe the state property of the USSR as socialist property: **"for the latter has as its premise the dying away of the state as the guardian of property, the mitigation of inequality and the gradual dissolution of the property concept even in the morals and customs of society. The real development in the Soviet Union in recent years has followed a directly opposite road. Inequality grows, and, together with it, state coercion."** [127]



J. V. Stalin

A workers' state within which the transition to socialism is blocked must prove a highly unstable and contradictory phenomenon. The bourgeoisie historically can tolerate the loss of direct political power within Bonapartist regimes so long as its property and economic life is safeguarded. But its property relations can prosper and expand under Bonapartism as can the bourgeoisie itself. However the loss of political power by the proletariat undermines the very workings of the property forms established by the working class. Of necessity therefore Stalinist Bonapartism as a political regime has to maintain itself in power with a degree of terror and repression against society at large that testifies to its lack of historical legitimacy. Only ruthless terror and the atomisation of society can maintain the Stalinist bureaucracy in power. That is why the Stalinists have never been able to permanently coexist with independent organisations of the working masses and why all Stalinist regimes have ultimately relied on terror and large scale force to both establish and maintain their rule.

The Stalinist form of Bonapartism was, for Trotsky, unprecedented in the degree of independence from society that it had established for itself. **"The Stalin regime, rising above politically atomized society, resting upon a police and officers' corps, and allowing of no control whatever, is obviously a variation of Bonapartism - a Bonapartism of a new type not before seen in history."** [128]

In political form the Stalinist regime showed a marked symmetry with that of the fascist regimes in Western Europe **"In many of their features they show a deadly symmetry."** [129] And this symmetry itself testified to the inability of Stalinism to survive as anything other than a regime of terror.

From this analysis of the contradictory nature of the USSR Trotsky developed a perspective based on its inherent weakness and instability. The social base of the Soviet Bonapartism was particularly fragile. On the one hand it based itself on the property relations of a workers' state and a small privileged layer of those who prospered from the political expropriation of the working class within that state. This meant that the regime set itself against the overwhelming bulk of the population over which it ruled.

"In the USSR there are 12-15 million privileged individuals who concentrate in their hands about one half of the national income, and who call this regime 'socialism'. On the other hand there are approximately 160,000,000 people oppressed by the bureaucracy and caught in the grip of dire poverty." [130]

On the other hand it based itself on constructing *strategic* alliances with sections of the world bourgeoisie as a means of buttressing and maintaining its power. However the 1930s showed very clearly that imperialism's alliances with the Stalinists were entered into by the imperialist powers only for *tactical* reasons. Whatever its hopes or expectations the Bonapartist regime could not eliminate the fundamental contradictions that existed between the property system it presided over and that of world imperialism.

It followed for Trotsky that such a regime must, of necessity, prove a regime of permanent crisis and prove to be a shortlived episode in the history of the transition to socialism. He returned to this theme time and time again in the late 1930s and in 1935 in "The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism" he formulated this perspective in the following way: **"Bonapartism, by its very essence, cannot long maintain itself: a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must invariably roll down on one side or the other."** [131]

The onset of the bloody purges of the mid and late 30s seemed to provide ample evidence of the inability of the regime to stabilise itself and its rule: **"Severe crisis cannot be a permanent condition of society. A totalitarian state is capable of suppressing social contradictions during a certain period, but it is incapable of perpetuating itself. The monstrous purges in the USSR are most convincing testimony of the fact that Soviet society organically tends toward ejection of the bureaucracy...symptomatic of his oncoming death agony, by the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class"** [132]

The onset of the imperialist war furnished further evidence of the fragility of Stalinism's base. The war itself opened the road for the final destruction of Stalinism. In his last years Trotsky presumed that either the proletariat would destroy the bureaucracy in the next period or that the bureaucracy, incapable of defending planned property relations, would open the door for the restoration of capitalism in one form or another. This was the immediate perspective upon which the Transitional Programme was based: **"either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."** [133]

It was this perspective that Trotsky considered was confirmed by Stalin's 1939 pact with Hitler and the Soviet bureaucracy's humiliatingly unsuccesful bid to seize parts of Finland in 1939.

"Stalin's apogee is behind him. Not a few fateful tests are before him. With the whole planet thrown out of equilibrium Stalin will not succeed in saving the unsteady equilibrium of totalitarian bureaucracy." [134]

For Trotsky the impending destruction of the Stalinist regime *either* at the hands of the proletariat or of capitalist restoration flowed inevitably from the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. Hence the confidence with which he could declare - **"if this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution.....To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse."** [135]

"Either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society." [136]

We will return later to the problems posed to Trotsky's perspective and analysis by the stabilisation and expansion of Stalinism in the aftermath of the Second World War. As we have already argued, perspectives must always be put to the test of real experience and adjusted accordingly. What lay at the heart of Trotsky's analysis of the USSR during this period was the unswerving insistence that only if the proletariat seized political power through revolution in the USSR could the property relations of the Soviet Union be put to their correct historical use in the process of socialist construction.

The full development of Trotsky's analysis of Soviet Bonapartism took place alongside, and indeed made possible, the development of Trotsky's programme for the degenerate workers' state. When the call for the Fourth International was first made Trotsky did not spell out that the tasks of the new Soviet section would be those of political revolution. Without a clear understanding of the nature of the political counter-revolution that had taken place this was not surprising. Thus in 1933 he argued: **"Much more important is the fact that these organisations** (parties of the F.I. - Eds.) **will acquire an enormous authority in the eyes of the Soviet workers and will thus finally create favourable conditions for the rebirth of a genuine Bolshevik party. It is only on this road that the *reform* of the Soviet state is possible without a new proletarian revolution."** [137]

Trotsky was hamstrung by his wrong conception of Thermidor. Germany had convinced him of the need to call for new parties - though he had effectively recognised that 1923 had seen the last congress of the real Bolshevik party. However he still erroneously held onto the perspective of reform.

Only after the development of the characterisation of the regime as a counter-revolutionary workers' state ruled by a form of Bonapartism, did Trotsky fully appreciate the need for a new proletarian revolution: **"To believe that *this* state is capable of peacefully 'withering away' is to live in a world of theoretical delirium. The Bonapartist caste must be smashed, the Soviet state must be regenerated. Only then will the prospects of the withering away of the state open up."** [138]

This programmatic position was the decisive outcome of Trotsky's theoretical analysis of the USSR. By recognising the possibility of a counter-revolutionary workers' state, Trotsky was able to arm his supporters with a programme that dialectically combined defence of the property relations established by October with the most intransigent revolutionary opposition to the bureaucratic caste. That position remains valid today and applies to all of these states which we characterise as degenerate workers' states.

Trotsky's analysis of the USSR was in a state of constant development. While he was wrong not to have realised that Thermidor had been completed until 1935 his struggle, and that of the Left Opposition was historically justified. The events that unfolded in the USSR were not readily grasped in their complexity by the Left Opposition until the late 1930s. However throughout this entire period Trotsky waged a revolutionary struggle against Stalin's Bonapartism.

In the end the argument over whether Trotsky was correct in the timing of his call for a new party in the USSR is a formal one. For Trotsky the key question was the best means of approaching the Soviet masses and winning them - fighting to win leadership of 'Lenin's Party' or turning one's back on it? Furthermore the possibility of reform of the party and the Comintern was linked to the existence of millions of subjective revolutionaries within the Comintern.

Their revolutionary consciousness made the *struggle* for reform both viable and politically correct. The defeat of the working class convinced Trotsky that their consciousness could no longer be turned into a material force for reform. With the collapse of this perspective and amidst the welter of police repression that followed in the USSR, it was clear that Trotsky needed to ground new perspectives in theoretical analysis.

Like Marx and Engels in 1848 he had oriented his followers to pursue a consistent marxist line. Like them the failure of that line to triumph forced him to consider the problem at a deeper level. His tardiness on the question of calling for a new political revolution is, therefore, explicable in terms of the enormity of the problems posed by the establishment of an entirely new formation - a degenerated workers' state.

It was Trotsky's genius that he learnt from the failures of his initial analysis and perspective and proved capable of constructing a new analysis and a new programme. His revolutionary genius developed the theory of a degenerated workers' state and that same genius developed the marxist programme to meet this new and unexpected eventuality.

BONAPARTISM IN CRISIS – STALIN'S TERROR

All of the essential elements of Stalinist Bonapartism had been constructed by the early 1930s. However the successes and failures of the Five Year plans and collectivisation and the enormous social contradictions that they created set a distinct limit to the 'golden age' of Stalinist Bonapartism.

The road to untrammelled Bonapartist tyranny led through a series of zig-zags to a struggle, muted and repressed to be sure, *within* the Stalin faction which now felt the varied social pressures of Soviet society, the effects of collectivisation and the Five Year plan. The Thermidorians had denied to the proletariat and its vanguard the ability to consciously deal with the problems of the direction of the workers' state. The revolutionists were imprisoned and exiled; the Right, who reflected the pressure of the better-off peasantry had been silenced. The pressure of the working class and peasantry now was distantly refracted, through the boorish bureaucrats, the 'rude satraps' (Trotsky's phrase for men like Kirov) but it could not be totally suppressed.

By 1932 the sufferings of the masses began to tell even on the nerves of their overworked taskmasters. The hard-pressed lower echelons of the bureaucracy's desire for a halt was expressed in the Ryutin group. M.N. Ryutin, a member of the Central Committee and the man responsible for organising anti-opposition strong-arm squads in Moscow, tried to organise within this body for the removal of Stalin as general secretary. Stalin, informed by the OGPU, tried to order Ryutin and his fellow plotters to be executed. Yagoda, head of OGPU refused unless the Control Commission and the Politburo authorized it. According to George Paloczi Horvath in his book **Kruschev**, Stalin's motion to allow this in both the Central Committee and in the Politburo was defeated- twice.[139] The upper levels of the bureaucracy, although they had initiated and officiated in the Stalin cult for the last two years, refused Stalin licence to terrorise them. Indeed Politburo members Kirov, Rudzutak and Ordzhonikadze led the opposition in this case. All three were to be dead by 1937!

The famine of 1933 and the under-fulfillment of much of the Five Year Plan served as a brake on the Stalinist bureaucracy's adventurist stampede towards industrialisation. The famine in the countryside could not be allowed to spread into the cities. Fearing that the ferocity of the attacks on the peasantry would intensify the agricultural crisis, Stalin and Molotov circulated an instruction in May 1933 to curb excesses. They denounced the 'saturnalia of arrests' and ordered that future arrests should only be directed against 'organised resistance.' [140]

By 1934 there was wide-spread desire within the bureaucracy for relaxation - for an easing of tempos in agriculture and industry. In the Politburo the three members cited above, often with the support of Kalinin and Voroshilov, resisted Stalin's break-neck policies.

The 'Congress of Victors' in 1934 was the public outcome of those internal Politburo decisions. In January 1934 the XVIIth Party Congress confirmed the complete victory of Stalinism over the revolutionary vanguard within the USSR.

At this congress the Stalinists were able to put on display an abject parade of repentant oppositionists from both the Left and the Right. Preobrazhensky declared the incorrectness of the Left Opposition's economic policies, while saluting the far-sightedness of Stalin. Tomsky performed in a similar vein on behalf of the Right. Delighted at the 'unity', that is at their total victory over the main opposition, Kirov, on behalf of the Stalinists, declared: **"Our successes are really immense. The devil take it, to speak frankly, one so wants to live and live! After all, look and see what is going on around us. It's a fact."** [141]

The other side of the Congress was an attempt by Kirov and his supporters to curb the growth of *Stalin's* bonapartist rule over themselves. While Stalin was reaffirmed in all of his positions the darling of the congress was undoubtedly Kirov. He had received the ovations. He, according to Roy Medvedev, only had 3 votes against him in the Central Committee elections, whereas Stalin is supposed to have had 270 cast against him! [142] It was in the context of this that Stalin's title was changed from General Secretary to Secretary. Clearly Kirov hoped to use his own enhanced position to curb Stalin's personal rule. However, his unwillingness to fight to *remove* Stalin (unlike Ryutin) was to prove fatal for himself and for the great bulk of the 'victors' who were to fall at the hands of Stalin's regime of one-man Bonapartism.

Kirov's failure to really challenge Stalin - or rather his inability to do so - meant that Stalin was able to use the Congress to further consolidate his plans for his dictatorship. The secretariat was dominated by his own key men - Zhdanov, Kaganovich and himself, plus Kirov. Yezhov became a full member of the Central Committee and was placed on the Orgburo and , as second in command to Kaganovich, in the Party Control Commission. The Central Committee itself came to be dominated by hand-picked police members, loyal to Stalin. Thus while the Congress of Victors signified the final victory of the Stalinist faction, it heralded the final victory of Stalin himself over his faction.

The moves towards relaxation were continued after the XVIIth Congress. The Congress had accepted a proposal from Ordzhonikidze for a slower rate of industrial growth than originally proposed in the draft Second Five Year Plan. Later in 1934 (November) it was announced that bread rationing was to be lifted and peasants on the collective farms were given the right to cultivate private plots.

Throughout the year there were pronouncements emphasising raising the standard of life. Agricultural output began to rise for the first time since 1928. Towards the end of the year Stalin declared the slogan for 1935 to be:**"Life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous."** This was far from the truth. In 1934 attacks on the party had continued with 340,000 purged from membership. In Leningrad 30,000 Communist and non-party workers were deported.

Only by reforming the security apparatus and placing it under the control of his most trusted henchmen could Stalin hope to exercise the degree of terror necessary to prevent opposition to him from within his own faction. This he accomplished in 1934. In July of that year the OGPU was reorganised and renamed the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (the NKVD). Its head, Yagoda, had proved unreliable in the Ryutin case. While he remained at the head of the NKVD, he was now to be overseen by Yezhov- a key supporter of Stalin who, in 1935, was to succeed Yagoda. Stalin was able to prepare this machinery without meeting any opposition because in the economic field and in foreign policy he continued to pursue the policies pushed for by Kirov. He appeared united with his political opponents while at the same time preparing to launch a devastating blow against them.

This blow, begun in the last month of 1934 and carried on through the Great Purges of 1936-8, constitute the transformation of Soviet Bonapartism from the Bonapartist rule of a faction into the Bonapartist rule of one man.



On the 1st December 1934 Sergei Kirov was assassinated by the young Nikolayev. A degree of mystery surrounds this event. For example the NKVD officer responsible for Kirov's safety died before anybody was able to question him. Whether or not Stalin directly organised, or simply withdrew any obstacles to the murder, it served as the immediate signal to launch his full-scale was on the party's old Bolshevik leaders.

In early 1935 Yezhov took over the Party Control Commission and succeeded Kirov as Secretary of the Central Committee. Khruschev, Malenkov and Beria - all absolutely trusted henchmen of Stalin - were moved into key positions within the party and the state. The murder provided these gangsters with the pretext they needed to exercise their total control. The rights of anyone *accused* of terrorist acts were suspended. Thus the NKVD could select who it wished for immediate transporatation and execution.

From 1935 into 1936 Stalin, true to form, struck first at the Lefts - Zinovievites and the capitulators from the Trotskyist opposition. Zinoviev and Kamenev were tried and imprisoned in January 1935 for complicity in the assassination of Kirov. Stalin chose his charge well - every bureaucrat from the party cell secretary in the Kolkhoz to the head of a ministry feared the silenced and brutally oppressed masses, they feared the appearance of 'the avengers' that the Narodnik tradition had implanted in the Russian consciousness. Any sacrifice seemed justified to dispel the long shadow of terrorist revenge.

Thus the bureaucracy raised above its head the guillotine it had for so long feared. After a lull of some eighteen months in August 1936 the great purges and the slaughter began. In the first trial of the 'terrorist counter-revolutionary Trotskyist Zinovievist bloc', Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yevdokimo and Ivan Smirnov made grotesque extorted 'confessions'. At the instigation of 'Judas Trotsky' they had become the 'despicable servants and agents of Germano-Polish fascists'. The defendants - the closest collaborators and comrades of Lenin for many years - were summarily shot. In January 1937 the second wave began, this time centering on the old members of the Left Opposition who had long since capitulated - Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebryakov, Muralov. In June 1937 Stalin attacked the leadership of the Red Army including Tukhachevsky. The purge was thoroughgoing; three out of five Soviet Marshals, 13 army commanders out of 15, 57 corps commanders out of 80, 70 divisional commanders out of 190, 75 of the 90 members of the Higher War Council - indeed over half the officer corps was purged. The road to the massive Soviet defeats of 1941 was opened by this holocaust.

That the old 'left' were attacked first can be explained by the nature of Stalin's bonapartism. The Stalinist Bonapartist state depended on negotiated alliance and co-existence with World Imperialism. From the time of Hitler's rise to

power the Stalinists sought to cement alliances with democratic imperialism. The Stalin-Laval pact signalled this. The Soviet bureaucracy was prepared to lend its weight, experience and police agents to drowning the Spanish workers' vanguard in blood in order to keep alive this strategic element of international class collaboration in the Stalinist programme. Stalin was keen to make sure that the 'democratic' imperialists were able to point to aspects of Soviet life that corresponded with the values and ideals of bourgeois democracy. The Left, despite their capitulations, remained thorns in his side. Zinoviev, for example, had been the bogey of the European democracies during his period as head of the Comintern. To allay suspicion Stalin aimed to discredit and destroy the 'left'. By linking them with Germany and Japan - suggesting they were agents - Stalin was linking them to the enemies of 'democratic' imperialism. At the same time he was linking them to a danger that ordinary Soviet citizens realised was a very real danger.

His Bonapartism also led him to once again ally with the Right - now broken and not a real threat. Thus Bukharin, a symbol of the Right and therefore a symbol of appeasement with imperialism, was allowed to be the editor of Izvestia, the official government paper and was involved in drafting the 1936 Constitution. The Constitution itself was symbolic in that it reproduced bourgeois democratic norms - such as geographical representation - but confirmed the absolute supremacy of the Party. It was a piece of paper that liberal friends in the West could point to in their pursuit of the Popular Front, but it was also a tool in the hands of the police dictatorship.

But the terror did not stop at the old 'left'. It was to engulf Soviet society for the last years of the 1930s. How do we begin to explain this particular bloody period of Stalinist Bonapartism? In the late 30s internal and external contradictions propelled the Bonapartist regime into deep crisis. In a manner that prefigures the experiences of Stalinist terror in Mao's China and Pol Pot's Kampuchea, the Stalinists could only respond to that crisis by unleashing their terror apparatus against every layer of Soviet society. Stalin's purges represent this extraordinary form of Bonapartism's response to crisis rather than the essence of Stalinism itself. The later 'de-Stalinization' of Khruschev saw an attempt to return to the norms of pre-1934 Stalinism rather than any attempt to dismantle the essential machinery of the Stalinist regime itself.

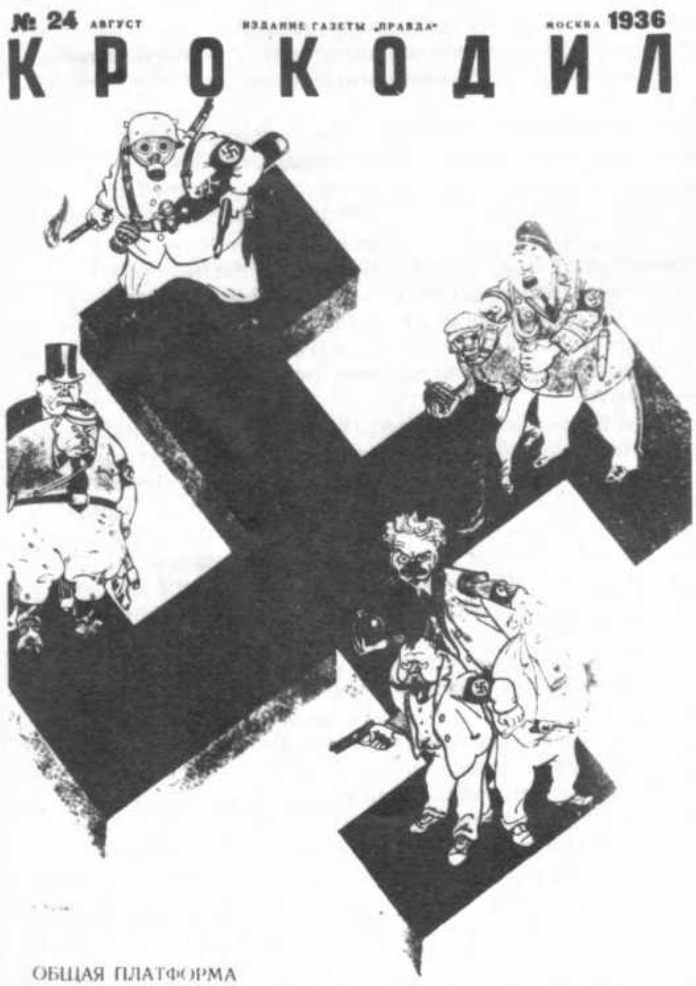
The key elements of Stalinism's crisis were analysed and predicted by Trotsky and the International Left Opposition. The international position of the USSR deteriorated dramatically in the mid 30s. On 25th November 1936 Japan and Nazi Germany signed the anti-Soviet anti-Comintern pact. In the face of the fascist offensive the Soviet bureaucracy's alliance with the 'Western Democracies' proved bankrupt. The victory of Franco in the Spanish Civil War, the 'Anschluss' of Austria with Nazi Germany in 1938, and the Munich agreement of September of that year whereby the British and French bourgeoisies recognised Hitler's seizure of the Sudetenland, all testified to the weak and duplicitous nature of the 'democratic' bourgeoisies. Having slaughtered the left as a means of appeasing the democratic imperialists the Stalinists turned to slaughter the Bukharinites and Soviet military chiefs who, each for their own particular reasons, were pledged to pro-Western or anti-German policies. The purges made possible the dramatic about-turns in Stalinist foreign policy as the Soviet bureaucracy turned first to the Western bourgeoisie and then to the fascists with the 1939 Stalin-Hitler pact as a prop to sustain them in the accelerating international crisis.

Secondly, the late 1930s saw the increased articulation of the accumulated contradictions of autarchic bureaucratic planning. Even the most limited discussion or accountability proved intolerable for the Stalinist regime in these circumstances. Only massive purges and the expansion of the Gulag economy could plug the gaps and keep the system in operation during the Third Five Year Plan.

In these crisis circumstances the bureaucracy could not tolerate discussion within its own ranks. 1932-34 had witnessed a recrudescence of factionalism. Unless it was terrorised into submission, the bureaucracy itself threatened to so divide under the impact of internal and external pressure that the right and more dangerously the left stood to gain a hearing once again both within the ranks of officialdom and, more importantly, within the working class itself. Hence Stalin's resort to extreme terror and the wholesale destruction of nearly all who had any connection with either the heroic or Thermidorian period of the Revolution.

The terror also served another purpose. The grotesque show trials and confessions could serve not only to silence the Soviet masses but also to explain shortages and increased work speeds. The visible shortcomings of Stalinist planning could be 'blamed' on saboteurs and agents. The bureaucratic mismanagers, hiding behind the cloak of police terror, could cover their own incompetence and privileges from the scrutiny of the masses.

A final factor in explaining Stalin's post 1934 offensive against the Thermidorian party was his terror of a revival of the left, following the German debacle. Trotsky had been proved so signally correct against Stalin and the fate of the German workers might have awakened sections of the Communist movement to this fact. Stalin could not risk such a possibility. Thus this period saw not only the stigmatization of all the 'old Bolsheviks' as counter-revolutionaries, but also a worldwide campaign to implicate Trotsky and the Trotskyists in the crimes of fascism. In all the trials the 'fascist' Trotsky was the chief defendant - in absentia. His followers were murdered by the NKVD - Klement, Ignace Reiss, Leon Sedov etc etc. The Bonapartist terror was aimed at destroying the Trotskyist movement inside the USSR and



1936 cover of "Krokodil". This Soviet satirical magazine portrays Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev as fascist terrorists.

outside, and preventing it from becoming a challenge to Stalin. As Trotsky rightly pointed out: **"but under no condition is it permissible for the international proletarian vanguard to obtain the opportunity to verify freely and critically the ideas of Leninism through its own experience and to juxtapose Stalinism and so-called Trotskyism in the broad light of day".** [143]

The net result of the purges was the total destruction, not merely of Lenin's party (which had occurred much earlier), but of virtually everybody who had been in Lenin's party. Stalin successfully created a party that was his tool and was made up of his followers.

The XVIII Party Congress in 1939 was the first since the "Congress of Victors". The victors had now been vanquished, with the majority of delegates to the 1934 Congress having been killed in the purges. As Molotov pointed out at the XVIII Congress, the party was dramatically transformed under the impact of police terror. 80% of republic Party secretaries and 93% of district secretaries had joined the party after 1924, and had known no other party regime than that of Stalin. [144] Equally significantly the party dropped in size from 3,500,000 members in 1933 to a mere 1,900,000 by 1937.

The 1937 census for the USSR revealed a population of 164 million - some 16.7 million less than the planned forecast. This shortfall gives some indication of the scale of the terror that Stalinism inflicted on Soviet society.

The monstrous barbarity of Stalin's regime was not the result of his deranged personality. In order to free itself from all social restraint and to destroy any potential base for opposition, Stalinism had to create this apparatus and regime of terror. In its own way this testifies to the illegitimacy of the Stalinists' usurpation of power and the inability of the Stalin clique to legitimize their regime in the eyes of the mass of Soviet toilers. Their creation of an army of millions of slave labourers enabled them to both terrorize the Soviet working class with the threat of the camps and complete a series of industrial projects under the bayonets of the NKVD. As Roy Medvedev has explained it: **"State plans assigned an increasingly important role to GULAG. By the end of the thirties GULAG was responsible for much of the country's lumbering and extraction of copper, gold and coal. GULAG built important canals, strategic roads, and many industrial enterprises in remote regions....The planning agencies frequently put pressure on the NKVD to speed up certain projects. Planning was done not only for projects assigned to GULAG but also for the growth of its labour force. Planning even encompassed the mortality rate in the camps - and in this respect achievement far exceeded plan goals".** [145]

In the spheres of cultural and family life the Stalinists inaugurated a period of acute reaction. Incapable of legitimizing their dictatorship as either socialist or the will of the working class the Stalinist bureaucracy decked out their dictatorship ever increasingly in the colours of Great Russian chauvinism. Medvedev highlights this well when he describes how **"A symbol of the time was the absence in Moscow of a monument to Marx, to Engels, or even to Lenin, while a statue of Yuri Dolgorukii, a stupid and cruel twelfth century prince, went up on Soviet Square, replacing the Obelisk of Freedom that had been erected at Lenin's suggestion"** [146]

THERMIDOR AND THE FAMILY

The reactionary impact of Stalinism is vividly illustrated by its erosion of the rights won for Soviet women by the October revolution and the proletarian dictatorship. In the Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky correctly stated that "The October Revolution honestly fulfilled its obligations in relation to women". The early Soviet government granted women full political, legal and economic equality and took important positive steps towards removing the burden of women's oppression within the home. All legislation which assumed the subordinate position of women was repealed, and women were written into the constitution with equal



Civil wedding in 1925 - Soviet Asian women still wore the veil.

rights and obligations. Protective legislation was extended to women, specifically in the areas of night and underground work, and any work considered injurious to a woman's health. Equal pay for equal work was established as a fundamental principle.

In terms of the family, all restriction on women's movement were lifted - she no longer had to move with her husband, inheritance and property laws were revised to weaken the strength of the nuclear family. In December 1917 civil registration of marriage and easy free divorce were granted, abortion was legalised in 1920 and made available free in Soviet hospitals. In Central Asia there were problems with the extreme oppression of Muslim women, and concessions were made on marriage laws, but abduction, forced marriage and the Kalym (bride price) were made criminal offences.

Alongside these legal measures the "revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called "family hearth" - that archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labour from childhood to death". [147] The family hearth was to be replaced by socialised institutions for child care, eating, laundry etc. These plans were made, and support for them built, but due to the poverty of the Soviet state and the exigencies of the civil war, they could never be adequately implemented. During the Civil War there were communal dining rooms, as there were during the industrialisation of the early 1930s, their popularity being probably due more to the absence of other sources of food than to a committment to communal living.

The establishment of the Zhenotdel (Women's Department in the Party) in 1918 was important as a means of positively mobilising and propagandising among women, but the female membership of the party still remained low - by 1922 only 8% of party members were women.

The period of the NEP curtailed the limited social programmes that had been established, and the unemployment it created amongst women pushed them back into the home and , increasingly, onto the streets. The 1926 family legislation made married and umarried couples responsible for supporting each other - a measure dictated by the inability of the state to support the vast numbers of deserted women, and aiming to prevent them from abandoning their children and turning to prostitution.

Thermidor as it affected the family and women can be seen to develop from these early problems, but to then have been actively exacerbated and consolidated by Stalinism.

During the First Five Year Plan, women's employment increased at a rate that exceeded the expectations of the planners - the number of women in industry and the national economy doubled from 1928 - 1932, and continued to rise to 41.6 % of the working population by 1939, 56% after the Second World War, 51 % in 1970. During the initial rise in the early 1930s, it was not accompanied by a correspondingly large increase in child-care and communal faciltiies. Women were simply working longer hours *and* doing all the housework. Childcare, of necessity, was expanded in the USSR, but it is still inadequate, both in numbers of places and the care received so that many women would prefer to use a "Babushka" - an unpaid member of the family, to look after the children. Protective legislation for women, particularly maternity leave, and pay declined proportionately with the increase in female labour. Thus the forced industrialisation policy meant that "A woman's place is in the factory *and the home*".

Up to the mid-1930s, the soviet government was still declaring that it would abolish the yolk of domestic slavery - "Down with the Kitchen!" was one of their slogans. In the mid 1930s this was abandoned alongside moves to strengthen the family. An ideological campaign was mounted, and backed up with legislation, to reinforce the family as a bastion of the "new socialist society". This was officially justified partly as a response to the "promiscuity" and breakdown in family life that had been witnessed after the revolution.

The Stalinist state wished to re-establish the family as a performer of domestic labour, but more importantly as an institution for the maintenance of discipline and order, to put a check on the youth and return workers to the isolation of the nuclear family. Homelessness among children, and prostitution were both increasing and the state response was to punish both - parents who were forced by poverty and destitution to abandon their children were fined and imprisoned, harsh measures were taken for the first time by the Soviet state against prostitutes and homosexuals.

This change in position on the family was consolidated in the new family legislation of 1936, which made abortion illegal, emphasised the centrality of the nuclear family and made divorce much more difficult. Stalin made other direct attacks on the equality that had been established after the revolution - in education differentiation of male and female roles was emphasised in schools and courses, and in 1943 coeducation was actually abolished in many schools. Still to this day, girls are taught domestic science and needlework in school and an emphasis on the duty of motherhood remains.

The Marxist tradition has always held that the level of culture and emancipation of society as a whole can be gauged by the position of women within it. Just as Stalinism upholds and extends the oppressive apparatus associated with the old type of state. So it struggled to recreate the old forms of oppression in family life. The position of women in the USSR at the end of the 1930s served as a poignant symbol of the profound degeneration that the world's first workers' state had undergone at the hands of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist regime.

Footnotes

1. L. Trotsky, **History of the Russian Revolution,** (London 1967) p27.
2. M. Dobb, **Soviet Economic Development Since 1917** (London 1966) p 38.
3. Ibid, p 36.
4. L. Trotsky, op.cit. p27.
5. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, **The ABC of Communism** (Harmondsworth 1969) p 186.
6. R. Pethybridge, **The Social Prelude to Stalinism** (London 1974) p137.
7. quoted in Dobb op.cit.p 83.
8. E.H.Carr, **The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin 1917-29** (London 1979) p 11.
9. N. Mironov and Z.V.Stepanov, **Rabochie Leningrada** (Leningrad 1975) p 184.
10. S.N.Kanev and V.M. Nanov, **Ocherki Istorii Leningradskoi organizatsii KPSS** (Leningrad 1968) p 148.
11. O.I. Shkaratan, "Ismeneniya v sotsial'nom sostave fabrichno-zavodskikh rabochikh Leningrada" in **Voprosy Istorii** (SSR 1959) No. 5 p 22.
12. Ibid, p 32.
13. P.R. Gregory and R.C. Stuart, **Soviet Economic Structure and Performance** (New York 1981) p 41.
14. H. Carrere D'Encausse, **Lenin - Revolution and Power** (London 1982) p 131.
15. V.I. Lenin, **Collected Works** (Moscow 1966) pp 467-8
16. Published in **Pravda** May 26th and 27th. See **Collected Works** Volume 33.
17. Lenin, **Collected Works** op. cit. Vol 33 p 474.
18. Ibid, p 487.
19. Ibid, p 488.
20. Ibid, p 498.
21. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed** (London 1967) p 59.
22. Lenin,op.cit.p 428.
23. Lenin, **Collected Works** op. cit. Vol. 36, p 606.
24. Ibid, p 610.
25. Ibid, p 596.
26. L. Trotsky, **The Stalin School of Falsification** (New York 1937) pp 58 - 63.
27. H. C. D'Encausse, op.cit. p 154.
28. quoted in M. Schactman, **The Struggle for the New Course** (Michigan 1965) p 153.
29. Dobb, op. cit. pp 161-162.
30. L. Trotsky, **The New Course** (Michigan 1965) p 45.
31. Ibid, p 46.
32. Ibid, p 18.
33. Ibid, p 19.
34. Ibid, p 23.
35. Schactman, op. cit. p 169.
36. quoted in ibid, p 170.
37. Chetyrnadtsaty S'Ezd VKP (b), **Stenograficheski Otchet** (Moscow 1926) p 135.
38. quoted in W. Korey, **Zinoviev and the Problem of World Revolution 1919 - 1927** (Unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia 1960) p 189.
39. For a fuller discussion of this see **Workers Power** (Journal, Autumn 1977) No 5, pp 10 - 15.
40. For more details see A. Neuberg, **Armed Insurrection** (London 1970)
41. V. Serge, **Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901 - 1941** (London 1963) p 177.
42. H.C. D'Encausse, op.cit. p 170.
43. Ibid, p 165.
44. J. Stalin, "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists" in **Leninism** (London 1940), pp 96 - 97.
45. E. H. Carr, op. cit. p 69.
46. L. Trotsky, **Towards Capitalism or Socialism?** (London 1976) p 9.
47. L. Trotsky, **The Third International After Lenin** (New York, 1970), p 240.
48. **Pravda** 20th October 1925.
49. **Platform of the Joint Opposition** (London 1973), p 28.
50. Ibid, p 28.
51. M. Lewin, **Russian Peasants and Soviet Power** (London 1968) p 99
52. **Platform of the Joint Opposition** op. cit. p 38.
53. Ibid, p 17.
54. Figures from T. H. Rigby **Communist Party Membership in the USSR** (Princeton 1968) Chapter 4.
55. H. C. D'Encausse, **Stalin - Order Through Terror** (London 1981) p2.
56. Ibid, p 8.
57. GPU means State Political Administration; OGPU means Unified State Political Administration.
58. GULAG means Main Camp Administration.
59. H. C. D'Encausse, **Stalin** op. cit. p 12.
60. R. Medvedev, **Let History Judge** (London 1972) p 113.
61. Ibid, p 148.
62. The term "Eighteenth Brumaire" refers to Naopleon I's coup d'etat on 9th November 1799. Brumaire (literally the "foggy month") was a month in the new calendar adopted by the French revolutionaries of the 18th Century. We use the term here in an analagous sense to describe Stalin's coup d' etat, and the establishment of "Soviet Bonapartism".
    The Term "Ninth Thermidor" refers to the events of July 27th 1794 in France when the majority of the Convention ousted Robespierre and his key followers from the Convention and its committees and thereby defeated the most radical elements of the Jacobins and ended their dictatorship. Like Brumaire, Thermidor was a month in The French Revolutionary calendar (literally the "hot month"). We use the term in an analogous sense to refer to the victory of the Stalin/Right (Bukharinite) bloc against the Left Opposition.
63. R. W. Davies, **The Industrialisation of Russia, Volume 1: The Socialist Offensive - The Collectivisation of Agriculture 1929-30** (London 1980) p 39.
64. quoted in A. Nove, **An Economic History of the USSR** (Harmondsworth, 1972) p 148.
65. D'Encausse, **Stalin** op. cit. p 17.
66. Ibid, p 19.
67. T. Cliff, **Russia, A Marxist Analysis** (London, 1970).
68. cf E. Mandel, **Marxist Economic Theory** (London 1968).
69. Gregory and Stuart, op. cit. p 98.
70. A shortfall made even more considerable in its effects on the living standards of the working masses by the fact that in 1927-28 artisan

production was responsible for a considerable proportion of consumer good production but was not accounted for in these figures for state production. During their "left turn" the Stalinists virtually abolished artisan production in the USSR.
71. For a discussion of the evolution of Soviet planning mechanisms, see A. Baykov, **The Development of the Soviet Economic System** (London 1946).
72. quoted in ibid, p 167
73. Dobb, op. cit. p 238.
74. C. Rakovksy, "The Five Year Plan in Crisis" in **Critique** Vol 13 p 21.
75. A. Nove op. cit. p 211.
76. H. Hunter, "Priorities and Shortfalls of Pre-War Soviet Planning" in: J. Degras and A. Nove (Eds), **Soviet Planning** (Oxford 1964).
77. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1930-31** (New York 1973) p 206.
78. Ibid, pp 206 -7.
79. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1932** (New York 1973) pp 277-8.
80. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1932 - 33** (New York 1972) p 225.
81. cf Hunter op. cit.
82. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed** op. cit. p 8.
83. cf Translators afterword to Rakovksy, op, cit. p 53.
84. Hunter op. cit.
85. Nove op. cit. p 227-8.
86. Quoted in S.M.Schwarz **Labour in the Soviet Union** (London 1953) p 195.
87. Cliff, op. cit. p 33.
88. K. Marx , **Marx and Engels Collected Works** (London 1977) Vol 9 p 212.
89. Ibid, p 213.
90. Cliff, op. cit. p 107.
91. Ibid, p 118.
92. Ibid, p 97.
93. Ibid, p 161.
94. Ibid, pp 160-161.
95. Ibid, p 160.
96. Quoted in M. Lewin, "Society and the Stalinist State in the Period of the Five Year Plans" in **Social History** (May 1976) p 151.
97. Schwarz, op. cit. p 87.
98. Quoted in P. Bellis, **Marxism and the USSR** (London 1979) pp120-1.
99. Dobb, op. cit. p 239.
100. D'Encausse, **Stalin** op. cit. p 239.
101. Ibid, p 24.
102. L. Trotsky, **The Challenge of the Left Opposition 1928-29** (New York 1981) p 139.
103. Ibid, p 294.
104. Ibid, p 295.
105. Ibid, p 294.
106. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1932 - 33** op. cit. p 76 (our emphasis).
107. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1930 - 31** op. cit. p 221.
108. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1929** (New York 1975) p 281.
109. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1932 - 33** op. cit. p 77.
110. L. Trotsky, **Challenge of the Left Opposition 1928 - 29** op. cit. pp 275-7.
111. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1930-31** op. cit. p 221-2.
112. Ibid, p 73.
113. Ibid, p 75.
114. Ibid, p 75.
115. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1933 - 34** (New York 1972) p 104.
116. Ibid, p 104.
117. Ibid, p 108.
118. Ibid, p 117.
119. Ibid, p 118.
120. L. Trotsky, "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" in **Writings 1934 - 35** (New York 1971) p 181.
121. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed** op. cit. p 59.
122. Ibid, p 90.
123. Ibid, p 94.
124. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1936-37** (New York 1970) p 331.
125. cf ibid, p 478.
126. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1935 - 36** (New York, 1970), p 360.
127. Ibid, p 354.
128. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed** op. cit. p 277-8.
129. Ibid, p 278.
130. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1939-40** (New York 1969) p 115.
131. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1934-35** op. cit. p 181 -2.
132. L. Trotsky, **In Defence of Marxism** (New York 1973) pp 13-14.
133. L. Trotsky, **Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution** (New York, 1977) p 142.
134. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1939-40** op. cit. p 164.
135. L. Trotsky, **In Defence of Marxism** op. cit. p 131.
136. Ibid, p 132.
137. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1933 -34** op. cit. p 21 (our emphasis).
138. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1938-39** (New York 1969) p 325.
139. According to G.P. Paloczi, **Kruschev the Road to Power** (London 1960).
140. L. Schapiro **History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union**
141. Nove op. cit. p 221.
142. Medvedev op. cit. p 156.
143. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1934-35** op. cit. p 126.
144. D'Encausse, **Stalin** op. cit. p 126.
145. Medvedev op. cit. p 394.
146. Ibid, p 493.
147. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed** op. cit. p 144.

The survival and expansion of Stalinism after the Second World War

The continued existence of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state into the 1980s can only be understood and explained by an analysis of the expansion of Stalinism since the end of the Second World War. The theoretical and political problems posed by this expansion have caused programmatic confusion amongst those claiming to uphold the banner of Trotskyism. In part or in whole this confusion has stemmed from an inability to creatively elaborate Trotsky's own analysis of Stalinism under the changed conditions of the war and its aftermath.

Ever since the early 1920s Trotsky sketched out the general contradictions which were pushing towards a new imperialist world war. He correctly recognised that the USA emerged from the First World War far stronger than both the victorious and the defeated imperialism of Europe. At that time Trotsky believed that a new war would arise out of a failed attempt at post-war USA expansion, a failure caused by an inability to accumulate sufficiently on a ruined European economy, *and* French and British unwillingness to be reduced to semi-colonies of the USA. [1]

The major impetus which forced Trotsky to concretise his analysis and discuss the tempo of the coming war in the 1930s, was of course, the rise to power of Hitler in 1933 in Germany.[2] Precisely because Stalinism's fate was inextricably tied to the respective fortunes of imperialism and the working class, Trotsky drew a number of conclusions regarding the fate of the Kremlin usurpers should the expected war materialise.

Trotsky argued that the imperialist war and its accompanying revolutionary upsurges would sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy. Either it would succumb directly to the onslaught of imperialism aided by restorationist forces within the USSR *or* a series of successful proletarian revolutions in Europe, arising out of the war, would lead to political revolution in the Soviet Union and destroy the Kremlin bureaucracy.[3]

Taken as a strategic prognosis, Trotsky's formulations retain their validity. The reactionary, utopian policy of "detente" practiced by Stalinism in the USSR will lead, inevitably, to the destruction of the collectivised property relations should the working class not first come to the rescue. This *undeniable tendency* towards the destruction of Stalinism was, however, offset during the course of the Second World War, by a set of *conjunctural* factors which Trotsky did not, and, in some cases, could not anticipate.

STALINISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN WORLD WAR 2

The divisions within world imperialism which weakened its offensive capacity against the USSR. The very nature of the imperialist war—bloody conflicts over the division of the world markets—led to the Allied or "democratic" imperialist nations (primarily Great Britain and the USA) eventually enlisting the support of the Stalinist bureaucracy for its war effort against the Axis Powers.

The defeat of the Axis countries and the various compromised national bourgeoisies at the close of the war was accompanied by large-scale anti-capitalist mobilisations. This confirmed the objective potential for the revolutionary variant of Trotsky's prognosis for the war. In the Axis countries (Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary) the upsurges were most pronounced after the German defeat. In Bulgaria, for example, *The Economist* (7th October 1944) noted that throughout Thrace and Macedonia, "Soldiers councils have been set up, officers have been degraded, red flags hoisted and normal saluting has been abolished."[4]

In Eastern Europe the working class was most to the fore in Czechoslovakia, where plant committees, Councils and workers' militias were created, Dual power existed for many months in 1944 and 1945. It was a full year before the government dared to limit workers control in the factories.[5] In Germany there were widespread workers uprisings, particularly in Halle and Magdeburg. It has become commonplace, even amongst bourgeois historians, to recognise that the defeat of Hitler in France during 1944 provoked extremely favourable conditions for the working class to seize state power.[6]

The successful imperialist bloc in the war was itself not able to crush this movement. Imperialism was forced to lean upon the Kremlin and its armed agencies to abort this rising tide of working class struggle. The use of the Red Army to forcibly end workers control in the factories was widespread, particularly in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. In defeated Germany and Austria the working class suffered much worse. Many workers' districts were terrorised. Vienna was looted and pillaged for three days.

The continuance of the alliance had the effect of delaying any *immediate* confrontation between Stalinism and world imperialism. This unholy alliance against the working class took on a sickening dimension in Indo-China where the Stalinists, from positions of great prominence in the ranks of the workers and peasants, helped butcher the vanguard, and delivered a broken proletariat into the hands of imperialism. In Greece the Stalinists, acting in accord with Stalin's directives, were guilty of a similar betrayal. "Spheres of influence" deals struck betwen Churchill and Stalin in Moscow and by all the allies at Yalta had given Indo-China and Greece to the imperialists and Stalin was determined to honour this deal.

Trotsky's prognosis had always insited that the prerequisite for the revolutionary destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy during the war was the ascendancy of the leadership of the Fourth International. However, the war came to a close, and working class struggles erupted, in a situation in which the FI cadre were almost completely marginalised, except for a few notable exceptions, such as Indo-China. (See section on Vietnam). The Stalinists in the USSR and elsewhere were able to survive, therefore, because the revolutionary upsurge lacked a leadership capable of directing it against the bureaucracy, as well as against imperialism. The role of the conscious factor in Trotsky's prognosis should never be overlooked. Failure to recognise its importance led the FI movement, eventually, to believe that Stalinism and imperialism could be overthrown by the "objective process", unfolding independently of human will. (See section on the Fourth International after the War). This method of thinking was alien to that of Trotsky. He believed that prognoses had to be revised and corrected in the light of experience.

The survival of the USSR and Stalinism within it cannot just

be explained by a series of *international* factors. Important *internal* events must also be taken into account. The swift and extensive construction of a war economy displayed the progressive potential of the planned property relations in the USSR. But the survival of the Soviet Union is ultimately accounted for by the heroism of the Soviet masses (20 million dead) in the face of German imperialist aggression. The resistance of the people to fascism, despite the tyranny of Stalinist rule, is explained, on the one hand, by the sobering experience of fascist rule in large Western areas of the USSR, and, by the relative weakening of the Bonapartist State machinery over the masses, enabling them to efficiently organise their own defence against German imperialism relatively free from bureaucratic oppression, as happened in Leningrad.

Although the property relations of the USSR were to prove resilient to the attacks of imperialism the war did wreak havoc on the productive forces of the Soviet Union. This manifested itself most dramatically in a severe contraction in accumulation and an absolute decline in the level of productive forces. In all 31,850 industrial plants were destroyed. 65,000 kms of railway track, 15,800 locomotives and ½ million freight cars were ruined. Coal and steel production fell between 40-50% in 1942-3. It only reached the 1940 level again in 1946. In addition, 4.7 million houses, 1,710 towns and 70,000 villages were destroyed. In agriculture the picture was equally grim. 98,000 collective and 1,876 state farms disappeared. Seven million horses were lost as were 20 out of 23 million pigs. Only 3% of the tractors survived in German occupied Russia.[7]

Centrifugal tendencies undermining the planned property relations became more and more pronounced between 1941 and 1944. Heavy industry, for example, suffered greatly as budget production costs were done away with in 1941, giving autonomy to the trusts. Light industry was often organised on a local scale and even reduced to handicraft production in some areas. In the countryside the war witnessed an accelerated tempo of capitalist restoration in agriculture, with the extensive development of primitive capitalist accumulation which threatened to undermine the social regime in the USSR. As Germain observed:

"The corollary to greater freedom given to the richer peasants was a massive increase in draconian measures taken against the working class in the cities in order to meet the war's demands."[8]

At the same time the privileges of the bureaucracy and its cohorts were extended. The right of inheritance was increased, the orthodox church re-established, and the army and GPU were given independence from the party. Despite this massive crisis the Kremlin rulers managed to reassert their rule and establish an unexpected level of stability. As the siege of Leningrad was lifted, for example, the GPU converged on the city once again. This was possible because of the exhaustion of the working class. Furthermore the lend-lease aid given to the Kremlin by the Allies at Teheran and Potsdam served to shield the bureaucracy from the worst effects of its economic crisis. As it became clear that Hitler was going to be defeated the Kremlin took fright at the powerful restorationist forces it had unleashed and which threatened the collectivised property; a Five Year Plan (the Fourth) was drawn up for 1945-49 which aimed at a 10% growth rate. At the end of 1944 large show trials of industrial bureaucrats were held for "misappropriations" and at the end of 1945 in official pronouncements, the terminology of "Marxism-Leninism" began to replace that of Great Russian/Imperial chauvinism that had been stoked up in the war.

Gradually the Bonapartist state machine was re-built up all over the country as a guardian of the bureaucracy's interests against restorationist and proletarian threats to its existence. On the one hand this bonapartism struck out against the elements of restoration in the countryside which had been let loose. At the same time, however, the Kremlin lashed out against the working class which had shown a developing independence from the bureaucracy during the process of defending the USSR.

However, the survival of the Stalinist caste was not, in the last analysis, a question to be settled on the national arena. Rather, it was the *international* scene at the close of the war which held the key to the future of the Kremlin bureaucrats.

Formal political and military contact between the USSR and the Allies was established in July 1941, a month after the German invasion of the USSR put an abrupt end to the Stalin-Hitler pact. The military bloc was always shot through with suspicion and hostility on both sides. Even the first meeting of the heads of the "Grand Alliance" in late 1943 in Teheran was a bitter affair at which the Soviet Union urged the immediate opening of a second front in Europe. The Western Allies, in fact, had left the Soviet Union to take on the might of German imperialism in the East while they concentrated on reconquering lost colonies from Germany and Japan. While the US did give lend-lease aid to the USSR their policy was one of *both* defeating Germany and exhausting their Soviet ally. As token of its sincerity towards its democratic imperialist allies the Kremlin formally disolved the Communist (Third) International in 1943, thus ending even the pretence of commitment to international revolution.

DIPLOMATIC MANOEUVRES BETWEEN STALINISM AND IMPERIALISM

In the earlier part of the war the dominant thinking amongst US imperialist leaders was total US control over Europe. George Kennan, chief foreign policy advisor to Roosevelt and head of the Policy Planning Staff in the White House said in 1942:

"We endeavour to take over the whole system of control which the Germans have set up for the administration of the European economy, preserving the apparatus putting people of our own into the key positions to run it, and that we then apply this system to the execution of whatever policies we adopt for continental Europe, in the immediate post-war period."[9] The decisive shift in the balance of forces between Allied and Axis imperialism took place during the course of 1943, when the victory of the Allies became more and more assured. Soviet victory at Stalingrad and entry into Eastern Europe forced the imperialists to come to terms with the bargaining power of the Soviet bureaucracy within the anti-German alliance. At Teheran little consideration was given to post-war territorial divisions apart from a general agreement to dismember Germany. Stalin said:

"There is no need to speak at the present time about any Soviet desires. But when the time comes, we will speak."[10] However Roosevelt left the conference convinced that some tactical concessions would have to be made to the USSR after the war. It was only as the defeat of Germany became a certain prospect and the role that the USSR would play in the defeat became clear to the USA that such tactical concessions were even considered.

Roosevelt on his return from the Yalta conference in January 1945 confessed to a group of Senators,:

"The occupying forces had the power in the areas where their arms were present and each knew that the others could not force things to an issue. The Russians had the power in Eastern Europe . . . The only practical course was to use what influence we had to ameliorate the situation."[11]

Even in these moments of weakness the imperialists did not give carte blanche to the USSR. They insisted on spheres of "influence", not "control". Faced with this prospect the Kremlin was confronted with several acute problems, all of which necessitated a right turn in international policy. The chief problems was the containment of the rising tide of anti-capitalist upsurge throughout Europe which was largely outside the control of the Soviet bureaucracy or was threatening to get out of control of the indigenous Stalinists. But the Soviet leaders also had to be wary of the *strategic* threat from Anglo/American imperialism. Although the tactical alliance with the latter bloc was necessitated by the threat of German imperialism, as this threat subsided, so the threat of Anglo-American aggression resurfaced. It was essential for Stalin to take steps to prepare for this threat.

Such tactical concessions to the Kremlin were opposed by sections of the US ruling class. Acting Secretary of State throughout most of 1945 was Joseph Grew, a warmonger who argued in December 1944 (the eve of Yalta),

"It will be far better and safer to have the showdown before Russia can reconstruct herself and develop her tremendous potential military, economic and territorial power."[12]

At the Potsdam Conference in June/July 1945, the fine details of the post-war carve up were agreed. During this conference (July 16th) the USA exploded the first atomic bomb in New

Mexico. The existence of the bomb would render redundant the US imperialists request for a Soviet drive against Japan at the end of European hostilities and serve to shift the balance within the alliance against the Soviet Union. Churchill, on behalf of the British, was delighted at the new weapon. Before the news of Churchill's defeat in the July General Election forced him to take his leave of Potsdam, he wrote:

"We now have something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians. The secret of this explosive and the power to use it would completely alter the diplomatic equilibrium which was adrift since the defeat of Germany." [13] In addition Churchill was determined to keep the German army intact as a bulwark against the USSR.

Aware of this potential threat Stalin recognised the imperative need to rebuild the ravaged economy as quickly as possible so as to re-establish his security both internally against the working class and externally against the threat from imperialism. In order to put pressure on the Kremlin, lend lease aid to the USSR was stopped in June 1945, immediately prior to Potsdam. The US also took a much tougher line on reparations. Both these measures were designed to punish the USSR for supposedly overstepping the limits of the Yalta agreements. Consequently at Potsdam reparations were *the* sticking point, as Stalin was determined to make Germany pay for the cost of the war. In the end, the seal of approval was given to any reparations taken from USSR occupied territory and 25% of "unnecessary" capital equipment from the imperialist-controlled zone of Germany.

THE POLITICS OF STALINIST RECONSTRUCTION AFTER THE WAR

Given the crucial nature of the manifold threats to the existence of a stable, parasitic caste in the USSR, and the international character of the dilemma, the *survival* of Stalinism was inescapably bound up with the political consolidation of its military *expansion* in Eastern Europe. Stalinism's expansion was marked by a number of specific features. Stalinism fears above all the threat of genuine proletarian revolution. Consequently the expansion of its political influence was achieved in a manner which subordinated the interests of the working class to itself, and through it to imperialism. The reactionary, utopian theory of "socialism in one country", the credo of the Stalinist bureaucracy, leads programmatically to the illusory strategy of "peaceful co-existence" with world imperialism. The interests of the working class were sacrificed on the altar of this strategy.

However, under exceptional circumstances, the strategy of "detente" with private property on a world scale can lead, by its very logic, to its tactical negation on a local scale. In other words, the overall desire to strike a "modus vivendi" with private property leads to the *abolition of private property* in certain, local circumstances where this proves unavoidable for the Stalinists. This proved to be the end result in most of the areas that the USSR had occupied at the end of the war. But this only occurs when the balance of "detente" has become very unfavourable to the Stalinists. It occurs only in order to re-establish "peaceful co-existence" with the imperialists on a more stable basis on a world scale.[14] It does not indicate that Stalinism has in any way become a revolutionary factor in events.

An extremely important impulse for expansion was the crisis of accumulation within the USSR. For example, the Soviet Union sought to repair its war-torn economy at the close of the war through forced transfers of raw materials and energy (ie plundering) and through unequal exchange (ie the "mixed company").

The previously Axis countries of Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary were hit first and hardest, immediately they were occupied, about 70% of their industrial machinery was removed. In Hungary some 90% of industrial capacity in the metal and engineering industries was removed in 1945. In Rumania, between 23rd August 1944 and 12th September 1944 equipment to the value of 2 billion dollars was taken, including the entire war fleet, most of the merchant marine fleet, half the available railway stock, and the oil industry equipment. In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia some 15-25% of the industrial stock was removed. *60* large industrial enterprises alone were dismantled from the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia. In that part of Germany annexed by Poland after the war, it is estimated that up to 30% of industry was uprooted and taken to the USSR. In addition, up to 30% of each occupied country's annual GDP was syphoned off by the Kremlin.

In theory the "mixed company" was supposed to be an equal combination of Russian and national bourgeois capital. In reality very little of the Russian share was forthcoming. Under this guise lots of raw materials and energy supplies went to the USSR for



Stalin (with Molotov behind), Roosevelt and Churchill at the Tehran Conference, 1943.

next to nothing in exchange (eg Rumanian oil, Iranian oil, Yugoslavian bauxite).[15] We must remember Trotsky's own warning that the rapacious insatiable appetite of the bureaucracy, with its desire to enhance its privileges and prestige over other areas, will always be a factor in any expansion. However, this will be very much a subordinate factor since alone it would not be sufficient reason for the Stalinists to risk their "understanding" with imperialism nor provoke the possibility of unleashing unwanted revolutionary action by the oppressed masses.

In Eastern Europe (ie Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia) the political strategies pursued by the Stalinists at the end of the war, and the impetus behind them were essentially the same. In each of these countries the defeat and retreat of German imperialism was accompanied by uneven and potentially revolutionary mobilisations of the urban and rural workers and peasants. Although anti-capitalist in direction, these actions of the masses were without revolutionary Trotskyist leadership. The hold of indigenous Stalinism on the other hand, over the vanguard of the masses was very uneven throughout Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia was the only Eastern Europe country on the eve of war to have even a semblance of bourgeois democracy. This helped the CP to operate fairly openly. At its lowest pre-war point the KSC (Czechoslovakian CP) had a membership of 24,000. Electorally it always managed to pick up at least ¾ million votes, although it only controlled about 12% of the trade union membership. It survived the occupation emerging with a membership of 27,000 in May 1945 in the Czech areas alone. This grew to 1,159,164 by January 1946. On the other hand the Polish Communist Party suffered from the Stalin purges of 1938. It was virtually liquidated, with 12 of its Central Committee members executed. Reconstituted in late 1941, after the breakdown of the Stalin–Hitler pact (in preparation for which the Polish Stalinists had been killed), it still only had a membership of about 4,000 in 1942/3.

In the last analysis, though, the weakness of certain indigenous Stalinist parties was compensated for by the role and control of the Red Army. Given the sporadic and atomised nature of the resistance movements in Eastern Europe the major force for sweeping German imperialism out was the Red Army, the armed wing of the Kremlin. From 1944 onwards, the defeat of German imperialism by the Red Army was accompanied by the deliberate destruction of the anti-fascist and anti capitalist movements of the Eastern European masses. Everywhere the Stalinists protected, and in some cases reintroduced, the rule of the bourgeoisie in the economy and prevented the seizure of private property by the workers and peasants. Where the workers had already seized factories then the Stalinists used nationalisation as a means of taking direct control away from the workers.

Molotov's strictures to the Bulgarian working class were typical of this period:

"If certain Communists continue their present conduct we will bring them to reason. Bulgaria will remain with her democratic government and present order." [16]

Of Bulgaria, the French bourgeois paper, Le Monde, was pleased to note in June 1946,

"Moreover, the Fatherland Front, has been able to maintain a sound economic situation and to safeguard the financial stability of the country." The equally worthy Swiss publication, the Geneva Journal crowed the previous month, with regard to Hungary,

"Wherever they can do so, the Russians block and oppose the taking over of large industrial enterprises under a new statist system." In Rumania, the fascist collaborator and big oil trust magnatre Tatescu was vaunted by the Stalinists as a national hero. Even the discredited Rumanian monarch, King Michael was brought back, decorated by Stalin and put back on the throne.[17]

In the occupied countries of Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia the German bourgeoisie owned much of the capital. In 1945 in Czechoslovakia more than 60% of the industry and virtually the whole of the financial system was in German hands. With the retreat of the fascists the workers established workers' control throughout the nation. The workers councils set up national managements, which the Benes government were forced to recognise. A short time after there were some 10,000 national managements embracing some 75% of industrial workers. Nationalisation by the state and the gradual introduction of state functionaries into the plants as managers was the only way, short of terrible blood letting, of defusing the revolutionary situation.[18] At the same time there was considerable popular pressure for nationalisations from the working class who believed it would mean an end to capitalist exploitation. As a result, the October 1945 nationalisation decrees brought 61.2% of the working class into nationalised industries (16% of the enterprises). This did not represent the expropriation of the whole capitalist class by the Czech workers. On the contrary, as the KSC put it,

"By nationalisation we understand the transfer of the property of Germans, Hungarians, Traitors and collaborators to the hands of the Czech and Slovak nation."[19] One nationalisation decree was even more explicit, stating that the enterprises were to be administered in line with the principles of commerical business, independence, profit making and free competition.[20]

The impecably bourgeois president of the first Czech government, Benes, stated the position clearly in an interview to the 'Manchester Guardian' in December 1945:

"The German simply took control of all main industries and all the banks. . . In this way they automatically prepared the economic and financial capital of our country for nationalisation. To return this property and the banks into the hands of Czech individuals or to consolidate them without considerable state assistance and without new financial guarantees was simply impossible. The state had to step in."

DUAL POWER IN EASTERN EUROPE 1944 - 1947

At the level of the state, the Red Army served to stabilise and in some cases reconstruct the forms of administrative and repressive state apparatus associated with bourgeois rule; government centralised in the hands of a distant and unaccountable executive; internal and external security centralised in the hands of a standing army above and opposed to the mass of direct producers. Given the highly statised nature of the property relations in these countries and hence the relative weakness of the individual representatives of capital in the economy, it was particularly important for the Stalinists to construct coalition governments with the representatives of the bourgeoisie in high, if not crucial, places.

In Bulgaria, throughout 1945 there was a wave of political executions possibly numbering 20,000. Nevertheless the popular Agrarian Party leader, Nikola Petkov was in the government. In November the elections took place with an overwhelming majority for the Fatherland Front, a Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist coalition headed by the strident anti-communist Prime Minister Georgiev. In Rumania the first government after the German defeat was made up by the National Peasants and National Liberals in September 1944, the only Stalinist representative being the Minister of Justice Patrascanu. The machinations and brutal force of the Red Army over the next months in Rumania were designed to remove the two major bourgeois parties (The National Democratic Bloc) and replace them with a government of the National Democratic Front (NDF), consisting of Stalinists, Social Democrats, Union of Patriots and the Ploughman's Front. Such a government would be an extremely malleable one for the Kremlin. In this period the Kremlin charge, Vyshinsky, dictated the sequence of events to King Michael. Eventually after a period of armed demonstrations an NDF government was installed in March 1945 with 17 Cabinet positions going to the NDF and 3 economic ministries to the oil magnate Tatarescu who was installed as foreign minister. These measures were clearly designed to placate the 'democratic' bourgeoisie.

A similar struggle took place in Poland this time between the US/GB backed London based group of Polish nationalists headed by Peasant Party leader Mikolajczyk and the Soviet backed Lublin Committee. In each of these cases the purges, intimidation and liquidation of prominent bourgeois figures must not be interpreted as the complete elimination of bourgeois rule, but as measures designed to crush bourgeois parties with *strong roots in the national population* and replace them with other bourgeois



Stalinist expansion after World War 2.

figures who would have little base from which to resist the designs of the Kremlin, but which could, at the same time, administer the economy in a way that would also serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie and even solicit aid from imperialism.

In each of these countries the state apparatus had, to a greater or lesser extent, disintegrated in the last period of the imperialist war. While the Stalinists prevented the workers and peasants from creating their own new state apparatus (based on Soviets and a workers militia) and re-established bourgeois control in the economy, they kept the key levers of the reconstructed state apparatus firmly in the grip of the Red Army and its local allies and agents. The leading Hungarian Stalinist Rakosi spoke for all his ilk in Eastern Europe in this period when he remarked:

"There was one position, control of which was claimed by our party from the first minute. One position where the party was not inclined to consider any distribution of the posts according to the strenghts of the parties in the coalition. This was the State Security Authority. . . We kept this organisation in our hands from the first day of its establishment." [21] In fact, it was in Hungary where the Stalinists had to make the most concessions on the issue. The coalition which emerged from the October 1945 elections haggled over portfolios. Eventually Imre Nagy secured the Ministry of the Interior but responsibility for the police was delegated to the Smallholders Party. With the exception of Czechoslovakia, the Stalinists also retained the post of Defence, again reflecting the relative strength of the bourgeoisie in this country. Everywhere the levers of armed power were used in this period to intimidate opponents, fix elections and in general guide policy down desired channels.

The result was a dual power situation that reflected the balance of forces between the world bourgoisie and the USSR as it manifested itself in the Eastern European area. Political power was split, or rather shared, between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. The Stalinists held a monopoly of repressive power but the bourgeoisie were reintegrated into the political superstructure via their control of the highly statified economy. Nowhere was this more clearly the case than in Czechoslovakia. The Germans were finally driven from Prague only in May 1945. The first post-war government set up was a coalition of four bourgeois parties and two bourgeois workers' parties. The KSC emerged from the war the strongest and they were given first choice of ministries, the 22 portfolios being divided up equally among the parties. The KSC chose Interior, Information and Agriculture, leaving the economic ministries in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

By defining this period as one of dual power we can understand its instability and its eventual ourcome. In Eastern Europe after 1945 the dual power consisted of a pact between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. Such a pact was necessary for the bourgeoisie because they were weak and depended on the Stalinists to maintain private property. It was necessary for the Stalinists because during the period 1945/47 they wanted to maintain private property to fulfil their deal with imperialism and in return secure economic aid. Dual Power was also necessary for the Stalinists because it was a means of *crushing* the independent activity of the working class. Trotsky, drawing on the experience of the English and French revolutions (17th and 18th centuries) anticipated the possibility of such a form of dual power:

"The splitting of sovereignty foretells nothing less than civil war. But before the competing parties will go to that extreme—especially in case they dread the interference of a third force—they may feel compelled for quite a long time to endure, and even to sanction, a two power system." [22] The coalition governments were the sanction given by both parties in Eastern Europe in 1945 to the split sovereignty that existed. These governments had, to a greater or lesser extent, bonapartist characteristics. This was less so where the indigenous bourgeoisie and Stalinists represented genuine social forces viz Czechoslovakia, more so where the new governmental form had little indigenous social foundations eg Soviet Occupied Germany.

The ability of the Stalinists to resolve the dual power from 1948 onwards without recourse to civil war can be explained by their dominance within those governments. Dual power does not necessarily mean that both sides are equal and balanced. The Soviet Army and police apparatuses established in Eastern Europe meant that repressive power lay exclusively in the hands of the Stalinists. There were therefore able to use this power to resolve

dual power in a cold manner, when world imperialism moved against them.

POPULAR FRONT AND BOURGEOIS WORKERS GOVERNMENT

Within the coalition governments in existence throughout Eastern Europe in this period the Stalinist parties were the decisive force because of their relations to the armed forces of the USSR.[23] Committed to the maintenance of private property and the demobilisation and continued exploitation of the masses they acted *either in a form of popular front with the bourgeoisie as in Czechoslovakia or as a specific form of a bourgeois workers government.* These parties with roots in the national working class, owing their power to the Soviet bureaucracy, shaped the policies of government in the interests of a deal between imperialism, its own national bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The two *forms* of government established by the Stalinist Parties were different. A popular front is an open coalition of bourgeois and workers parties, while the bourgeois workers government is a concealed coalition in which a workers party governs on behalf of and in the interests of, the bourgeoisie. However, in content they are both designed to deflect the working class from seizing power and exercising it in its own name. Of the bourgeois workers government the Comintern rightly stated that they **"are a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the State, or to ward off, with the help of corrupt workers leaders, the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and to gain time.".**[24] Likewise with the popular front, as Trotsky pointed out, referring to its role in demobilising the French working class in 1936: **"The People's Front in France took upon itself the same task as did the so-called 'coalition' of Cadets, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in Russia in February 1917—checking the revolution at its first stage."**[25] He went on to point out that, like a bourgeois workers government, the popular front disguises the real nature of bourgeois power from the workers: **"The workers were deprived of these instruments (party and soviets—WP) because the leaders of the workers organisations formed a wall around the bourgeois power in order to disguise it, to render it unrecognisable and invulnerable. Thus the revolution that begun found itself braked, arrested, demoralised."**[26]

The bourgeois workers governments *and* popular fronts played exactly these roles in Eastern Europe. The bourgeoisie was extremely vulnerable. Its armed power was negligible. It lacked, at this time, decisive support from imperialism. The advance of the Red Army had aroused the expectations and activities of the masses. Everywhere the objective possibility of replacing the collapsed power of the bourgeoisie with genuine proletarian power existed. Such an outcome could have delivered a death blow to the Kremlin Stalinists. For that very reason, *rather* than moving against the bourgeoisie, they either governed on their behalf (eg East Germany) in specific forms of bourgeois workers governments, or drew the bourgeoisie into open coalitions, ie popular fronts (eg Czechoslovakia and Rumania). The dominance of the Stalinists in the bourgeois workers governments and the Popular Fronts did not alter their nature. It did alter the eventual outcome of these necessarily temporary government formations. The bourgeois workers government, as the Comintern predicted, could 'objectively help to accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.'[27] Thanks to the shift in imperialist policy *and* the dominance of the Stalinists, this objective possibility was realised. The popular fronts were also superceded by governments in which the Stalinists had absolute control. They were able to dispense with their weaker coalition partners, when the main threat came from imperialism rather than genuine proletarian revolutions which the Popular Fronts had served to check.

The nationalisations of the coalition period were carried through as the result of an agreement between the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie to nationalise that property which was owned by the Axis powers and their collaborators. Land reform affected only the largest estates. Land reform occurred generally within the first months of "liberation", but was uneven between countries and inadequate in scope. Given the weight of the peasant based parties in the post war coalitions, the large scale evacuations of the land by former landlords in the wake of the German retreat and the immense contribution of the peasantry in the various partisan forces, it was expected that there would be a conserable movement pressing for land redistribution. In addition the immediate need for increased food production required giving peasants the initiative to produce. The most sweeping reforms were in Hungary where all landholdings were reduced to 142 acres. In Rumania all holdings of more than 500 hectares were partitioned. Thousands more peasants 'benefited' from such decrees but the social condition of most remained the same. This was because the Red Army took the best agricultural machinery to the USSR as reparations and left untouched the crippling system of credit, thus condemning the small peasantry to perpetual crisis.

It is clear than between 1944-47 the Kremlin and the local Stalinists were committed to resolving the dual power situation through the creation of capitalist states friendly to the USSR. To this end they sought to maintain or partially reconstruct the old (ie bourgeois) official apparatuses. Only these apparatuses could have permanently guaranteed the protection of bourgeois property. Thus, in the period of dual power the states in Eastern Europe can be described as still, essentially, capitalist. However this general statement is insufficient to explain the dynamics of a dual power situation which by definition is transitional and lends to the state itself a contradictory, transitional character. As Trotsky pointed out with regard to the Russian Revolution after February (ie *before* the proletarian revolution): **"If the state is an organisation of class rule, and a revolution is the overthrow of the ruling class, then the transfer of power from the one class to the other must necessarily create self-contradictory state conditions, and first of all in the form of dual power."**[28]

The aim of the Stalinists was to prevent the resolution of dual power in a genuinely revolutionary direction. Two options alone were open to them in carrying this through. Either, they could fully reconstruct a capitalist state and cede power to it—a course that would in fact have resulted in the restored capitalists dumping them from government and attacking them (as happened in Vietnam in 1945). Or they could have carried through a bureaucratic revolution which from the outset, excluded the proletariat from direct political power as they had done in the Baltic states and Eastern Poland at the beginning of the war. The possibility of these two options for the Stalinists invested the state machine in Eastern Europe between 1944-47 precisely with a self-contradictory character. The Stalinists reintegrated sections of the bourgeoisie into the state machine, but their fear of the reintroduction of imperialism into their newly established "buffer zone" led them to exclude the bourgeoisie from any control over the armed power of the state.

This does not mean, however, that these states became degenerate workers states immediately after the entry of the Red Army. We do not, as Marxists, define the form or the content of the state according to the social or political composition of its personnel. That the Stalinist personnel were in the last analysis largely dependent on post-capitalist property relations but found themselves defending capitalist property relations further underlines the contradictory, transitory nature of the period 1944-47. Shortly before his death Trotsky commented that should the Stalinists successfully make their peace with capitalist property relations in those countries it dominated politically for any length of time, then we would be forced to revise our understanding of Stalinism and the social nature of the USSR.[29]

FROM COMPROMISE TO CONTAINMENT

A closer appreciation of Trotsky's reasoning on this score allows us to affirm the correctness of his analysis. Trotsky's statement was based on the irrefutable fact that with regards to an isolated workers state, imperialism (ie *world* capitalism) remains stronger than the USSR. If Stalinists were to hold power then their reign must inevitably be short-lived as the national *economic* power of the bourgeoisie, itself drawing on the power of imperialism

through its thousands of ties, would be marshalled to unseat the "alien body" in the bourgeoisie's state. In this way a bourgeois political counter-revolution would destroy the political rule of Stalinism and the contradiction within the social formation would be "resolved" in favour of imperialism. For this reason the Stalinist project of consolidating capitalist states was necessarily utopian.

It is within this perspective and not by abandoning it that we must understand the situation in Eastern Europe at the end of the war. A situation that allowed this contradiction to exist in reality, but only for a short period. The stagnation of world trade and the protectionism of the decade before the war was at its height during the war itself and spilled over into the post war period. With the partial exception of Czechoslovakia, the Eastern European countries had been bonapartist regimes throughout the 1930s and of semi-colonial status. Their economic and political ties with imperialism were severely dislocated during the war. The contraction of world trade and the fracturing of the world economy continued right through the 1944-7 years. However, relations between Anglo-American imperialism and the national bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe were virtually non-existent after the war. In its turn, this reduced the power of the national bourgeoisies to resist the enforced direction of the Stalinists.

This fracturing of the relations between imperialism and its national agents was a highly unstable, conjunctural factor which temporarily offset the contradiction between Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. But this *strategic* contradiction reasserted itself during 1947/8 when the long expected "united front" of the successful imperialisms was directed at the Kremlin's role in Eastern Europe. The tactical united front between imperialism and the bureaucracy, put together to deny the possibility of a European revolution now subsided along with the threat of a revolution itself. Relations between the USSR and the Western Allies had deteriorated with increased rapidity during the course of 1946, which was a watershed year, a transitional year from compromise to containment on U.S. President Truman's part. He had an ally in Churchill who had become the front runner for a more hawkish attitude ever since he detected a 'betrayal' of the Yalta agreement in 1945. In fact, the first reference to an 'Iron Curtain' across Europe dates from five days after the German surrender in May of that year. The celebrated reference in a major speech in the USA in March 1946 to the Iron Curtain was a pulling together of the threads of what was to later become called the 'Cold War' stance of America and British imperialism against the USSR.



US President Harry Truman.

The reasons which underpin the gradual change in ideological stance in 1946 are not hard to find. The Yalta and Potsdam conferences had come to an agreement over 'spheres of influence' which basically covered Europe and the Balkans. But the Kremlin's refusal to take its troops out of Northern Iran in February 1946, Molotov's claim to the 'trusteeship' of Libya in North Africa, and the USSR's fiery insistence on having the right of access to a warm water port in the Dardanelles in August, convinced the imperialists of the urgent need to contain the USSR . The imperialist offensive was led by the USA; the western nations, such as France and Great Britain, were in the midst of economic crises and were thus unable to relaunch a vigorous round of accumulation on their own.

British coal production in 1946 was 20% down on its 1938 level; in Western Germany it was two-fifths of its 1938 level. Precisely because of the dominant position of Germany in the industrial field before the war, its crushing defeat was bound to have an enormous effect throughout Europe. In 1939, Germany had been responsible for one-fifth of all Europe's industrial production. Allied to all this was a severe agricultural and financial crisis in Europe. European wheat production fell in 1947 to less than half its 1938 level. In 1946, some 125 million Europeans were living on 1000-2000 calories a day, and this was to worsen. A measure of the financial instability can be gauged from the fact that wholesale prices in France in 1946 were rising at the rate of 80% per annum.[30] The USA's own productive capital emerged from the war relatively untouched, indeed even strengthened. Relative to its markets the productive forces were burgeoning. In 1945 the USA manufactured half the world's products. In 1946 it accounted for half the world's income. In short, it occupied a position of dominance in the world economy unparallelled since Britain of the 1850s. However the boom in the USA economy was facing the prospect of a major reversal if it allowed the stagnation in the markets of Western and Eastern Europe to continue.

Stalin's hold in Eastern Europe and the spectre of revolution in the west, called forth the 'Truman Doctrine'—the doctrine of containment, not immediate war against the USSR, backed up by massive economic aid for anti-communist governments. Greece proved to be the launching pad for this new policy. Rapidly crumbling as an imperialist power, Britain refused to financially underwrite Greece in February 1947, then in the midst of civil war. Fearing a communist (ELAS) victory, the US made an unconditional commitment to the right-wing government. 300 million dollars was given immediately. On 12th March, Truman elaborated before Congress: **"It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."**[31] The economic complement of this doctrine was the Marshall Aid Programme and the plans to introduce a new currency unity in the imperialist-occupied zones of Germany.

General Marshall had replaced Byrnes as Secretary of State in January 1947. His Plan was called the 'Truman Doctrine in Action' and was announced in June though it was to take nearly a year for ratification. It was not a programme of relief but of reconstruction, entailing some 17 billion dollars to Europe in return for massive US influence in domestic and foreign policy. Sixteen countries had applied and accepted its terms by September 1947.

With this twin attack the US codified its Cold War stance; to draw the line on USSR influence in Europe, to burden the Kremlin with sole responsibility for reconstruction in its own "spheres" and to eradicate its influence in the imperialist spheres. These events threw the Kremlin and the National Communist parties into a turmoil. In Western Europe the Stalinists were unceremoniously dumped from the bourgeois coalition governments. It was the social instability arising from the economic crisis that forced the French and Italian bourgeoisie to tolerate the Stalinists in Government, since they could control the working class. In May Marshall wrote to DeGasperi , head of the Christian-Democrat Government, urging the expulsion of the CP and promising to underwrite their financial needs.

In Eastern Europe, where the levers of political power were in their hands, the Stalinists were compelled to choose whether to confront the imperialist offensive or retreat and concede to it. Consistent with their attempt to construct a strategic alliance with



Soviet troops atop the Reichstag in Berlin.

capitalism, several of the national communist parties were prepared to accept Marshall Aid. The Marshall Aid Plan was formally open to the USSR, but this was merely a deliberate ploy to put the onus on the Kremlin to make the split. Molotov attended the preliminary discussions briefly before withdrawing. The Czech and Polish Cabinets showed a positive response to the Plan, including the Stalinists. But they were soon forced to decline by USSR pressure. As a counter measure the Kremlin drew up a set of improvised trade agreements (the 'Molotov Plan') for Eastern Europe. If the road of the Marshall Plan had been accepted then sooner or later Stalinism would have lost complete control in Eastern Europe and imperialism would have stood knocking on the door of the USSR itself. The Kremlin and Stalin were not prepared to risk this fate and so risk their own necks. Stalin tightened the reins of power and ordered the elimination, from above, of the economic roots of the bourgeoisie, and their political representatives in the state who could have been a potential point of departure for rebuilding their power in the future.

COUNTER – REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL OVERTURNS IN EASTERN EUROPE

A preparatory and necessary step to the *bureaucratic* liquidation of bourgeois power in Eastern Europe was the complete bureaucratic control of the national communist parties over the working class. Primarily this meant the destruction of the influence of the Social-Democratic parties over the working class which rivalled and in most cases outshone that of the Stalinists. This was especially so in Poland, Hungary and in what was to become East Germany. The method was usually the same; intimidations, purges and forced fusions. In September 1944, a new pro-Stalinist leadership was foisted on the Polish socialists (PPS) with a view to securing unification. The rank and file continuously refused to endorse this so in December 1947, it was done anyway, a further 12 leaders being removed and 82,000 members expelled. The term 'salami tactic' was used by Hungarian Stalinist, Rakosi, to describe what was done. Persistent resistance from the Hungarian socialists (SDP) was finally overcome in February 1948 when the pro-Moscow minority in the SDP convened a Congress without the centre and right under the protection of the secret police, and in June the merger was announced.[32]

Despite the risks this policy held for the future of "detente", the Kremlin reckoned that not to take this road was to risk its own destruction. Not only would the USSR have had to give up the enormous productive potential of Eastern Europe to imperialism, but it would have seriously threatened the continued existence of the bureaucracy itself. Faced with this extremely disadvantageous turn in the relationship of "peaceful co-existence", the Kremlin decided everywhere in these countries to economically and politically destroy the bourgeoisie. Everywhere the pattern was the same. Leading bourgeois figures were arrested or executed and opposition gradually banned. In Poland, the opposition leader, Mikolajczyk fled in 1947 to escape from the tightening hold of the Stalinists. In Rumania King Michael was deposed in December and in early 1948 the now Stalinist dominated United Workers Party took control. The leader of the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, Petkov, was arrested in June 1947 and executed in September. 20,000 were arrested and opposition papers closed for good. In Hungary, Kovacs, the former Smallholders leader, was arrested in May by the SAF. The Prime Minister fled to the USA in May. New elections in August saw the CP dominant, though they continued the facade of a coalition until the fusion with the socialists in 1948.

After 1947/8 the destruction of capitalism in these countries was undertaken bureaucratically from above and was combined

with repression against the vanguard of the proletariat. One of the ways this repression occurred was through purging of the Communist Parties themselves. This was continuous after 1947 but received new momentum after the Stalin-Tito split in the summer of 1948. In Poland, for example, between September and December 1948 30,000 members were expelled. The General Secretary, Gomulka,was imprisoned. In Bulgaria, the vast majority of the leadership and 92,000 of the rank and file were expelled up to 1950. In Czechoslovakia, where the spirit of independence had long been nurtured via Czech nationalism, 100,000 were expelled between February and August 1948. The Stalinists were already in control of the political/repressive apparatus and could utilise this power against the bourgeoisie and its agents.

Only in Czechoslovakia, during February 1948, did the Stalinists mobilise forces outside their own security apparatus to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The period of dual power, an exact and precarious balance in the Czech Cabinet, came to a decisive end in late February 1948. On 20th February a dispute over Cabinet control of the police resulted in 12 non-CP ministers offering the bourgeois head Benes their resignations. It was understood that they would be refused, and was designed as an offensive against the KSC. But the KSC staged mass demonstrations culminating in marches of armed trade union militia on February 23rd. No independent organisations were thrown up; the demonstration was kept within strict limits designed to put pressure on Benes to accept the resignation which he did. The KSC was asked to form a government which it did comprising only the KSC and its allies. The May elections went ahead under great repression, with one slate of candidates and a decree that a blank ballot paper was 'tantamount to treason', the results gave a juridicial seal to the 'coup'.

Elsewhere demonstrations and rallies were used merely to *legitimise* the bureaucratic overturn in the eyes of the Stalinists base. During this period the Stalinists did not constitute a "revolutionary workers government" acting under the pressure of the masses to take decisive measures against the bourgeoisie and its property. The government was not a government of struggle based on independent workers organisations—militias and soviets. Instead the overturn was the work of a Stalinist bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers'government (see section on the state) which had ensured that the masses were so disorganised, and that the state force at its own disposal was so considerable as to prevent the working class carrying out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie itself and replacing it with the forms of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers'councils and a workers'militia. Such a prospect would have *both* challenged the privileges and authority of the bureaucratic caste that had been coalescing in these countries between 1944 and 1947, and stood to challenge the political rule of the Stalinists in the USSR itself.

The *qualitative* transformation of these bureaucratised states into a bureaucratically degenerate form of the dictatorship of the proletariat takes place at that point when the regimes have expropriated the bourgeoisie economically and set out to subordinate and curtail the operation of the essential law of the capitalist economy—the law of value—and organise their nationalised economies on the basis of the planning principle—albeit in a bureaucratically deformed manner.

None of this is possible without the prior existence of nationalisation, the monopoly of foreign trade and the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie. But in themselves the existence of these features do not necessarily constitute a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. a state based on post-capitalist property forms. Total planification and the *complete* elimination of the bourgeoisie was necessary on top of these features before a post-capitalist economy could be established. This aspect of these degenerate workers states and their method of creation distinguishes them from the period of a healthy workers state in the USSR created by the October revolution.

The characterisation of Russia as a workers state in 1917 flows from the fact that state power was in the hands of the working class organised as ruling class with its own organs of class rule—the soviets and the workers militia. This preceded nationalisation and planning in the USSR. In Eastern Europe the workers states—established as a result of Kremlin policy—*were degenerate from birth.* From their inception a political revolution against the bureaucratic caste was the prerequisite for the working class to take political power into its own hands. With the introduction of the Five Year Plans in the Buffer Zones: Bulgaria 1948, Czechoslovakia 1949, Hungary1950, Poland 1950, Rumania and GDR 1951, the process of the creation of bureaucratically degenerate workers' states was complete.

We reject the term "deformed workers state" for the states created by the post World War II overturns. Terminologically "deformed" does not adequately suggest the qualitative difference between such states and proletarian dictatorships where the working class holds political power. In the former case there may exist severe bureaucratic deformations—as Lenin admitted existed in Russia in 1921—but the transformation of quantity into quality—the bureaucratic political counter-revolution which faces the proletariat with a new task, a political revolution, still lay in the future. The post-war bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions were at the same time counter-revolutionary expropriations of the proletariat's political power. Therefore we designate such states degenerate workers states—degenerate from birth. Thus we identify these states in all fundamentals with the degenerated workers state in the USSR, there being only the latter's origin in a genuine proletarian revolution to distinguish them.

Wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions are counter-revolutionary. They are carried through *against* the prevailing level of consciousness of the forces necessary for the proletarian revolution in the country—ie the working class. They occur on the basis of a bureaucratic-repressive limitation of independent action of the working class and therefore devalue the very notion of "revolution", "socialism", "workers" state and the planned economy in the eyes of the oppressed masses. They retard the development of a revolutionary consciousness within the world proletariat. They create a congenitally bureaucratised state in which the working class is politically expropriated. The bureaucratic regimes represent an obstacle in the path of the world working class in the struggle for socialism and communism. The measures carried through by the Stalinists in the course of the social overturn (expropriation of the bourgeoisie, statification of the means of production), whilst themselves revolutionary in character, are achieved in a military bureaucratic fashion. This means that during the bureaucratic overturn, revolutionaries organised as an independent force, struggle to transform that overturn into a direct fight for proletarian power.

It was Trotsky himself who witnessed and recorded these things in the first case in which Stalinist expansion was coincidental with a bureaucratic social overturn—Poland and the Baltic states during 1939/40. Under the direct threat of invasion by German imperialism the Kremlin felt compelled to secure the Western flank of the USSR by invading those countries. This adventure was kept within the strict limits of a bureaucratic-military straitjacket and was followed by generalised repression against the working class and the poor peasantry. This invasion led to the incorporation of these countries into the USSR and the destruction of the private property relations within them. Trotsky summed up his understanding of the nature of these overturns thus:
"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proeltariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."[35]

Footnotes

1. cf. L. Trotsky, **Europe and America,** (New York, 1972).
2. For a selection of his most prescient statements on this theme see "Uneven and combined development and the role of American Imperialism", in **Writings 1933-34,** (New York, 1975),pp.116-120, March 1933; "Hitler and Disarmament", **ibid.,** pp.246-57, June 1933; "Hitler's Victory", **ibid.,** pp.133-7, March 1933; "Hitler the Pacifist", **ibid.,** pp.144-8, November 1933. All these articles are full of a profound grasp of the central strategy of Hitler in Europe in his struggle against the Versailles Treaty and the USSR *as well as* an excellent insight into the diplomatic and military tactics that Hitler would have to employ to secure his aim. But perhaps the most perceptive estimate of the tempo and line up in the approaching war is to be found in "On the threshold of a new World War", **Writings 1936-7,** (New York, 1978),pp.379-96. Trotsky also predicted the Stalin-Hitler pact after the downfall of Czechoslovakia in 1938, and *because* of that pact, the inevitability of war between the USSR and Germany.
3. "In either case the war will lead to Stalin's downfall." (Trotsky) Depending on which of Trotsky's writings one reads, one can find sharp or guarded statements on the "inevitability" of the destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy in the war. For the former see for example "War and the Fourth International", **Writings 1933-4,** (New York, 1975), Thesis 48,pp.316-7; or for one of the innumerable briefer passages on the theme see "The Kremlin's role in the European Catastrophe", **Writings 1939-40,** (New York, 1973), June 1940,pp.290-1. For a more guarded and considered view see "The USSR in War", in **In Defence of Marxism,** (New York, 1973) eg. "War accelerates the various political processes. It may accelerate the process of the revolutionary regeneration of the USSR. But it may also accelerate the process of its final degeneration." (p.21). It may appear an obvious point, but against those who have taken this prognosis as an example of Trotsky's one-sided 'catastrophism' it needs to be stressed that Trotsky always saw these questions from the point of view of *programme,* that is, the need to outline to his supporters the main conflicting tendencies in order to orientate them for *action* to bring about the desired end.
4. Quoted in Y. Gluckstein, **Stalin's Satellites in Europe,** (London, 1952). Leading member of the Fourth International (FI) E. Germain also noted the widespread demonstrations and strikes throughout Rumania and Bulgaria in the Autumn of 1944. See "The Soviet Union after the War", September 1946 in the Internal Bulletin of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International,p.7.
5. cf. J.Bloomfield, **Passive Revolution,** (London, 1979), pp.50-51
6. For one such account, see E. Mortimer's article on France in **Communist Power in Europe 1944-49,** (ed. M. McCauley, London, 1977)pp.151-3. He concludes that 1944 "was the most favourable moment for a revolutionary insurrection...". In Italy the defeat of the German troops occurred in 1945 and they were also accompanied by massive workers' strikes. Allum and Sassoon in **ibid.,** show that in this period there was not a factory in the North and a few in the centre that was not armed. Churchill summed up the problem facing the imperialists in West Europe at this time in a letter to his Foreign Secretary Eden, in November 1944: "...every country that is liberated or converted by our victories is seething with Communism and only our influence with Russia prevents her actively stimulating this movement". Quoted in R. Douglas, **From War to Cold War 1942-48,** (London, 1981),p.61.
7. cf. Germain, **op.cit.,** pp.2-3, and D. Yergin, **Shattered Peace,** (Harmondsworth, 1980),p.64.
8. Germain, **op.cit.,**p.3.
9. Quoted in Yergin, **op.cit.,** p.55.
10. Quoted in **Ibid.,** p.473.
11. Quoted in **Ibid.,** p.58.
12. Quoted in **Ibid.,**p.91.
13. Quoted in **Ibid.,**p.120.
14. Trotsky first recognised this in his analysis of the soviet invasion of Poland in 1939:"This overturn was forced upon the Kremlin oligarchy through its struggle for self-preservation under specific conditions. There was not the slightest ground for doubting that *under analogous conditions* it would find itself compelled to repeat the very same operation in Finland." Trotsky, **In Defence of Marxism, op.cit.,** p.175.
15. See Germain, **op.cit.,** p.7; C. Georges, "Russian Economic Policy in Eastern Europe", in SWP (US) Internal Bulletin vol 13, no.8,p.10; L. Schwartz, "USSR and Stalinism", in **International Information Bulletin** SWP(US), vol.1,no.2; C. Harman, **Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe,** (London, 1974), pp.49-53.
16. Quoted in Harman, **op.cit.,** p.31.
17. P. Zinner in **Revolution in Hungary,** (New York, 1952), gives details of the factories returned to private owners. See also Schwartz, Germain and Harman. In Rumania, Patrascanu, the Communist Minister of Justice, drew up a law allowing industrialists, businessmen and bankers to escape punishment as war criminals.
18. cf. Bloomfield, **op.cit.,** Chapter 6.
19. Quoted in **ibid.,** p.89
20. cf. Schwartz, **op.cit.,** pp.32-33.
21. Quoted in Harman, **op.cit.,** p.35.
22. L. Trotsky, **History of the Russian Revolution,** (London, 1977), p.225.
23. The SAF reached its maximum size in May 1945, at the moment of Germany's defeat and the height of the independent actions of the workers and peasants, when it stood at an enormous 11,365,000. Demobilisation began in June and in early 1948 it was estimated at 2,874,000, still twice the size of the imperialist troop presence in Europe. The role of the SAF in Eastern Europe was uneven between nations. In Czechoslovakia in late 1946 British intelligence believed that only 5,000 troops were in the country. Shortly after the 'Prague coup' in 1948 American intelligence thought there were as few as 500 USSR troops left in the country. In other words, the strength of indiginous Stalinism enabled the construction of native security forces that was not possible elsewhere. Poland's security, on the other hand, depended heavily on the SAF and the Soviet Security Corps (NKGB). The latter were particularly notorious, having been granted full control 'over civilian security in the Soviet Army's rear' by the Committee of National Liberation, see McCauley, **op.cit.,**p.270, and Yergin, **op.cit.,**pp270-348.
24. J. Degras, **The Communist International 1919-1943,** (London, 1971) vol.1, p.427.
25. L. Trotsky, **On France,** (New York, 1979),p.193.
26. **Ibid.,** p.201.
27. Degras, **op.cit.,** p.427.
28. L. Trotsky, **The History of the Russian Revolution, op.cit.,**p.231.
29. L. Trotsky, **In Defence of Marxism, op.cit.,** p.18.
30. Yergin, **op.cit.,** pp.303-310.
31. Quoted in Douglas, **op.cit.,** p.153.
32. cf. Harman, **op.cit.,**p.36, and McCauley, **op.cit.,**p.102
33. cf. Harman, **op.cit.,** p.54.
34. For the relevant passages see Trotsky , **In Defence...op.cit.,** pp.8-20,26-29,56-59,81-90,130-137,170-178.
35. **Ibid.,** p.19.

Bureaucratic social revolutions and the Marxist theory of the State

The precondition for the establishment of proletarian property forms is the destruction of the machine used by the capitalists to defend their property forms—the state. The marxist programme is clear that the task of smashing the capitalist state belongs to the proletariat. It calls for the fulfilment of this task through the use of armed, directly democratic, workplace organisations—workers'councils or soviets. These councils in turn are the antithesis of the capitalist state. They are the organs (legislative, executive and coercive) of the workers'state.

The bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions that have occurred in Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba did not witness the destruction of the state by the proletariat organised in armed workers councils. Yet when the actual stages of these revolutions are examined it becomes clear that the abolition of capitalism by Stalinist parties did not contradict the Marxist theory of the state. The capitalist state was smashed in each bureaucratic revolution, but in a manner not envisaged by Marx, Engels or Lenin, nor in a manner that is at all desirable from the standpoint of revolutionary communism.

THE BOURGEOIS STATE AND THE MARXIST PROGRAMME

The state, fundamentally, is the *oppressive* apparatus used by the ruling class to defend its economic dominance in society. Thus, we define the class nature of a state, not by its form (which for all states can vary tremendously), nor even by the specific features of its apparatus, but by the economic regime, the mode of production, that it defends. We recognise that the *common* feature of all states that have ever existed, is the presence of a *public force*, bodies of armed men whose job it is to defend the given mode of production. As Engels noted: **"We saw that an essential characteristic of the state is the existence of a public force differentiated from the mass of the people."**[1]
Or as Trotsky expressed it: **"Friedrich Engels once wrote that the state, including the democratic republic, consists of detachments of armed men in defence of property; everything else serves only to embellish or camouflage this fact."**[2]

From this it follows that all social revolutions necessarily involve the passing of state power from one class to another. However for the bourgeoisie, during its revolutionary struggle against feudalism, it was not necessary for it to smash the feudal state or its public force. By virtue of its economic dominance prior to its achievement of political power it was possible for the bourgeoisie to merely capture the allegiance of the public force, of the whole state machine (through its influence and wealth). In other words the bourgeoisie captured and perfected the old state machine. It did not smash it: **"All revolutionaries perfected this machine instead of breaking it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor."**[3]

But the nature of the proletariat as a class and the tasks of its revolution—the conscious construction of a communist society—require that the proletariat organise itself as a ruling class with unique and particular state forms. Unlike all hitherto existing revolutionary classes the proletariat cannot achieve its historical objective by laying hold of the existing machinery and form of state—its army, bureaucracy and officialdom—and use it to implement its programme. This was the principal lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: **"But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made machinery and wield it for their own purpose. The political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation."**[4]

The goal of marxists is the abolition of classes and therefore also of all states. This is to be achieved in the first phase by the dictatorship of the proletariat; a state to be sure, but one that is, properly speaking only a semi-state:
"As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection-nothing necessitates a special coercive force, a state. . . The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state (ie the workers state -Eds) is not 'abolished'. It withers away.[5]

Because the proletariat's seizure of power inaugurates the transition to socialism, because the dictatorship of the proletariat is the first act in the very withering away of the state itself (ie of any form of coercive apparatus), the proletariat must smash the state of the bourgeoisie and replace it with a state of a new sort. Lenin, against the opportunists, made the necessity of this action clear: **"The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletariat is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state i.e. of the state in general, is impossible except through a process of 'withering away'."**[6]

If the essential characteristic of the state is the existence of bodies of armed men in defence of property, then the essential element in the smashing of the state is the destruction of the armed power of the bourgeoisie. This is a fundamental law of proletarian revolution. By smashing the state we mean first and foremost smashing its armed apparatus. Marx left no room for doubt on this question: **"Paris could resist only because in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."**[7]
The Bolsheviks later codified this lesson into their programme: **"When the proletariat is fighting for the power, against whom and what is it fighting? In the first place against this bourgeois organisation (the state-Eds). Now when it is fighting this organisation its task is to deliver blows that will destroy the organisation. But since the main strength of the government resides in the army, if we wish to gain victory over the bourgeoisie the first essential is to disorganise and destroy the bourgeois army."**[8]

The armed bodies of the bourgeoisie—its police and standing army—must be abolished and replaced by a militia of the armed proletariat. This repressive element of the state must be smashed prior to, or in the process of, the proletariat achieving state power. The degree of violence involved in that seizure of power will be

determined by the degree to which the bourgeoisie have lost control over, and allegiance of, the coercive apparatus of the state. As long as the bourgeoisie's armed power remains at all intact then the proletariat still faces the task of destroying it. Otherwise it will be used to crush the proleteriat itself.

But, in addition to its armed forces the capitalist state maintains itself by alienating the mass of producers from the administration of society by means of a huge and powerful bureaucratic apparatus (civil service, judges etc.) This is directly and indirectly linked to the army and police etc. Thus the smashing of the state must also involve the destruction of this bureaucracy. The highest ranks of the executive bureaucracy—the top civil servants, the judges etc—must be immediately abolished by the proletariat revolution and replaced by responsible, recallable representatives of the proletariat. In this way the bourgeois executive is smashed. This is vital because as Marx and Engels made clear in *"The Communist Manifesto"*: **"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for the managing of the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."**[9]

The bureaucracy of the modern state however, also consists of large numbers of lower ranking officials who possess administrative skills that would be vital to the functioning of a young workers'state. Therefore, the bureaucracy in its entirety would not be smashed. Rather the ranks of the lower officialdom would be heavily purged and placed under the control of the workers themselves. Lenin, for example, distinguished between the smashing of the key elements of the oppressive apparatus and the need for the workers'state to maintain certain elements of the administrative apparatus bequeathed it by the bourgeois state. He made this clear in advance of the seizure of state in *"Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"*: **"In addition to the chiefly 'oppressive' apparatus—the standing army, the police, the bureaucracy—the modern state possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and the syndicates. . . This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed."**[10]

The tasks of book-keeping, accounting and so forth would be fulfilled by those sections of the bureaucracy thus retained by the workers'state. The marxist tradition maintained that such initial acts as limiting the pay of all officials to that of a skilled worker, subjecting the apparatus to workers control, were in themselves, preparatory to the gradual disappearance of administration as a distinct element in the social division of labour separate from and set against the producers themselves. The task facing a proletarian state was to progressively eliminate the separate caste of full time administrators on the road to building a communist society. This task was always seen, however, as distinct from the immediate act of smashing the bourgeoisie's oppressive machine.

Prior to the October revolution Lenin outlined the tasks of the Bolsheviks in this sphere of the state apparatus thus: **"Power to the Soviets means radically reshaping the entire old state apparatus, that bureaucratic apparatus which hampers everything democratic. It means removing this apparatus and substituting for it a new, popular one, ie a truly democratic apparatus of soviets, ie the organised and armed majority of the people - the workers, soldiers and peasants. It means allowing the majority of the people initiative and independence not only in the election of deputies, but also in state administration in effecting reforms and various other changes."**[11]

In addition to the destruction of the bourgeois state machine marxists also insist that the proletarian revolution involves a positive action—the consolidation of a state of a completely new sort which is in the process of withering away from its very inception. In other words the organs of destruction (of the bourgeois state) are, in turn, the organs of reconstruction, of a workers'state. The workers'state itself will disappear with the advent of communism—that is with the disappearance of classes. Marx and Lenin were clear the the building up of the workers'state was a process that took place *after* as well as during the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of state power by the proletariat. This process constitutes the final element of the smashing of the state. It constitutes the continuation of class struggle even after the conquest of power by the proletariat: *"After* **the overthrow of the exploiting classes—he (Lenin-Eds) repeats and explains in every chapter of State and Revolution the proletariat will shatter the old bureaucratic machine and create its own apparatus out of employees and workers."**[12]

THE VICTORY AND DEFEAT OF SOVIET POWER

The October revolution marked the passing of state power to the proletariat organised to wield that power with new distinctively proletarian state forms—the workers'militia, the factory committees and the soviets of workers', soldiers'and peasants'deputies. The police and army of the Russian bourgeoisie had been smashed as instruments upon which the bourgeoisie could rely in order to defend its class rule. The last significant attempt of the Russian bourgeoisie to deploy the army in defence of its interests crumbled with the defeat of the Kornilov coup in August 1917. After that—in the struggle against the Moscow uprising and in the form of the White Guards of the civil war, the bourgeoisie could only deploy armed force as an instrument of counter revolution against a victorious proletariat. In all of the major industrial centres the standing army and police force was replaced by the armed power of the workers'militia. The first and most essential aspect of the smashing of the capitalist state was completed—ie the bourgeoisie was deprived of its powers of coercion.

The executive power of the bureaucracy—its civil service chiefs and judges—was smashed by the soviet power. But the young proletarian state faced the task of building new forms of administration and regulation on the basis of the armed power of the proletariat expressed in the soviets. It faced that task in conditions of extreme material backwardness and, increasingly, of international isolation. In order to ensure the very survival of proletarian power the young proletarian state was forced to maintain, and even reintroduce, capitalist state forms in a workers' state. A standing army was created, material privileges were granted to officials with particular invaluable skills and experience and a standing bureaucracy had to be maintained in order to preside over the unequal distribution of goods in a situation of extreme shortages and disruption of production. Lenin and Trotsky both noted and explained this inevitable development:
"Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes, of course, inevitably a bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of compelling observance of its norms. It follows that under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie."[13]—Lenin.
And: **"For the defence of 'bourgeois law' the workers'state was compelled to create a 'bourgeois' type of instrument—that is the same old gendarmes although in a new uniform."** [14]—Trotsky.

By the death of Lenin the old administrative apparatus overwhelmingly determined the functioning and administration of the new soviet state. Lenin talked of Soviet Russia as a workers' state with profound bureaucratic deformations. The administrative apparatus in Russia was not replaced by a state of a new sort in any permanent or lasting form. But, in our view, the *forms* of the state were not decisive. Despite its reversion to old forms of *administration*, the state was based on the defence, and that time particularly, the *extension* of new forms of *property*.

The possibility of different *forms* of the dictatorship of the proletariat has always been anticipated by marxists, whose method is based on a dialectical analysis of concrete reality and not on the rigid application of schematic norms to reality. Thus Bukharin perceptively commented, against Kautsky:
"In his (Marx-Eds) analysis of capitalist production he took capitalist economy in its 'pure' form ie. in a form uncomplicated by any vestiges of the old (feudal) relations of production, or any national peculiarities and so on, and he treats the question of the dictatorship of the working class in the same way, as a question of the workers'dictatorship in general, that is to say a dictatorship which destroys capitalism in its pure form. And there was no other way to consider the question if he was to do it in abstract theoretical terms ie if he was to give the broadest algebraic formula for the dicatorship.

Experience of the social struggle now permits concrete definition of the question along the most diverse lines."[15]

Likewise Lenin had not expected the dictatorship to have a universal form: **"Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same; all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same; the dictatorship of the proletariat."**[16]

The degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks increased the diversity of these potential forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat with tragic consequences for the Soviet and international working class, leading Trotsky to comment: **"In the interim between the conquest of power and the disolution of the workers'state within socialist society the forms and methods of proletarian rule may change sharply depending on the course of the class struggle internally and externally."**[17]

What for Lenin and Trotsky had been a temporary retreat/truce in the direction of strengthening bourgeois state forms in order to consolidate the workers'state was embraced as a permanent and conscious goal by the Stalinists. They strove to consolidate and extend elements of the capitalist state form in the USSR as a base for their own material privileges and as an obstacle to the proletariat's realisation of socialism. In that the Soviet state defends bourgeois norms of distribution, in that it maintains a massive standing bureaucracy, army and police force against the masses, it retains key features of the state of the old, bourgeois type. In that it defends, albeit in the manner of the privileged bureaucracy, the property relations of October it retains a proletarian character. Within the Degenerated Workers' State bourgeois state forms continue to present themselves to the proletariat as an obstacle to the transition to socialism. The political revolution will destroy the power of the bureaucracy and, in so doing, either destroy completely bourgeois state forms or, where necessary, place them under the strict controls of the organs of the healthy workers state.

However, from this we do not conclude that there are two types of state co-existant in the USSR. We describe the degenerate workers state as one that has a dual, contradictory nature. It defends proletarian property forms but it does so with coercive instruments normally associated with capitalist states. It does this because the working class have been politically expropriated by the bureaucracy. Trotsky described the dual nature of the USSR thus: **"The state assumes directly and from the very beginning (ie even in its healthy period-Eds) a dual character; socialistic, in so far as it defends social property in the means of production bourgeois, in so far as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom."**

This dual character remains right up to today but we should add that the bureaucracy have a monopoly of political control over the bourgeois aspect of the state and it serves first and foremost their interests. The Stalinist programme is historically committed to the maintenance of bourgeois state forms and the suppression of proletarian state forms even should bourgeois property relations be overthrown.

THE BUREAUCRATIC WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

When we look at each of the postwar overturns we can see that in no case did the Stalinists permit the old bourgeois state to be replaced by a state of a new sort based on workers'councils and a workers'militia. Throughout the process they tried as best they could to strengthen and maintain bourgeois state forms—a standing army and police force, a bureaucracy separate from, and in opposition to, the mass of toilers. The realisation of this element of their programme placed the Stalinists alongside the bourgeoisie in the struggle to break up the embryonic organs of a healthy workers'state that emerged, in some form, prior to the creation of degenerate workers'states in each case, ie in the period 1944/47.

While this was the case—and the new workers'states were therefore created in a form bureaucratically degenerate from birth—in each case the armed bodies of men of the old ruling class were smashed/broken up either by the entry of the Red Army into Eastern Europe, by Stalinist led partisans as in Yugoslavia, Albania and later China or, in the 1959/60 by the politically petty bourgeois July 26th Movement in Cuba. These coercive bodies were smashed to the extent that the bourgeoisie were no longer able to deploy armed force in defence of their remaining property rights, just as the coercive machinery of the Russian bourgeoisie—its army and police—disintegrated prior to the direct seizure of power by the proletariat and, to that extent, was smashed before the October revolution. Thus it is indisputable that *the armed*



Russian workers' militia on guard in 1917.

power of the bourgeoisie was physically smashed prior to each of the bureaucratic revolutions that marked the expansion of Stalinism in the post war period. This is decisive in understanding why apparently peaceful bureaucratic revolutions were able to take place. The essential element of the smashing of the bourgeois state had, in fact, already been completed.

In each case the outcome of this initial act of smashing was—as had been the case in Russia during the process of the disintegration of the Russian bourgeoisie's enormous standing army—a highly unstable period of Dual Power. In each case there coexisted:
a) the forms of a reassembled/reasserted bourgeois state kept in viable existence by the continuing direct links between the particular native bourgeoisies and the armed power of world imperialism, but *in each case* in need of decisive external aid in order to reconstruct and deploy armed power in defence of its property of its own accord;
b) the embryo of degenerate workers'states—in the form of the Red Army itself or of Stalinist-led armed bodies, not inevitably forced to, but in exceptional circumstances capable of, resolving the contradictory Dual Power period through the medium of a *Bureaucratic Workers'Government* should *either* the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy *or* the interests and privileges of a nascent Stalinist bureaucratic caste based on national proletarian forces come under threat in circumstances where the balance of forces between the Stalinists and the Imperialists is unfavourable to the latter.

The Comintern recognised two types of 'workers'governments': ostensible workers'governments, Liberal and Social Democratic, that were in reality bourgeois governments, and workers'governments that *could* act as a bridge to the dictatorship of the proletariat. To the three types of the latter category; workers'and peasants government, workers'government in which communists participate and governments in which communists predominate, the experience after 1945 obliges us to add a fourth type—the bureaucratic workers'government. In this new type Stalinists are politically dominant. The government has the programme of anti-capitalist measures constituting the expropriation of the bourgeoisie whilst simultaneously depriving the working class of *political power*. Thus it prevents the formation or development of organs of proletarian struggle, self-organisations and democracy (soviets) with methods which range from political misleadership to outright military repression. Where the working class has a history of conscious revolutionary struggle, has an alternative revolutionary leadership, the element of repression, of breaking the proletariat's advance, of smashing and bureaucratising its parties, soviets and trade unions, will generally precede the formation of a bureaucratic workers'government. Where the proletariat is weak in numbers or where its class consciousness is obscured by petty bourgeois illusions, the process may take place while the masses are mobilised for non-socialist tasks but before clear class goals and the political forms are created to achieve and defend them, exist. In the latter case the element of repression, of Stalinist dictatorship may be attenuated for a whole period. However, what defines a bureaucratic workers'government is that it is not under the control or conscious pressure of the organs that can form the basis of a full *political* dictatorship of the proletariat. It is thus anti-capitalist but a bridge to a degenerate not a healthy workers'state.

Thus in Eastern Europe and in degenerate workers'states created since the late 1940s the bourgeoisie is overthrown by an anti-capitalist bureaucratic workers'government. Such an overthrow of the bourgeoisie could only take place, in each case, after the potential organs of a healthy workers'state had been either physically destroyed or rendered mere appendages to the Stalinists. In Eastern Europe what remained of the bourgeoisie's administrative apparatus, in each case was either deliberately maintained *or* reinstituted. The administrative apparatus—composed largely of the personnel of the old regime—was purged and key positions within it occupied by the Stalinists and their allies.

This utilisation of the capitalist state's administrative apparatus (suitably purged) for the purposes of social revolution would have been impossible had the capitalist class not been deprived of their control of armed force. The armed power of a degenerate workers' state (as in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and later Cuba, Stalinist-led peasants armies) can be said to have completed the first and essential stage in the smashing of the capitalist state. This alone facilitated the later complete political and economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The resolution of Dual Power in each case did not occur on the basis of the programme of revolutionary marxism. The Stalinists moved against the bourgeoisie, having already destroyed their armed power, with the full intention of maintaining a state profoundly similar to that of the old bourgeois type, not of replacing it with a state of a new soviet type. The creation of new workers' states was the work not of the working class acting in its own name and through its own democratic organisations *but* of a counter revolutionary caste based on the working class. This process was complete only after the liquidation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletarian property forms. At every stage in the process the programme of the working class would have remained the seizure of power by the working class itself and the establishment of a state of a new type based on soviets and the armed workers.

This process does not contradict the marxist theory of the state. It demonstrates that the capitalist state can be destroyed by counter revolutionary workers'parties *only* to the extent that these new states no longer defend capitalist property relations while retaining most of the features of bourgeois type states. They are therefore an obstacle to the socialist transformation of society. The creation of a healthy proletarian state, a genuine semi-state, remains a task of the working class political revolution against the bureaucratic caste.

This does not mean that workers'states can be created without the smashing of the capitalist state. The bureaucratic revolutions were only possible because in each case the coercive apparatus of the bourgeoisie had been smashed. The Eastern European overturns were to prove that the historical and material preconditions for the creation of workers'states had been revised and extended as a direct result of the creation of the first workers'state in October 1917 and its consequent degeneration. The Russian revolution mapped out the *only* conscious and *revolutionary* road for the overthrow of capitalism and the building of communism. The healthy workers'state will be the revolutionary product of the independent actions and organs of the mass of the working class, headed by a revolutionary Trotskyist party, which seeks to preserve the revolution by its extension internationally.

However, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution has meant that in certain exceptional historical circumstances, the preservation of the remaining gains of the October Revolution, together with concern for its own privileges, has driven the Stalinist bureaucracy or Stalinist parties to overthrow capitalism in a *counter-revolutionary* manner which retards the working class struggle for socialism and communism.

Footnotes

1. F. Engels, **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,** (London, 1972),p.180.
2. L. Trotsky, **Whither France,** (London, 1974),p.108.
3. K. Marx, **Marx and Engels Collected Works,** (London, 1979) vol.11,p.186.
4. K. Marx, **Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune,** (Moscow, 1976) p.202.
5. F. Engels, **Anti-Duhring,** (Peking, 1976), p.363.
6. V.I.Lenin, **Collected Works,** (Moscow, 1964), vol.25,p.400.
7. K. Marx, **The Civil War in France,** (Moscow, 1972),p.53.
8. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, **The ABC of Communism,** (Harmondsworth, 1970),p.128.
9. Marx and Engels, **Collected Works,** (London, 1976), vol.6,p.486.
10. V.I.Lenin, **Collected Works,** (Moscow, 1964), vol.26,pp.105-6.
11. **Ibid.**, vol.25,p.368.
12. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed,** (New York, 1972),p.50 (our emphasis).
13. V.I. Lenin, **op.cit.**, vol.25,p.471.
14. L. Trotsky, **op.cit.**, p.53.
15. N. Bukharin, **The Politics and Economics of the Transition Period,** (London, 1979), p.37.
16. V.I.Lenin, **op.cit.**, vol. 25,p.413.
17. L. Trotsky, **Writings 1934-35,** (New York, 1974),p.172.
18. L. Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed,** p.54.

Bureaucratic social revolutions and the Marxist theory of the State

The precondition for the establishment of proletarian property forms is the destruction of the machine used by the capitalists to defend their property forms—the state. The marxist programme is clear that the task of smashing the capitalist state belongs to the proletariat. It calls for the fulfilment of this task through the use of armed, directly democratic, workplace organisations—workers'councils or soviets. These councils in turn are the antithesis of the capitalist state. They are the organs (legislative, executive and coercive) of the workers'state.

The bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions that have occurred in Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba did not witness the destruction of the state by the proletariat organised in armed workers councils. Yet when the actual stages of these revolutions are examined it becomes clear that the abolition of capitalism by Stalinist parties did not contradict the Marxist theory of the state. The capitalist state was smashed in each bureaucratic revolution, but in a manner not envisaged by Marx, Engels or Lenin, nor in a manner that is at all desirable from the standpoint of revolutionary communism.

THE BOURGEOIS STATE AND THE MARXIST PROGRAMME

The state, fundamentally, is the *oppressive* apparatus used by the ruling class to defend its economic dominance in society. Thus, we define the class nature of a state, not by its form (which for all states can vary tremendously), nor even by the specific features of its apparatus, but by the economic regime, the mode of production, that it defends. We recognise that the *common* feature of all states that have ever existed, is the presence of a *public force*, bodies of armed men whose job it is to defend the given mode of production. As Engels noted: **"We saw that an essential characteristic of the state is the existence of a public force differentiated from the mass of the people."**[1]
Or as Trotsky expressed it: **"Friedrich Engels once wrote that the state, including the democratic republic, consists of detachments of armed men in defence of property; everything else serves only to embellish or camouflage this fact."**[2]

From this it follows that all social revolutions necessarily involve the passing of state power from one class to another. However for the bourgeoisie, during its revolutionary struggle against feudalism, it was not necessary for it to smash the feudal state or its public force. By virtue of its economic dominance prior to its achievement of political power it was possible for the bourgeoisie to merely capture the allegiance of the public force, of the whole state machine (through its influence and wealth). In other words the bourgeoisie captured and perfected the old state machine. It did not smash it: **"All revolutionaries perfected this machine instead of breaking it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor."**[3]

But the nature of the proletariat as a class and the tasks of its revolution—the conscious construction of a communist society—require that the proletariat organise itself as a ruling class with unique and particular state forms. Unlike all hitherto existing revolutionary classes the proletariat cannot achieve its historical objective by laying hold of the existing machinery and form of state—its army, bureaucracy and officialdom—and use it to implement its programme. This was the principal lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: **"But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made machinery and wield it for their own purpose. The political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation."**[4]

The goal of marxists is the abolition of classes and therefore also of all states. This is to be achieved in the first phase by the dictatorship of the proletariat; a state to be sure, but one that is, properly speaking only a semi-state:
"As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection-nothing necessitates a special coercive force, a state. . . The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state (ie the workers state -Eds) is not 'abolished'. It withers away.[5]

Because the proletariat's seizure of power inaugurates the transition to socialism, because the dictatorship of the proletariat is the first act in the very withering away of the state itself (ie of any form of coercive apparatus), the proletariat must smash the state of the bourgeoisie and replace it with a state of a new sort. Lenin, against the opportunists,made the necessity of this action clear: **"The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletariat is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state i.e. of the state in general, is impossible except through a process of 'withering away'."**[6]

If the essential characteristic of the state is the existence of bodies of armed men in defence of property, then the essential element in the smashing of the state is the destruction of the armed power of the bourgeoisie. This is a fundamental law of proletarian revolution. By smashing the state we mean first and foremost smashing its armed apparatus. Marx left no room for doubt on this question: **"Paris could resist only because in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."**[7]
The Bolsheviks later codified this lesson into their programme: **"When the proletariat is fighting for the power, against whom and what is it fighting? In the first place against this bourgeois organisation (the state-Eds). Now when it is fighting this organisation its task is to deliver blows that will destroy the organisation. But since the main strength of the government resides in the army, if we wish to gain victory over the bourgeoisie the first essential is to disorganise and destroy the bourgeois army."**[8]

The armed bodies of the bourgeoisie—its police and standing army—must be abolished and replaced by a militia of the armed proletariat. This repressive element of the state must be smashed prior to,or in the process of, the proletariat achieving state power. The degree of violence involved in that seizure of power will be

states. He tried to bind these leaders to himself and to subordinate their policy to his".[4] He was never fully successful in this aim during the war.

The YCP - led movement was based above all on the peasantry. It was programmatically limited to the achievement of national independence and democratic land reform. The control of the "People's Committees" by a bureaucratic caste headed by Tito served to limit the possibility of the movement passing out of the control of the YCP. Nevertheless the development during the war of a stable administration in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste meant that this structure presented itself as an enormous obstacle to the reintroduction of the national bourgeoisie into the administrative apparatus and economy on any meaningful scale. By the close of the war the repressive apparatus of state power was firmly in the hands of the YCP Stalinists, not of the Red Army as elsewhere in the buffer zone.

The gradual advance of the liberation movement in Yugoslavia had been accompanied by increasing nationalisations of holdings of the collaborator bourgeoisie and a limited agrarian reform. This proceeded apace up to the middle of 1944 at which point some 80% of industry had been nationalised. This process was *arrested* during the course of 1944 - 45 under the pressure of Stalin and Churchill who sought to stabilise the situation by the construction of a more openly coalitionist government and a halt to the nationalisations.

Churchill and Stalin brought Tito and the bourgeois leader Subasich together in June 1944 to agree on a coalition government. This was signed on June 16th 1944. The declaration, issued at the time said:

"We are therefore, underlining once more that the leadership of the National Liberation Movement in Yugoslavia concerns itself with the only and most important aim - the struggle against the invader and his aides and the creation of a democratic, federative Yugoslavia, and not the establishment of communism as some of our enemies claim".[5]

The coalition government was actually formed in March of 1945. It lasted only eight months, until October 1945. After the break-up of the coalition the Stalinists took complete control of the government. In the period 1944 to late 1945, therefore, the Yugoslav government can be characterised as a Popular Front presiding over a situation of dual power.

The short-lived nature of this dual power period can be explained by the strength of indigenous Stalinism and its mass base, relative to both the Kremlin's influence in Yugoslavia and the strength of the native bourgeoisie. The latter were a defeated class, discredited in the eyes of the masses. However, like the Kremlin and its agents in other countries in the buffer zone, the YCP used the period of dual power to demobilise the masses. The dominance of the YCP and the strength of the partisan army made possible the creation of an undivided state power in Yugoslavia. Yet Tito refused to take this road until he was certain that the masses could be prevented from taking matters into their own hands.

The sharing of power with the capitalists was therefore a necessary, if brief, stage in the bureaucratic social revolution. In this period the Stalinists were able to ensure that the mass mobilisations of the resistance period were curtailed and that the key levers of state power were in the hands of the bureaucratic caste that had been welded together by Tito and the YCP within the partisan movement.

At this point, the immediate interests of the YCP did not conflict with those of the Soviet bureaucracy on any fundamental matter. The state remained capitalist in character. But the Yugoslav bureaucratic caste did have its own interests and, unlike its counterparts in the buffer states, it did have the means to assert them against the policy directives of the USSR. This Stalinist caste aspired to monopolise state power, emulate the USSR's planned economy and hegemonise the Balkans via the creation of a Yugoslav-dominated Balkan Federation with Albania - a plan firmly opposed by Stalin. When Tito decided to push ahead with these goals early in 1946, the basis was laid for his later conflict with the Kremlin.

In carrying through the political and economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie during 1946, the Yugoslav Stalinists did not act as direct agents of the Kremlin. The YCP could not accept a client status for Yugoslavia and wanted to stablise its rule and extend its own privileges within Yugoslavia on the basis of an expanding economy. Unique in the buffer zone, the YCP was actually in a position to resist Stalin's plans. Stalin's aim, in 1946, was was to fulfil the "fifty-fifty" deal in Yugoslavia that he had made with the British. He would control a friendly capitalist state, while Britain would be guaranteed access to Yugoslavia's ports and resources. The major factor in forcing the YCP's hand was, therefore, the need for a defensive reaction to the Kremlin's plans. The pressure of the masses was not the real cause of the YCP's accelerated moves against capitalism. That pressure happened to coincide with, and serve the bureacracy's struggle for, its self-preservation against the immediate plans of both imperialism and the Kremlin.

The Yugoslav bourgeoisie had been bureaucratically eliminated by the spring of 1947. As Yugoslav Stalinist Kidrich put it,

"In 1946...the Central Committee put an end to the continual discussion. Our state apparatus was reorganised, as well as the economic institutions. We began to lay down the foundations of the socialist organisation of our economy, of accumulation and of a financial plan...The principle form of the...assault delivered at the main capitalist positions in our economy were the trials brought against the reactionary criminals which were throughout regularly concluded by the confiscation of their goods".[6]

During this process, begun early in 1946, the Stalinist monopolised government was a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers government. The bourgeoisie were expropriated while, at the same time, the Stalinists ensured that the working class and poor peasants could not replace their rule with the organs of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat - soviets and workers' militias.

The expropriation of the Yugoslav bourgeoisie represented a break with the interests of imperialism but only a partial break with the Kremlin. While passively resisting the overturn at first, the Kremlin faced with a virtually accomplished fact, did supply material support in the decisive period of the overturn and the consolidation of Stalinist rule.

By the spring of 1947, with the inauguration of the first five year plan, the process of the creation of a bureaucratically degenerate workers state in Yugoslavia was complete. That the Yugoslav Stalinists were able to carry through this overturn was due, in the last analysis, to the inability of imperialism to reassert itself in Yugoslavia and to the relative strength of the Soviet Union in the world balance of forces in the immeidate post war period. This allowed the Yugoslav Stalinists to economically and politically expropriate the bourgeoisie while maintaining the political expropriation of the Yugoslav working class.

TITO AFTER THE SPLIT – A STALINIST AGAINST STALIN

From this, it is clear that the Stalin - Tito break of 1948 was a break between two already existing bureaucratised workers states. It did not represent the creation of a genuine proletarian state. Stalin's designs for reasserting the hegemony of the USSR in Eastern Europe clashed with the interests of the Yugoslav bureaucracy. Despite its demagogic socialist rhetoric the final character of the YCP's break with Moscow was a break in the direction of imperialism. This was exemplified by its consolidation of trade links with the west, its declaration of "unaligned" status, and its support for imperialism in the Korean war. While the bureaucracy strengthened its independence vis a vis the Kremlin by forging a new alliance with imperialism, to this day, no qualitative change in the character of the state has taken place.

It is not the case, as Pablo argued, that Tito ceased to be a Stalinist "under the pressure of the masses", and became instead a centrist who led the proletariat and peasantry to power in a "deformed" (but only quantitatively) proletarian revolution which can be transformed into a healthy workers' state by a programme of *reform*.[7] The workers' management committees instituted in the aftermath of the split with the Kremlin, represent no more than a means employed by the bureaucratic caste to strengthen their social base amongst the ranks of the managerial and skilled sections of the labour force. Most representatives on

the town and regional committees are not actually workers but are rather experts elected on the "advice" of the party and the unions. They do not represent a deformed form of proletarian political power. It is clear that programmes for the reform of the Yugoslav state apparatus are hopeless utopias. They ignore the reality of the bureaucratic nature of the Yugoslav revolution and they involve a complete revision of the Trotskyist conception of Stalinism and the revolutionary party.

The Chinese revolution

Although it developed on a longer time scale the Chinese Revolution—the creation of a degenerate workers' state by 1953—exhibited many of the features of both the Eastern European and Yugoslav revolutions. As in the latter case a peasant based army was used by a Stalinist Party, which was largely independent of Moscow, to destroy the political rule of the bourgeoisie. After a period of maintaining capitalism via a popular front the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), under pressure from both external and domestic forces, moved to destroy the property relations of capitalism. At the same time, as in both Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe, this overturn was, at every stage, bureaucratically controlled by the Stalinists under Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping to prevent the working class and peasantry from playing any independent or leading role.

The history of the CCP as the leadership of a peasant based and largely guerilla army began with the historic defeats of the Chinese proletariat in the years 1926-30. The CCP had entered the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT) in a subordinate role in 1923/24 having been under pressure to do so from representatives of the C.I. since 1922. On March 20th 1926, Chiang Kai-shek led a coup d'etat in Canton, at that time the centre of CP influence. Through the coup Chiang, with communist compliance, disarmed the workers' militia controlled by the CCP-led Hong Kong-Canton General Strike Committee. He also forced the CCP to relinquish its posts in the government and KMT administrations.

In March 1927, Chiang's troops entered Shanghai, after the workers had seized the city. Again Chiang disarmed the workers and again the CCP called for acceptance of this measure. On April 12th Chiang's troops aided by the underworld gangs of Shanghai, unleashed a pogrom against the workers districts in which thousands were killed.

Under C.I. instructions, the CCP launched a series of insurrections. Each of these, at Changsha, Nanchang, Canton and Haifeng was put down by Chiang's troops with great loss of life amongst the CCP and the workers. The CCP responded to these defeats by withdrawing the remnants of its forces to the isolated and mountainous Chinese interior.

The changed material circumstances of the communist forces after they had fled from the towns, together with the disastrous consequences of attempted urban insurrections (e.g. Changsha 1930), were the material basis for the development of that variant of Stalinist class collaboration identified with Mao Zedong.

The Maoist current, initially centred on the Front Committee in the "Soviet Base Area" in the Jing Gang Mountains and opposed to the Shanghai based Central Committee, rationalised the rural and distinctly non-proletarian base of the CCP. They developed a strategy for fighting the imperialists and 'compradors' that centred on the mobilisation of the peasantry, rather than the proletariat, within the framework of the Stalinist policy of the bloc of four classes.

From November 1930, Chiang led a series of five 'extermination campaigns' against the communist-held 'Soviet Base Areas'. The first four of these failed signally but the fifth, with the assistance of German advisers such as Von Seeckt (later Nazi commander of Belgium) and a force of a million well armed men, forced the CCP to leave the Jiangxi Soviet and undertake the perilous Long March. This eight thousand mile trek across some of the worst terrain in China under almost daily attack, in which 70,000 of the original 100,000 communist troops were lost, brought the remaining 30,000 to the future Maoist stronghold of Yenan in North West China. After the confused and demoralising first stage of the Long March the Maoist current gained control of the Party from the clique around Stalin's protege Wang Ming at the Zunyi Conference of January 1935.

The establishment of the Maoist forces in the already existing Yenan "Base Area" marked the consolidation of the hold of the Maoists within a continuing period of territorial dual power in China that constantly threatened to develop into civil war and which lasted until 1949. Although land reform and other much needed reforms were carried out in the "Base Areas" in the early Thirties and later in Yenan, private property as such was protected. This was an essential element in the Maoist strategy and conception of the Chinese Revolution, **"... the spearhead of the revolution will still be directed at imperialism and feudalism, rather than at capitalism and capitalist private property in general. That being so, the character of the Chinese Revolution at the present stage is not proletarian-socialist but bourgeois democratic."**[8]

This commitment to a 'stagist' conception of the revolution, the first stage being purely 'bourgeois-democratic', defined the CCP's relations with the KMT and the Chinese bourgeoisie. Following the policies pioneered by Stalin and Bukharin in the mid-1920s, the CCP viewed the bourgeoisie as a fundamentally *revolutionary* class, which was committed to a struggle against imperialism. It would therefore make an important component of a long term political alliance—involving the proletariat, peasantry and petit-bourgeoisie, the 'bloc of four classes'—which were welded together by their common hostility to imperialism. However as sections of the bourgeoisie were clearly colluding with the imperialists, it was necessary to distinguish between "good" 'national' sectors of the bourgeoisie and "bad" 'comprador' or 'bureaucratic' sectors. Which of these sectors a bourgeois grouping or party belonged to depended largely on whether it was willing to enter into an alliance with the CCP.

Trotsky attacked this notion of the revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie in imperialised countries in his polemics on the Chinese question. He pointed out that the bourgeoisie of an imperialised country might well enter into a struggle with the imperialists in defence of its own interests, in order to "deepen and broaden its possibilities for exploitation", but such actions would be sporadic and aimed at compromise. The willingness of the bourgeoisie to enter such a struggle depended on the degree of threat to its power posed by the proletarian and peasant mobilisations necessary to confront the imperialists. Without the masses behind it this bourgeoisie had no chance of defeating imperialism. With the masses aroused its very power was threatened, inevitably leading it to go scuttling back into the arms of imperialism.

It was this understanding of the cowardly and feeble nature of the bourgeoisie of the imperialised countries that led the still revolutionary Comintern to develop the Anti-Imperialist United Front, not as a long term, general agreement with the bourgeoisie, but as a series of episodic, practical agreements with definite aims. Agreements entered into which did not for one moment mean abandoning the independent position and programme of the communists—the overthrow of capitalism

and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. In contrast for the CCP, (as for all the Stalinist parties in the imperialised world) the 'united front', the bloc of four classes, meant precisely abandoning, "for the time being", the communist programme in order to woo the bourgeoisie into an alliance. It meant holding back the peasantry from pursuing too radical reforms and explicitly committing the CCP to defend capitalism, to limit its fight to the goal of a bourgeois democratic phase. This of course was not a united front but a popular front, an alliance which subordinated the independent demands of the workers and peasants, and the programme of socialist revolution, to an alliance with the bourgeoisie on *its* programme. That this alliance was not completely fulfilled in China was not the fault of the CCP, which conscientiously carried out its side of the 'bargain', but because of the hostility and treachery of the KMT.

In September of 1931, the Japanese had begun an invasion of Manchuria from bases established in the Twenties. On March 9th, Pu Yi, the last Chinese Emperor and himself a Manchu, was installed as the Japanese puppet in 'Manchuguo'.During the following five years repeated incursions and raids into North China signalled Japan's intentions but Chiang refused to send his troops to the defence of North China, preferring to maintain his blockade of the CCP held areas. This antagonised many nationalists in China. The long expected fullscale invasion of China by Japanese imperialism in 1937 provided ample proof of the continuing Stalinist nature of the Maoist CCP. As in the Twenties, the CCP strategy was to subordinate everything to the formation of an alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek and the KMT. To this end the CCP dropped all the radical elements of its programme, including land reform, renounced the class struggle against the KMT, accepted the dissolution of its armies into the Nationalist Army and recognised the leadership of the KMT in general and Chiang in particular.

In the original version, later withdrawn, of Mao's report to the sixth plenum of the Central Committee, he wrote: **"Without the KMT it would be inconceivable to undertake and pursue the war of resistance. In the course of its glorious history, the KMT has been responsible for the overthrow of the Qing (Ch'ing Dynasty-Eds), the establishment of the Republic, opposition to Yuan Shih-kai, establishment of the three policies of uniting with Russia, the communist party and with the workers and peasants, and the great revolution of 1926-7. Today it is once more leading the great anti-Japanese war. It has had two great leaders in succession. Mr Sun Yat-sen and Mr. Chiang Kai-shek. . . "**[9]

So important was Chiang in the CCP's schema that, in Xian in December 1936 they saved him from execution by his own troops who were enraged by his refusal to move against the Mongolian allies of the Japanese and his attempt to send them into battle against the CCP. In exchange for acceptance by Chiang of the self-effacing "united front' of the CCP, Zhou Enlai secured his release.

THE POPULAR FRONT AGAINST JAPAN

The Second United Front between the CCP and the KMT was used by Chiang in precisely the same way as the first, to prepare his forces for an attack on the CCP and the workers and peasants of China. Once again the CCP maintained the alliance and kept quiet about Chiang's "excesses". In Spring of 1939, for example, Chiang attacked the CCP bases in Hunan, Hubei and Hebei. In early 1941, the new Fourth Army (a renamed communist unit) attacked and defeated the Japanese in Anhui, thereby allowing access to the lower reaches of the Yangzi, China's largest river system. Chiang, commander in chief of all forces, ordered them to retreat through enemy held territory and, when they nonetheless managed to return to their base, attacked with his own forces killing several leading commanders and cadre. Despite its policy toward the KMT the CCP did wage a determined and increasingly effective war against Japanese imperialism. By the end of the war the Party and its forces controlled nineteen regions of China, led an army of three million regular and militia troops drawing support from a population of some 100 million in a total area of 950,000 square miles—an area approximately twice the size of France.

Although the CCP opposed land redistribution in its areas during the Second United Front, its policies of reducing rents and interest rates, of establishing a new, efficient and honest local administration, of strengthening traditional forms of seasonal cooperation in agriculture into mutual aid teams throughout the year, of basing its anti-Japanese militia on these teams and of elected local government, won the support of the vast majority of the population in these areas. Communist control of these elected bodies was ensured by the 'three-thirds' system whereby one third of the elected had to be party members, one-third supporters and the remaining third, 'middle of the roaders'. By comparison with the KMT-held areas where punitive taxation went alongside blatant corruption and even collaboration with the enemy, the 'liberated zones' were a shining example of the 'New China' and attracted considerable numbers of youth and intellectuals to the communist ranks.

With the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945 the CCP continued to pursue its aim of alliance with the bourgeoisie. Now, with the defeat of the Japanese, this meant the priority was to establish a Popular Front Government. All efforts were bent to establish a stable coalition with the KMT, with the Americans acting as 'mediators'. The CCP launched its political offensive under slogans calling for internal peace and national reconstruction. By October 1945 the Chongqing Negotations had achieved an agreement. The CCP would withdraw from eight liberated zones in the south and reduce its army to twenty divisions (a tenth of its strength). In return it was agreed that a Political Consultative Conference would be convened, which would be open to the Communists and centre parties e.g. the Democratic League.



Communist troops attack nationalist-held town in 1948.



Mao joins Chiang in a toast to their Popular Front.

This policy was fully endorsed and encouraged by the USSR which was firmly convinced of the need for the Chinese to make virtually any compromise to achieve a coalition with the KMT. At the end of the war the Government had immediately signed a friendship treaty with the KMT. A delegation of CCP leaders who went to the USSR at the end of the war were told in no uncertain terms by Stalin what was expected of them, as he later recounted to Dimitrov: "**. . . after the war we invited the Chinese comrades to come to Moscow and we discussed the situation in China. We told them bluntly that we considered the development of an uprising in China had no prospects, that the Chinese comrades should seek a *modus vivendi* with Chiang Kai Shek, that they should join the Chiang Kai Shek government and dissolve their army.**"[10] Stalin even complained, when the CCP was forced by KMT attacks to take up arms, that they had not followed his instructions. But in 1948 when the conversation with Dimitrov took place and the communists were clearly winning the civil war he could ruefully admit "Now in the case of China we admit we were wrong."[11]

Again it was the KMT, with American connivance, which reneged on the agreements. The Japanese were ordered in August to surrender only to the KMT and to 'keep order' until KMT forces arrived. In Autumn 1945 shortly after the Political Consultative Conference met, Chiang reissued his 1933 'Manual on the Suppression of Communist Bandits' and launched offensives against several communist bases. Political repression continued, student meetings were broken up, Democratic League offices were raided, Communists newspaper offices were destroyed. In March 1946 the KMT central committee disavowed the Consultative Conference resolutions which called for a democratic constitution and the convening of a national assembly. Despite this the CCP clung to its policy of alliance until the summer of 1946 when the KMT started moving its troops into Manchuria, in clear violation of the agreements, as Russian forces withdrew. After the failure in June 1946 for a joint commission including American representatives, when the KMT demanded the CCP hand over all the areas it controlled first, the CCP was subject to an all-out attack by Chiang's forces. The Americans stepped up their aid to the KMT considerably. After the war, in what the American supremo, Wedemeyer, called "the greatest air and sea transportation in history"[12] the US transported 540,000 KMT troops into formerly Japanese held territory. In addition all the supplies and munitions of the 1.2 million strong Japanese army were handed over to Chiang. On top of this 56,000 US marines joined the KMT armies as advisors. Between 1945 and 1948, the US gave Chiang some three billion dollars in direct cash aid.[13] With this support Chiang's armies rapidly gained control of former "Soviet Areas", even including their capital, Yenan, as the CCP withdrew before them.

This policy of retreat did allow the CCP to avoid great losses and to regroup in Northern China. Despite American warnings of the consequences, Chiang followed the retreating communist forces, thereby severely over-stretching his lines of supply and communication. In preparation for what would be the final offensive of the civil war, the CCP now reintroduced land reform which had been held back during the agreements with the KMT. Although the expropriation of the landlords was most extensive in the communist held North, it was not confined to this area, and was not, even in the North entirely under Communist control.

In June 1947, the CCP led People's Liberation Army (PLA) now reinforced with new recruits and the Japanese armaments seized by the armies of the Soviet Union when they entered Manchuria in 1945, abandoned guerilla warfare and began to advance Southwards. By this time disaffection had penetrated into the KMT itself. A number of prominent generals, such as Li Jishen had left the KMT and fled to Hong Kong, there to establish the 'Revolutionary Committee of the KMT'on a programme of coalition with the CCP to oust Chiang and the establishment of a republic based on a mixed economy. Indeed, General George Marshall, the US special envoy, expressed the opinion that,"**No amount of military or economic aid could make the present Chinese Government capable of re-establishing and then maintaining its control over China.**"[14]

Demonstrations and strikes swept all of Nationalist China at this time. In Shanghai, a virtual general strike raged as workers fought to maintain a sliding scale of wages to protect them from hyperinflation. The price index that had been 100 in 1937 rose to the staggering level of 10,300,000 by mid 1947 and was to continue upwards until it reached 287 million before the final victory of the CCP/PLA in 1949. KMT repression kept pace with the escalating militancy and inflation: "**Suspected communists and others believed to be conspiring against the state were dragged before drum head courts and then out to some public place to be shot through the back of the head. Scenes of this kind were a daily occurrence in Shanghai, the busiest street corners being invariably chosen for the execution of the victims, who were nearly all young men.**"[15]

At the same time the corruption of the 'Four Great Families' (the Soong, Kung, Chen and Chiang families owned a large proportion of modern industry in China) became ever more blatant. In October 1947, one of Chiang's principal economic advisers (and brother-in-law) T.V. Soong, bought the governorship of Canton Province with a donation of ten million dollars to the KMT (of which, of course, he was a leading member). A resolution passed by the National Federation of Chamber of Commerce in November 1948 summed up the feelings of those capitalists who were excluded from the inner circle of the KMT: "**. . . our people have lost confidence in our government leaders who are only interested in their personal gain at the expense of public welfare. We businessmen stand firm and united in fighting against corruption and despotism.**"[16]

In a clear attempt to win over the petty bourgeoisie of the cities and to hold back the tide of peasant revolt, the CCP reversed its policy on expropriation of the landlords. In a report to the Central Committee in December 1947, Mao criticised the land reform already taking place as, "Ultra left and adventurist." In February and May 1948, further directives were issued which called for greater moderation in the newly conquered areas of central China. The movement for land reform was stopped entirely when the CCP/PLA took control of Southern China where the landlords were, traditionally, verly closely connected to the urban bourgeoisie.

On May 1st 1948, the Central Committee of the CCP formally called upon all anti-Chiang parties to take part in a new Political Consultative Conference at which the form of a future coalition government could be discussed and decided upon. The

call was primarily aimed at the Revolutionary Committee of the KMT and the Democratic League.[17] Both these parties accepted the invitation and preliminary work began. An agreement was signed in November 1948 which provided for a preparatory committee to be established prior to the convening of a national conference.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEGENERATE WORKERS' STATE

By Spring 1949, the PLA had reconquered China North of the Yangzi river. After the collapse of the KMT armies in Manchuria in late 1948, most KMT-held territory and towns were surrendered without any fighting. Fu Tso-yi, for example, surrendered Peking in January 1949 as soon as the PLA advanced towards the city, indeed, he joined them in the march South. In April 1949, after the expiry of a last deadline for Nationalist surrender, the PLA crossed the Yangzi and entered South China. They met little resistance and disarmed some two million KMT troops in a period of six months. In September, the Political Consultative Conference met in Peking and established a central government headed by Mao Zedong, leader of the CCP, Zhu De, a principal commander of the PLA, Soong Ching-ling (the widow of Sun Yat-sen and sister in law of Chiang Kai-shek), Li Jishen, leader of the Revolutionary Committee of the KMT (and, formerly, the butcher of the Canton Commune in 1927) and Zhang Lan, President of the Democratic League. The CCP had achieved its aim of establishing a popular front coalition government. Mao Zedong had outlined the policy that such a government would follow in 1945: **"The task of our New Democratic system is to promote the free development of a private capitalist economy that benefits instead of controlling the peoples'livelihood, and to protect all honestly acquired private property."**[18]

This was the policy which was followed between 1949 and 1952, which meant both defending capitalism and containing and if necessary repressing the demands of the workers and peasants. When in 1952 the CCP decisively struck out at the bourgeoisie, expropriating their property, it was a moment not of the CCP's choosing—it was a vital self-defensive measure forced on the Stalinists by the onslaught of US imperialism. As Mao was to declare in 1957 'socialism': "came to our country too suddenly."[19]

The economic life of China at the time of the accession to power of this government was only one step away from complete paralysis. The collapse of the central administration, soaring inflation and the displacement of millions of people from the areas of military operations were accompanied by floods and droughts that affected 20 million acres and threatened 40 million people with starvation. Coal production stood at 50% of its previous highest point, iron and steel were down by 80%, cotton goods down by 25%, grain 25%, raw cotton 48% and livestock 16%. To make matters yet worse the railway network was out of operation with 50% of the track destroyed and most of the maritime fleet was in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore.[20]

The first priority of the "People's Government" was expressed in the Common Programme of October 1949, **"A policy that is concerned with private and public interests, that benefits the bosses and the workers, that encourages mutual aid between our country and foreign countries in order to develop production and bring prosperity to the economy."**[21] In other words the existing framework of capitalist property relations was to be maintained.

The policy of tolerance and encouragement extended to the 'National' capitalists was not extended to the 'Bureaucratic' capitalists. Their possessions were immediately nationalised, giving the state control of nearly a third of all industrial production. While the state had majority holdings in heavy industry (70% of coal, 90% of steel and 78% of electricity[22]) heavy industry was historically chronically underdeveloped in relation to light industry, much of which was often dependent on imported materials.[23] It was in light industry that the 'National' capitalists now dominated along with the distribution and transport networks. This group owned two thirds of all industrial capital in 1949.[24] The modern sector of the economy was, however, a small percentage of the economy as a whole. In 1945 it had been calculated at between ten and fifteen per cent.[25]

Largely because of its years of control in the 'liberated zones' the CCP/PLA already had within it a relative experienced administrative cadre. However, with the partial exception of those who had been in Manchuria,this cadre lacked experience of urban and industrial administration. This lack was partly made up by the entry into the CCP of ex-officials of the KMT regime and educated elements of the middle classes in the cities. Thus at the time of liberation, a sample of 6000 cadres had the following composition:2,500 middle class, 1,150 ex-KMT officials, 400 liberal professionals, 150 members of the privileged classes, 140 from the working class.[26] Workers made up a mere 2% of party members in 1949.[27] With a membership of this sort it was possible for the CCP dominated government to take state capitalist economic measures such as nationalisation and statification, primarily aimed at the universally hated 'bureaucratic' capitalists, so long as this remained within the general framework of capitalist property relations.

In March 1949, the state formed six major trading corporations for the distribution and procurement of: Food, Textiles, Salt, Coal, Construction materials and 'miscellaneous' goods. In addition, a network of state owned retail outlets was established. These two measures, coupled with the introduction of a new currency, a sliding scale of wages linked to the monetary value of essential foods, an enforced loan at 5% interest from capitalists and the state distribution of goods that had been hoarded by the KMT and its supporters, allowed a rapid improvement in the living conditions of the masses and brought inflation under control. By mid-1951 it was down to 20% and prices were essentially stable in 1952.

That, despite this statification of essentials, the popular front government was anxious not to scare the 'national' bourgeoisie into flight, can be seen from the assurances given them by Chen Yun the Chairman of the Financial and Economic Commission, in August 1950, **". . . industrial investments undertaken for a long time by the national capitalists, if they remain progressive in character, will be useful to the state and the people."**[28] The Agrarian Reform of June 1950 shows the same clear intention of maintaining friendly relations with the capitalists in order to maintain production. Article 4, dealing with whose lands could or could not be expropriated, said, **"Industry and commerce shall be protected from infringement, industrial and commercial enterprises operated by landlords, and the land and other properties used by the landlords directly for the operation of industrial and commercial enterprises, shall not be confiscated."**[29]

The new land reform was only applicable in the South where, as we have noted, the ties between landlords and the urban bourgeoisie were stronger than in the North. In addition to the strictures on landlords' lands, it was also expressly forbidden to confiscate all the 'surplus' lands of the wealthiest peasants and that of the 'richer middle peasants' was to be left alone entirely. Mao explained why at the third session of the Central Committee, June 6th 1950, **". . . our policy towards the rich peasants ought to be changed. Their excess land must no longer be confiscated, but their life must be preserved to speed up the restoration of production in rural areas "**[30]

Despite these limitations imposed by the state, the land reform did involve a massive transfer of land in South China, some 7 million acres out of a Chinese total of 17 million. On average all individuals over sixteen held one third of an acre after the reform.[31] As in the country generally, so in the cities the chief priority of the new government was to re-establish order Far from utilising the entry of the 'Liberation Army' to ensure a proletarian takeover of the towns and industrial plant, Lin Biao, commander of the Fourth Army, issued the following proclamation in January 1949, **"The people are asked to maintain order and to continue their present occupations. KMT officials or police personnel of provincial, city, county or other level of governmental unit district, town, village, or Bao Jia[32] personnel are enjoined to stay at their posts".**[33]

In addition, whilst granting statutory rights to workers' organisations the People's Government showed in its Labour Law

of 1950 that its interest lay solely in regularising the labour/capital relationship, not in abolishing it. With regard to disputes, for example, it laid down the following procedures.
"The first step in procedure for settling labour disputes shall be consultation between the parties the second step shall be mediation between the parties by the Labour Bureau (a state department-Eds) and the third step shall be arbitration by the arbitration committee established by the Labour Bureau."[34]

The nature of the unions set up by the government, and modelled on those of the Soviet Union, can be judged from the fact that one of the Vice Chairmen of the All China Federation of Trade Unions was Chu Xuefan, previously the head of the yellow unions of the KMT, the Association of Labour.[35] In addition the Minister of Labour, Li Lisan was simultaneously Vice President of the ACFTU. The Chairman of this body made perfectly clear what the priorities of the government were,
"The immediate and sectional interests of the working class must be subordinated to the long term and over all interests of the state led by the working class."[36]

That 'subordination' was to be taken absolutely literally was shown by Lin Biao when he sent his troops against the workers of the Sun Sun Textile plant in Shanghai who had occupied their plant to prevent its removal to Manchuria, under the government's policy of thinning out industry. Ten workers were killed or wounded in the clash.[37]

While capitalist representatives shared the government with the CCP, between 1949 and 1951 and the policy of that government was clearly to defend capitalism, the repressive apparatus of the state—the police, army, secret police etc., remained firmly in the hands of the Stalinists. This special form of dual power already witnessed in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, continued to exist until it was resolved decisively against the capitalists. The popular front period played an important role for the Chinese Stalinists in demobilising the aroused workers and peasants. At the time when capitalism was at its weakest and the mobilisations of the workers and peasants at their strongest, the CCP acted to limit those mobilisations and to restrain them within the limits of capitalist property relations. The dangers of this policy of maintaining and strengthening the capitalists swiftly became apparent. The utopian goal of the Stalinists-a stable "New Democracy" where capitalists and Stalinists worked in harmony was never a possibility. The onslaught of American imperialism in the Korean war produced a growing threat of capitalist counter-revolution inside China amongst sections of the remaining bourgeoisie. America and Chiang Kai Shek were ready to act as their heavily armed allies. This forced the CCP towards the close of 1951 to move swiftly to resolve the situation of dual power in its favour through a bureaucratic, anti-capitalist workers government. As in the other Stalinist social overturns this necessitated striking out at both the capitalists *and* suppressing the last remnants of the independent workers' movement.

The immediate cause of the change of policy and, eventually, the nature, of the government, was the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950. As American armies (supposedly UN) advanced towards the Yalu River (the border between Manchuria and Korea) under the rabid anti-communist, MacArthur, the 'People's Government' was forced to change its policy both internationally and domestically.

The initial victories of the PLA under Peng Dehuai, which forced the US back beyond the 38th parallel, were met by Washington with the rearmament of Chiang Kai-shek and the delivery of considerable economic aid to Taiwan. The US Seventh Fleet took up station between Taiwan and the mainland, thereby forcing the Chinese to divert troops from Korea to the coastal province of Fujian. In addition a total economic blockade of China was instituted. The New York Times, April 5th 1951, reported, **"MacArthur favours a Nationalist second front on the Chinese mainland and is convinced that the fate of Europe will be decided in the war against communism in Asia."[38]**

Now, under both economic and military pressure from imperialism and fully aware of the potential alliance between foreign, Taiwan based and domestic capital, the CCP took steps to mobilise the masses against the 'national' capitalists. In the countryside, the Agrarian Reform was accompanied by the building of the 'People's Tribunals', organised by the Party cadres with the purpose of applying a degree of terror and intimidation to the landlords. Although the campaign was limited to the terms of the Agrarian Reform, the wave of executions, fines and expropriations both broke the class power of the landlords and served to bind the peasantry yet closer to the regime. At the same time the control of the CCP ensured that this did not go beyond its own predetermined limitations. Indeed, so bureaucratic was the procedure for ratifying redistribution of land that, in Canton province it still had not been completed by December 1952.[39]

A parallel movement was set in train in the cities for similar purposes. The so called "three anti's" campaign, introduced alongside the "five anti's" campaign at the end of 1951, was aimed at CCP and government functionaries. The masses of members who had been recruited to the CCP on the basis of its popular front programme, were now considered unreliable—a massive purge took place in the party, involving the expulsion of over one million members (a fifth of the party) between 1951 and 1952.[40] It was also in this period that the Stalinists struck out against the left. Chinese Trotskyists, many members of the 'Internationalist Workers Party' had been active leading strikes in Canton and Shanghai. They had suffered repression before 1952 at the hands of the CCP, but at the end of that year a nation wide raid by the secret police completely decimated the Chinese Trotskyists—two or three hundred were thrown into gaol[41]. Leading members Cheng Ch'ao-Lin and eleven others were only released 27 years later in June 1979.[42]

The "Five anti's" campaign which ran parallel with the "three" was aimed at weakening and intimidating the bourgeoisie. Mass meetings were held throughout the country to whip up feelings against the capitalists. Businesses were investigated for fraud and corruption. In the first six months of 1952 nearly half a million businesses were inspected and over three-quarters found guilty of infractions.[43] Many were heavily fined, contributing 850 million US Dollars to state coffers. Those who could not pay were nationalised instead. By these bureaucratic methods, albeit backed up by mass mobilisations and denunciation sessions, the CCP led government, a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government came to control 64% of wholesale trade and 42% of retail trade by mid 1952.[44]

Initially, this led to a fall in production as the bourgeoisie retaliated by closing down plants. Between January and February 1952, at the height of the campaign, production fell by 34%[45] and the state was obliged to slow down the campaign. Once again Chen Yun offered reassurance: **"Private factories will, according to concrete conditions, be guaranteed a profit of around 10, 20 or up to 30% on their capital."[46]** Once again private capital survived in China, but it was now severely curtailed in its freedom, state control of orders placed with private industry, for example, was a powerful weapon for ensuring that the capitalists did not step out of line.[47] This respite was short lived however and in 1953 at a government convened National Congress of Industry and Commerce the remaining capitalists were told that the first aim of the government was to have a fully socialist economy in which private industry would have no place.[48]

Thus, after 1951 primarily under pressure from imperialism, the popular front government was transformed into a bureaucratic, anti-capitalist workers' government which removed the foundations of the class rule of the capitalists, "not by decree but by relentless, high-pressure gradualism". In this way it ensured that its prime enemy, the independently organised revolutionary working class, remained firmly excluded from political power within China. Because the fundamental bastion of the bourgeois state—its bodies of armed men—had already been smashed, the CCP was able to carry out the military-bureaucratic overthrow of the Chinese bourgeoisie relatively peacefully.

It was against a background of economic blockade by the West, majority state control of heavy industry and effective control of trade in the modern sector, that the government of the People's Republic moved against the essential foundations of capitalism with the introduction of planning in 1953. At first this took the form of annual plans for 1953 and 1954, these were then incorporated into, and used as a basis for, the First

Five Year Plan 1953-57. This was not published until late 1955.

The introduction of planning in 1953 on the clear basis of subordinating the operation of the law of value, marks the establishment of a degenerate workers' state in China. The plan was modelled on the Five Year Plans of the Soviet Union. Planners exhorted plant managers to take careful heed of the "advanced experience" of the Soviet system. The ability of the plan to even begin the industrialisation of China was, in a large measure, due to the aid provided by the USSR. Since 1950 China had been in receipt of an annual 300 million dollar loan from the Soviet Union. In March 1953 this was added to by a commercial agreement with the USSR, supplying China with many of the materials necessary for industrial expansion.

The plan revealed the dynamic lodged within the post-capitalist property forms, and, at the same time, the way in which the bureaucracy acts as a fetter on the full realisation of this dynamic. The bureaucracy claimed that 1953 saw a 13% increase in industrial output over the 1952 level, while in 1954 output rose a further 17% higher than the total for 1953.

However, the exclusion of the masses from political control of the plan meant that these advances were undermined by the bureaucracy's tendency to plan blind. In 1955, when the collection of statistical data took place on a national scale, the figures often disguised the problems of the plan. In 1956 these surfaced. On March 18th 1956 the "People's Daily" was forced to admit that only just over 50% of the capital construction programme had been fulfilled. Shortages, particularly in construction materials, began to block the fulfillment of targets. Inflationary pressures mounted and the bureaucracy was forced to reduce its targets in heavy industry.

As usual with bureaucratic plans the fulfillment of targets did not mean that the goods produced were of a high quality. The tyranny of the "target" in fact meant that workers often took little care with their products, and ended up producing shoddy goods, but at a faster rate! These features of bureaucratic planning have been apparent in the Chinese economy since 1953. They are an inevitable product of a regime under which the working class is excluded from political power. In China the economic power of the bourgeoisie was destroyed, bureaucratically, through induced bankruptcies and , after 1955, by state purchases of majority shareholdings. In 1956 the modern sector of the Chinese economy was virtually 100% nationalised, and the bourgeoisie as a class was eliminated. But perched at the top of this workers' state was a Stalinist bureaucracy,ruling over the working class.

The independent base of the CCP, built up over years of war, provided the Chinese Stalinists with the means to pursue their own policy, independently of Stalin, at certain decisive moments. This did not mean that the CCP was not Stalinist. It merely confirmed the ability of certain indigenous Stalinist parties to prosecute Stalinist polices in spite of the wishes of the Kremlin. The initial hostility of Stalin to Mao's seizure of power was in reality a hostility to an independent Stalinist force, similar to Tito's YCP. The Sino-Soviet split in 1963 brought these hostilities once more to the surface. It illustrated the tendency of Stalinism to fracture along national social patriotic lines. In no way was it a sign of the CCP's transformation into a non-Stalinist party.

Footnotes

1. I.Deutscher, **Stalin : A Political Biography,** (Harmondsworth 1966) p.577
2. D.Mountfield, **The Partisans,** (London 1979) pp.131-4
3. M.Djilas, **Conversations with Stalin,** (Harmondsworth 1963) p.17 and p.54
4. Ibid, p.68
5. Quoted by Germain in, "The Yugoslav question, The Question of the Soviet Buffer Zone and their Implications for Marxist Theory" **International Information Bulletin** (New York, 1950) p.6
6. Ibid,p.34
7. For Pablo's most thorough exposition see M.Pablo, "On the Class Nature of Yugoslavia" **International Information Bulletin** (New York 1949) and M.Pablo, "Yugoslavia and the Rest of the Buffer Zone", ibid (New York, 1950)
8. Quoted in S.R.Schram, **The Political Thought of Mao Tse Tung** (Harmondsworth 1969) p 230.
9. Ibid, p 228.
10. F. Claudin, **From Comintern to Cominform** (Harmondsworth 1975) p 551,
11. Ibid, p 551.
12. H. A. McAleavy, **A Modern History of China** (New York 1967) p 320.
13. J. Chesnaux, F. Le Barbier, Marie-Claire Bergere, **China from the 1911 Revolution to Liberation** (Sussex 1977) p 331.
14. A. Thornton, **China: The Struggle for Power** (1976) p 210.
15. McAleavy op. cit. p 235.
16. cited in Y. Gluckstein, **Mao's China** (London 1957) p 192.
17. The Democratic League was formed during the war to oppose the corruption and authoritarianism of the KMT. Originally based on intellectuals and the professional classes it had some 50,000 members by 1949.
18. Quoted in C. Brandt, **A Documentary History of Chinese Communism** (Cambridge, Mass. 1952) p 303.
19. J. Chesnaux, **China: The People's Republic 1949-76** (Sussex 1979) p 9.
20. Ibid p 17.
21. Ibid, p 9.
22. In 1937 only about 9% of the industrial resources of China could be classified as capital or heavy industry. Most of this was concentrated in Manchuria - see Hughes and Luard, **The Economic Development of China 1949 - 1960** (London 1961) p 15.
23. Chesnaux, op. cit. p 45.
24. Ibid, p 48.
25. Ibid, p 19.
26. Ibid, p 10.
27. A. Eckstein, **China's Economic Revolution** (Cambridge 1977) p 168.
28. Gluckstein, op. cit. p 89.
29. J. Guillermaz, **The Chinese Communist Party in Power** (Westview, 1976). p 26
30. Eckstein op. cit. p 68
31. Gluckstein op. cit. p 212.
32. The Bao Jia was the name of the KMT secret police and their network of informers modelled on the Nazi (and Stalinist) block system, ie one informer per housing block.
33. Gluckstein, op. cit. p 214.
34. Ibid, p 235.
35. Ibid, p 235.
36. Ibid, p 235.
37. C. L. Liu, "China, An Aborted Revolution" **Fourth International** (New York January/February 1950) p 6.
38. H. Foster Snow, **The Chinese Communists** (Westport Connecticut 1972) p 385.
39. Gluckstein op.cit. p 92.
40. Chesnaux, op. cit. p 35.
41. Wang Fan Hsi, **Chinese Revolutionary** (Oxford 1980).
42. **Intercontinental Press** (New York October 1st 1979).
43. Chesnaux, op. cit. p 50.
44. Gluckstein op. cit. p 197
45. The percentages of private sector output ordered by the state were:

1949	12
1950	29
1951	43
1952	56
1953	63
1954	79
1955	82

(Cited by Gluckstein, op. cit. p 197).

46. Figures from Guillermaz op. cit.
47. Eckstein op. cit. p 217.
48. Hughes and Luard op. cit. p 91.

Indo-China's long revolution: a history of war, compromise and betrayal

Vietnam - North and South

For over thirty years the Vietnamese masses struggled against imperialist control of their country - by the Japanese, the British, the French and the Americans. This protracted anti-imperialist struggle ended with the creation of a degenerate workers state in Vietnam. The heroic struggle of the Vietnamese masses influenced a section of the Trotskyist movement to ignore the counter-revolutionary nature of the Stalinist leadership of this struggle.

During the 1970s the majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) denied that the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) [1] was Stalinist and opposed the programme of political revolution for North Vietnam. Ernest Mandel argued: **"Because for us the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean revolutionaries are distorted socialist revolutions (ie led by bureaucratically distorted working class parties) we prefer not to call the parties which led these revolutions "Stalinist Parties""** [2] The USFI's Vietnam "expert" Pierre Rousset takes this point further: **"Of all these parties (ie Yugoslavian, Greek and Chinese - Eds) the Vietnamese has travelled furthest in the direction of a rediscovery of the principles of Marxism".**[3]

However, the history of the VCP in the course of this struggle, and the nature of the social revolutions that have occurred in Vietnam, stand in sharp contradiction to this opportunist assessment by the USFI. The Vietnamese revolutions were carried through and betrayed by a thoroughly Stalinist leadership.

In the imediate aftermath of the Second World War as the Japanese armies retreated from Vietnam the Stalinist-led resistance movement - the Vietminh - took power.

The Vietminh, whose full title, "The Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh", means the League for the Independence of Vietnam, was founded by the VCP, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh in May 1941. It was a classic popular front embracing bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalists, and announced a programme strictly limited to national independence. The VCP even dropped its slogan of "Land to the Tillers" in order to woo the bourgeois nationalists. It supported the Allied war effort - supplying the Americans and British with information about Japanese movements - and received aid and weapons from Chiang Kai Shek and the American Office of Strategic Services.

In the North it was in control by 20th August 1945 , and then after outmanoeuvering the Southern United National Front (which consisted of various nationalist groupings and a section of the Vietnamese Trotskyist movement) it established a "Provisional Executive Committee of South Vietnam"in Saigon. The independent and united Democratic Republic of Vietnam was declared by Ho Chi Minh on September 2nd. At this time, apart from the armies of the Stalinist-led Vietminh, no coercive state apparatus existed.

The French had been disarmed by the Japanese in 1945. The Japanese forces were in complete disarray. The British expeditionary force that was to re-establish order on behalf of the French had not yet arrived. Thus the Vietminh, as a result of the "August Revolution" were in total control. Yet. in these extremely advantageous circumstances the VCP proceeded to *attack* the Vietnamese working class, their revolutionary leaders (the Trotskyists) and lay the basis for a pact with imperialism that reopened Indo-China to imperialist armies of occupation for another 30 years. Such a historic betrayal underlines the Stalinist nature of the VCP. It reveals it as a counter-revolutionary party.

The August Revolution, at least in the South, and particularly in Saigon posed the objective possibility of the creation of a healthy workers state in Vietnam. Following the defeat of the Japanese, the workers in the South, often acting under Trotskyist leadership [4] established some 150 "Peoples Committees"[5]. These committees organised many thousands of workers. They were embryonic Soviets. They stood as a potential governmental alternative, and thus a second power, to the Vietminh coalition (with the ex-Emperor Bao Dai included in it by Ho). The spectre of independent working class power terrified the Stalinists. Their project was for a negotiated settlement with imperialism, aimed merely at the guarantee of independence. Bourgeois property and the bourgeois state in Vietnam were to remain intact. As the Stalinist leader in the South, Nguyen Van Tao declared: **"Our government...I repeat is a democratic and middle class government, even though the Communists are now in power".**[6]

Thus, instead of basing themselves on the Peoples Committees, they proceeded to smash them. Ho Chi Minh based the constitution of his Democratic Republic on the bourgeois American Declaration of Independence. (It opened with a sentence from that Declaration foreshadowing similar utterances from Fidel Castro). Five days after this declaration by Ho, the Stalinists issued a decree on September 7th, outlawing all armed bodies except their own. This was a direct attack on the armed workers.

Ten days after the declaration of independence on September 12th 1945, the Stalinists welcomed General Gracey, chief of the British expeditionary force, into Vietnam. In order to forestall organised working class resistance to this treachery, the Stalinists arrested and murdered the leaders of both the Trotskyist organisations. The Peoples Committees, robbed of their leaders, were effectively crushed by the British and the newly-returned French in heavy fighting in Saigon.

The Stalinists' bloody services earned them little thanks from the imperialists. Preparing for the return of French troops to Vietnam was always the aim of the British. General Gracey had brought some French troops with him. He armed French troops

who had been interned by the Japanese and he declared martial law in Saigon, forbade publication of Vietnamese language papers and allowed French troops and officials to take over *all* Vietminh-held public buildings in Saigon on September 23rd. Having crushed the Saigon resistance to this restoration the British then stood aside leaving a clear field for the French General Leclerc to launch a campaign for the reconquest of the whole of Indochina.

Thus the Stalinist collaboration with the British resulted, in effect, in handing the South over to the French. The attempt to prevent this in October 1945 was doomed. The Saigon rising called by the Vietminh was abortive and the French, British and Japanese troops, rearmed by the British, quickly massacred many of the insurgents. Ho, still in control in the North, then compounded his earlier treachery by seeking a negotiated pact with the French. The fruit of this was the March 6th 1946 agreement with the French which allowed them (with 25,000 troops) to enter Hanoi and the North. Having gained this enormous advantage the French repaid Ho by shelling the northern port of Haiphong in November 1946, deliberately provoking the Vietminh into war. *Only* when given no other option by imperialism did Ho sanction a war against the French by the Vietminh - a costly war made necessary by the actions of the Stalinists in August - September of 1945.

HO CHI MINH NEGOTIATES DEFEAT

From the March settlement through to the shelling of Haiphong, Ho had been busy negotiating. In May 1946 Ho went to Paris in a bid to secure a referendum on independence in the South. The status of the South had been the outstanding problem in negotiations with France since March. In September Ho and the Socialist Minister of Overseas France, Marius Moulet, signed a "modus vivendi" in a bid to keep the negotiations open Despite this, the French imperialists had no intention of giving up their "right" to Vietnam. In November, following the formation of an army, under Va Nguyen Giap by Ho, the French General in Saigon - Vallay - telephoned the French commander in Haiphong and gave him the following message: **"attempts at conciliation ...are out of season. The moment has come to give a severe lesson to those who have treacherously attacked you. Use all the means at your disposal to make yourself complete master of Haiphong and so bring the Vietnamese army around to a better understanding of the situation."** [7]

On November 23rd 1946, the town was shelled and some 20,000 Vietnamese were killed. Despite this, on December 20th, Ho made yet annother appeal (to Leon Blum) for negotiations. However, it is unlikely that the appeal reached him - the French generals held it up in Saigon. Ho was thus *forced* into a war of liberation by the imperialists.

These events demonstrate clearly that it is *not* the case that the Stalinist will inevitably carry through a social overturn whenever their repressive apparatus holds sway, and that of the capitalists has disintegrated.

There are two major reasons for this Vietnamese variant on the pattern elsewhere after the establishment of the armed hegemony of the Stalinists. Firstly, the Soviet bureaucracy had agreed to French imperialism's claims for the re-establishment of its colonial power in Indochina. Vietnam, like Greece, had been definitively signed over to imperialism by the Kremlin. The imperialists could act with confidence to re-establish their state apparatus, knowing that the Soviet bureaucracy would not resist.

The second reason was that the Vietnamese Stalinists could not break with Stalin's plans - as had the YCP and the CCP (however partially). This was due in the last analysis to the strength of the Vietnamese working class. Far more immediately than in China and Yugoslavia, the Stalinists were faced with the real threat of the establishment of *genuine* workers' power. Their influence was rivalled by that of the Trotskyists, at least in the South. To have resisted the re-introduction of imperialist troops would have unleashed forces that the Stalinists would not have been able to contain. The Stalinist programme for the political expropriation of the working class had to be carried through in bloody alliance with imperialism.

The Vietnamese experience in 1945 - 46 shows how utterly false it is to believe that the Stalinists are compelled by some sort of objective process to economically and politically expropriate the bourgeoisie. It is completely false to characterise any regime within which the Stalinists have achieved armed hegemony as a *workers* state, or even a workers state in the process of formation. This position presumes that Stalinism is inevitably compelled to establish workers'states and is therefore both expansionist and progressive.

In the war that raged from the end of 1946 through to July 1954, the Vietminh pursued a strategy identical to that of Mao's CCP / PLA. The Vietminh withdrew its forces from the cities and began a strictly rural guerilla war, leaving the small but, as 1945 had shown, strategically important working class of Vietnam in centres like Saigon, at the mercy of the French. It is true that the northern cities, especially Hanoi, were returned to the French only after very fierce fighting. However, once defeated in the cities, the Vietminh made no further attempt to base their war effort in any way on the urban population, until they had actually achieved victory.

Again, as in the war against the Japanese, the Stalinists fought on a purely nationalist programme. The struggle was called a "national democratic" struggle and Ho repeated many times that his aim was unity and independence on a capitalist basis and under the auspices of a coalition regime. Indeed, in the areas liberated by the Vietminh land reform - the crying need of the peasants who supported Ho's army - was not granted until 1953.

The appeal of nationalism was very real in a country which had been directly controlled by the French since 1888. This domination squeezed every section of Vietnamese society including the national bourgeoisie which controlled only 5% of private capital in Vietnam, and that mainly in the low profit agricultural sector.

In the course of the war the Stalinist leadership of the Vietminh, the VCP maintained themselves and their army by means of a tax on agricultural produce in the liberated areas. The Vietminh levied such a tax twice a year. It had 41 scales, ranging from 5% to 45%, depending on income. A trade tax (maximum of 28% on net profits) was also levied. The Party branch in each village was responsible for the collection of taxes. They were also able to retain a portion of the taxes collected for local purposes. During the 1956 "Rectification of Errors" campaign, many party cadres admitted to having "persuaded" peasants to pay more tax than they should have done. This taxation system was crucial in explaining the crystallisation of a Stalinist bureaucracy in advance of the creation of a degenerate workers state in Vietnam.

This bureaucratic caste had at its head Ho Chi Minh, Va Nguyen Giap, Pham Van Dong, Hoang Quoc Vet and Truong Chinh - the established leadership of the VCP since the 1930s. Their brief enjoyment of government in 1945 had whetted the appetite of these bureaucrats for power. Their dependence on a tax on the peasants who supported them and their Vietminh army provided a material base for the restoration of that power. Their programme was aimed at achieving governmental power, but not at smashing capitalism and the capitalist state in Vietnam. They were genuinely willing to co-exist with capitalism. Upon achieving power, however, the brutal realities of imperialism exposed this project as not only a reactionary one, but also an absolute utopia.

French imperialism emerged from the Second World War a considerably weakened world power. Their re-entry into Vietnam was only as a result of British intervention and a guarantee of non-intervention by the Soviet Union. Their early victories were a consequence of the Vietminh's self-defeating treachery to the working class and the Vietnamese People in 1945. However, by the late 1940s the French were beginning to lose the war. A series of defeats enabled the Vietminh to launch an offensive in 1950.

The ability to launch this offensive was greatly facilitated by the victory of Mao in China, who officially recognised Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (on January 16th 1950) and supplied the Vietminh with arms. Moscow only recognised the DRV after Mao had - on January 31st. No significant aid to the Vietminh was forthcoming from Moscow.

The offensive was however defeated because in May the US decided to give military aid to the French. Anxious after Mao's victory they were very concerned to keep Asia under imperialist control - via the French in Indochina and themselves directly in Korea. In July 1950, the first American military mission arrived in Vietnam. Despite American aid, which was not extensive enough, French imperialism was not able to sustain a succesful war effort. In 1952 a second offensive by the Vietminh began. This culminated in the decisive defeat of the French in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu.

This defeat gave Ho Chi Minh absolute control of the North and considerable prestige and support in the South. Once again imperialism was at a tremendous disadvantage. Once again the VCP prevented the Vietnamese masses from consolidating a final victory.

U.S. IMPERIALISM FILLS THE BREACH

Prior to the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the USA, Britain, France and the Kremlin had convened a peace conference in Geneva. This opened on 26th April 1954. The US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, made clear that the US was not interested in a negotiated peace with Ho Chi Minh. Immediately after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the then Vice President Nixon announced that if the French left, the US would move in. When the Geneva accords were signed, dividing Vietnam at the 17th parallel, recognising the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and providing for elections throughout a unified Vietnam in 1956, the US simply refused to sign.

They had strengthened their economic hold on the South, had installed a pro-American premier in June 1954 - Ngo Dinh Diem - and had increased their military aid to the French and the Saigon government's forces. Their intentions were clear and yet Ho Chi Minh, with massive support throughout the country [8], with an army whose victories meant its morale was high, refused to move against the puppet Diem and instead signed the Geneva Accords on 21st July 1954. This was the Stalinists' second historic betrayal in Vietnam, and one which, like the first, was to lead to many more years of war and suffering for the Vietnamese masses.

As his part of the bargain, Ho agreed *not* to move against capitalism in the North. He maintained the goal of achieving a capitalist democracy, despite the hegemony of Stalinist armed forces in the North. However, if, in 1945 it was the spectre of working class power that led the Stalinists to compromise with imperialism, between 1954 - 56 the intransigence of US imperialism's puppet Diem forced them in the direction of overthrowing capitalism by means of a bureaucratic social revolution. Within months of the Geneva Accords, it became clear that Diem with the backing of the world's most powerful imperialist nation - the USA - had no intention of allowing elections to take place.

Diem set about hunting out and killing all Southern Vietminh activists. He began military manoeuvres at the 17th parallel to provoke the North. At the same time the US blocked French aid to the DRV, and began an economic blockade of the North. In July 1955 Diem declared that South Vietnam had not signed the Geneva Accords and did not therefore recognise them. In the following October he declared South Vietnam a Republic. This happened under the careful eye of the US. In November 1954, General Collins, Eisenhower's special Ambassador to South Vietnam arrived in Saigon to give Diem backing against the French who remained sceptical of Diem. In January 1955 the US started to give military aid directly to the South Vietnamese army instead of via the French, and a press campaign in the US, began in praise of Diem. The following month the US military mission took over training of the Southern Army from the French.

In these circumstances Ho was forced to change course. There was now no threat of independent working class power in the North. The wave of mass support that had followed Dien Bien Phu had largely receded. Thus it was safe for Ho and the Stalinist caste that he represented to move against capitalism using bureaucratic means in the North. At the end of 1955 French businesses in the North were nationalised and a land reform programme was launched. A national planning board was set up, and at the beginning of 1957 it implemented a one year plan. This was quickly followed by a three year plan "to liquidate capitalist ownership of the means of production in industry and trade" [9]. By 1960, no purely private enterprises remained in North Vietnam.

Despite the miniscule size of the industrial base in the North (in 1954 there were only seven large-scale (French owned) plants in the North), the drive to liquidate capitalism and plan the economy was facilitated by aid from Peking and Moscow. On July 7th 1955, Moscow concluded an aid deal with Hanoi. With the establishment of a planned economy at the beginning of 1957, North Vietnam can be said the have become a degenerate workers state. On the basis of its planned property relations, North Vietnam was able to expand industrial output significantly. In 1955 state industries accounted for 40% of total non-agricultural production (not including handicraft industries). By 1960 this had risen to 90% of total non-agricultural production. [10]

Between 1954 and mid-1955 the government in Vietnam was a Stalinist-controlled bourgeois workers government. That is it acted, consciously, in the interests of capitalism even though there were no bourgeois parties in the government. Bao Dai, who fled to the South in 1949 had been Ho's main hope for a coalition. Between the second half of 1955 and 1957 however, the blockade and sabotage of US imperialism and the actions of their puppet, Diem in South Vietnam, forced this government onto the road of systematic anti-capitalist measures, carried through bureaucratically. Vietminh cadres, *not* independent workers and peasants organisations strictly controlled the nationalisations and land reform. The regime at this stage was a bureaucratic workers government. In the period up to the second half of 1955, this government presided over a situation of dual power. Its eventual resolution was in the interests of the Stalinists, as had happened in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China. In this period, revolutionaries would have sought to break the bureaucratic stranglehold on the liquidation of capitalism and landlordism, by transforming it into a struggle for genuine workers power based on soviets, a workers militia, etc. The bloody liquidation of Vietnamese Trotskyism had ensured that no such leadership existed.

Thus the establishment of post-capitalist property forms in North Vietnam was achieved with counter-revolutionary consequences in both the North and the South. In the North, the working class was robbed of political power in the state by the Stalinist bureaucracy. In the South the struggle against imperialism suffered an enormous setback. Another 18 years of open war were inflicted on the Vietnamese masses, North and South by the combined effects of Stalinist treachery and the US imperialist stranglehold.

By 1957 the US had replaced the French as imperialist masters of South Vietnam. By 1957-58 US aid funded all of the South's armed forces; the US funded 80% of all other government expenditure; 90% of all imports into the South were from the US. In addition, over 1000 officers and men from the US were in the South training Diem's army.

Diem's state was vital to them as a bastion of anti-communism, a prop to the whole string of US semi-colonies in South - East Asia. It was a check to the "falling domino" effect that the Americans feared would result from a communist takeover in Indochina. With this backing, Diem was in a strong position to step up his repression against the Vietminh elements in the South. In 1957 captured Vietminh cadres were thrown into a network of concentration camps. Diem further antagonised the masses by carrying through a "land reform" programme that was explicitly designed to benefit the small number of catholic landlords who supported the catholic clique around Diem.

Prior to the land reform there were 600,000 landless peasants in the South. Over 50% of the land was owned by 2½% of the total number of landowners, while 70% owned a meagre 12½% of the land. The land reform launched by Diem *did not* give land to the landless. It merely introduced a maximum rent of 25% of the crop harvested. Given that a majority of peasants had been paying no rent during the war, this was in fact a guaranteed income from rents to the big (catholic) landlords.



Imperialism's answer to the struggle of the oppressed - a gun to the head.

The repression and the mass opposition to Diem forced the Southern Vietminh (led by the VCP) into war. In 1957 the second Indochina war began. The southern National Liberation Front was officially formed in 1960, but the army that comprised it had already been fighting for three years. That army had fought during that period without *any* material support from the Hanoi government. Despite Diem's obvious contempt for the Geneva Accords, Ho Chi Minh was determined to remain loyal to them. It was only in 1960 after three years of seeing his supporters fighting a difficult and bloody war against an imperialist-backed dictatorship that Ho called for the *commencement* of a struggle in the South. Even then, however, the aid that Hanoi gave to the NLF, imperialist propaganda notwithstanding, was minimal. Pentagon figures revealed that of the NLF weapons captured between 1962 - 64, only 179 (less than 1%) were neither home made nor from the US - ie could have come from the North.

The Americans had no such qualms as far as their puppet was concerned. They poured aid into South Vietnam. When Diem became an international embarassment, after the brutal suppression of a Buddhist rising in 1963, the US backed a military coup that replaced Diem with an equally barbarous dictatorship, but one that included Buddhists to offset the charges of religious repression that had been aimed at Diem and his US-backers. However, instability reigned in the South. A general strike in Saigon brought down Diem's successor. In the 20 months succeeding the coup (November 1st 1963), nine governments came and went. By 1965, the US decided that drastic measures were needed. More troops were poured in, and on February 7th, the US began bombing North Vietnam.

American involvement had escalated sharply towards the end of the 1950s. Before Diem's fall, Washington was giving him 1.5 million dollars a day to smash the NLF. After Diem's fall, troops were poured into the South. By August 1965 there were 125,000 US troops involved in the war. By 1966 this had risen to 400,000, and at the height of the war in the late 1960s, half a million US troops were involved.

THE POPULAR FRONT IS LAUNCHED AGAIN

By 1960, the VCP was able to launch the NLF having already moulded the liberation movement in the popular frontist image of the Vietminh. As with its forerunner the NLF was dominated by the Stalinists. They controlled its strategy (capturing the cities by a rural takeover) which was always purely military and never sought to link the war with the struggles fo the urban proletariat in Saigon and elsewhere. The famous Tet Offensive of 1968, while serving as an example of the courage and determination of the NLF, also underlined the centrality of this non-proletarian perspective. It left the urban masses as passive spectators of a rural military conflict.

The NLF's programme repeated all the formulations of that of the Vietminh. It promised to guarantee capitalism and limit

the revolution to a national democratic stage.[11] The appeal of this programme to the mass of the peasantry was strong. In the same way as the Vietminh had based itself on the peasantry, so the NLF followed suit. On this basis they were able to sustain the war, despite the meagre aid from their "allies" in Moscow, Peking and Hanoi. By the early 1970s, it became clear that America could not win this protracted war. The anti-war movement in America and elsewhere was massive. Morale amongst American troops was low, whilst the prestige and morale of the NLF was high. For a third time the possibility of completely ousting imperialism and its puppets from Vietnam was on the agenda. Yet, for a third time, the Stalinists chose to sit at the negotiating table. In January 1973 the Paris Accords were signed, calling a ceasefire and recognising the legitimacy of the Southern state now ruled by General Thieu. The Stalinists hailed these accords - which allowed Nixon and Kissinger, the bombers of Indochina, to present themselves as peacemakers - as a victory for the masses.

The need for an agreement was also due to the terrible devastation the North was suffering as a result of American bombings. A tactical agreement (recognised as such) with imperialism, to gain a breathing space would be entirely legitimate for a workers' state to undertake. However, this should not then be announced to the world's workers as a revolutionary victory. The Bolsheviks, for example , did not regard Brest-Litovsk as a victory. There was no way the Paris Accords could be regarded as a victory, unless they were viewed as a strategic pact with imperialism. Of course this is precisely what the Stalinists were aiming for - a goal that could only have profoundly reactionary consequences for the Vietnamese masses.

General Thieu had no such intentions. Having gained a respite he regrouped his forces and, again with American aid, launched an attack on the NLF and the DRV. In July 1974, the Third Indochina War began. However, it was to be even more short-lived and self-destructive for Thieu, than was Chiang Kai Shek's 1946 offensive. As victory for the combined NLF/DRV forces approached, the Stalinists again sought a compromise that would have left Thieu's successor, General Minh, in power in Saigon, in coalition with the NLF. Their strategy remained the implementation of the Geneva Accords. However, Minh was intransigent and, in April 1975, as the last panicky US officials scrambled aboard their helicopters, the NLF/DRV forces entered Saigon.

The pattern established by the Stalinist takeovers in Eastern Europe, China and North Vietnam was closely followed in the South. Despite the collapse of the capitalists' armed forces and the hegemony of those of the Stalinists, the VCP refused to move against capitalism. Instead, one of the first radio announcements made after Saigon fell was a plea to the Saigon workers, who had struck to greet the NLF/DRV forces, to return to work at once. The immediate pretext for keeping capitalism intact was the need to secure 3.25 billion dollars in aid from France and America. When the imperialist powers found pretexts to withhold the aid they had promised, the Stalinists had no alternative to carrying though a bureaucratic social revolution.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government, established in June 1975, was a Stalinist-controlled bourgeois workers government which was quickly driven under the pressure of an imperialist blockade and a devastated economy onto the road of an anti-capitalist bureaucratic workers government. In August of 1975, this government nationalised the Southern banks, and took control of all southern industry. In September it raided the houses of the wealthiest inhabitants of the Cholon areas of Saigon. The period of dual power between the VCP and the mainly comprador bourgeoisie ended very quickly, because that bourgeoisie, detached from its lifeline to imperialism had little cause to collaborate with the Stalinists.

For their part the enormous devastation that the Stalinists inherited forced them to act against the extensive black market profiteering, which the comprador elements had engaged in. This way the VCP hoped to offset a developing state of chaos that could easily have produced their own downfall. Thus the move to liquidate capitalism was imposed on the Stalinists by the need to preserve their newly-won governmental power.

During the course of 1976, the overturn of capitalism was consolidated by: 1) the geographical assimilation of the South into the North, announced on April 25th 1976; 2) the inauguration of the Five Year Plan in the summer of 1976 for both North and South; 3) the consolidation of an aid deal from China in 1976 followed by a series of aid deals with the USSR.

In no sense was the overturn the action of the masses themselves. The key moves against capitalism occurred *after* the decisive mobilisations of the Southern working class in April 1975 had abated. The mass demonstrations that did occur in the period from late 1975 to summer 1976 (ie the period of the bureaucratic workers government) did reflect the desire of the masses, after thirty years of civil war, to effect a fundamental change. Nevertheless they were not mobilisations based on independent organs of workers power. They were organised and tightly controlled by the armed forces of the NLF/DRV.

Although the capitalist Cholon merchants existed as a very important force in South Vietnam up to 1978 (when they were expropriated by government edict), the launching of the plan in 1976 and the unification with the degenerate workers' state in the North, can be said to be the point at which all of Vietnam became a degenerate workers' state.

This bureaucratic social revolution, carried through in a counter revolutionary manner, involved the political expropriation of the Vietnamese working class. The political revolution against the Stalinist rulers of Vietnam, with the defence of the country against imperialism and its restorationist agents, is the central tasks facing the Vietnamese working class.

The case of 'Democratic' Kampuchea

While the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Vietnam presents no theoretical problems for Trotskyists the same is not true of the genesis of Democratic Kampuchea. If this was a degenerate workers' state, then careful consideration is needed of its dynamics and the means by which it came into existence in order to explain the horrendous crisis that gripped the country in the late 1970's. Here was a degenerate workers' state which exhibited, apparently as its defining features, an absolute economic autarchy, genocide against its own population and perpetual famine. How is this to be explained ?

In 1970, a military coup in Phnom Penh brought to power a US puppet regime, headed by Lon Nol, in Kampuchea. In the same year the South Vietnamese regime, with full backing from the US, entered Kampuchea to help Lon Nol crush the 'Khmer Rouge' (the military wing of the Kampuchean Communist Party, CPK). The CPK, underground since 1963, had established a base of support amongst the peasantry in the late 1960's. With this support behind it, the CPK moved into war against Lon Nol and allied itself with his predecessor, Prince Sihanouk. The Kampuchean National United Front (FUNK) was formed to prosecute the war. It was described by one leading CPK member as, **"the largest united front in the world – all the way up from the peasants to the former king of the country".**[12] Indeed, the purpose of this 'united front' was to bring to power the 'Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea' (RGNUK) .

Thus, from the earliest phase of the 1970-75 war against

Lon Nol and his South Vietnamese and US allies, the anti-imperialist fighters were grouped together in a *popular front*. The Stalinist CPK (whose leading cadre had been educated in Paris and by the French CP) quickly moved into an alliance with Sihanouk after his fall, despite the fact that it had been Sihanouk's repression which had originally driven them into the countryside. In Kampuchea itself, the Stalinists were the overwhelmingly dominant force in the popular front, Prince Sihanouk being unable to field many troops and relying on Chinese support for influence within the alliance. The real weakness of his position was sharply revealed after the fall of Lon Nol in April 1975 – he was at first kept out of the country altogether and then eventually forced to resign as Head of State by the CPK in March 1976.

The war conducted by the People's National Liberation Armed Forces of Kampuchea (KPNALF – 'Khmer Rouge' is actually an anti-communist term of abuse for this army) followed closely the patterns of peasant war applied by Mao in China. The KPNALF established a series of liberated zones in which land reform was carried out (thus freeing the peasants from the vice-like grip of the city merchants) hospitals were built (under the direction of Dr. Thiounn Thioeun, the former head of the Medical Faculty of the University of Phnom Penh) and a literacy campaign was undertaken. In return the peasants supplied manpower, food and shelter for the guerillas. The CPK bureaucracy was thus able to consolidate a material base for itself prior to the final seizure of power.

By this strategy the KPNALF was able to exercise control over virtually the whole countryside, to isolate the cities and to move slowly against them. In this project there was no shortage of peasant support. The peasantry of Kampuchea was exploited not primarily by landlords (agriculture consisted mainly of small holdings) but by a comprador mercantile bourgeoisie. This class, based in the cities, bought rice from the peasantry at deflated prices, sold goods and equipment to them at inflated prices and lent the peasants the money, at high rates of interest, to pay the difference ! Indeed, the ferocity of the peasants towards city life (even as represented by inanimate objects such as typewriters which were smashed wholesale after the victory) can be accounted for by their relations to the merchants who exploited them.

By April 1975, Phnom Penh was completely surrounded. The torrent of US bombs, South Vietnamese troops and Lon Nol's terror machine had failed to check the anti-imperialist advance. On the 17th of April, after most of Lon Nol's regime had fled, the KPNALF entered Phnom Penh.

In the successful anti-imperialist struggle the potential for the future defeats of the Kampuchean masses was already lodged. First, the popular frontism of the CPK was to ensure that the masses themselves were prevented from taking the reins of political power into their own hands. Second, the peasant war strategy had weakened the anti-imperialists in the cities. Spontaneous urban uprisings against Lon Nol had been deliberately left isolated. They were cruelly repressed by Lon Nol. Thus, when the peasants met the urban population, the latter, or more particularly its proletarian and progressive elements, were too weak and disorganised to resist the CPK's economic and political plans. Writing about China in 1932, Trotsky had warned of the dangers arising out of a Stalinist led victorious peasant army, **"The party actually tore itself away from its class. Thereby, in the last analysis, it can cause injury to the peasantry as well. For, should the proletariat continue to remain on the sidelines, without organisation, without leadership, then the peasant war even if fully victorious, will inevitably arrive in a blind alley."** [13]

The blind alley predicted by Trotsky was the restoration of a new bourgeois power. The experience of bureaucratic revolutions allows us to modify this prediction. The blind alley can be a degenerate workers' state in which the economy, because it is being planned blind and according to the needs of the bureaucracy, can bring terrible ruin to the mass of the people. Following April 17th and the seizure of power by the Stalinist led peasant army this was the path that was followed in Kampuchea. A degenerate workers' state was established, but it proved to be a tragic blind alley for the masses of Kampuchea.



Pol Pot and Ieng Sary

A LAND DEVASTATED BY IMPERIALISM

The RGNUK, as the government was called until January 1976, inherited a land verging on total ruin. Under Lon Nol's rule the area under his control had become a virtual desert. According to UN figures, **"the area under rice production fell from 2,399,000 hectares in 1970 to 737,000 in 1973"** [14] It fell to 500,000 by 1975. In 1974, the Phnom Penh regime was *importing* 282,000 tons of rice - in 1968 Kampuchea had *exported* 230,000 tons of rice. Industrial production fell to 42% below its pre-war level. Of the total resources of Lon Nol's Kampuchea, only 2.2% came from domestic production. The rest came from the US (95.1%) and a number of other countries (2.7%). Phnom Penh and the other cities were thus gripped by economic chaos and increasing famine in 1975. This terrible situation was compounded by the 400,000 tons of US bombs dropped on Kampuchea's countryside. The population of Phnom Penh swelled from 600,000 to 3 million, to create in the city a 'Saigon' syndrome of corruption, starvation, depravity and cruelty – *before* the entry of the KPNALF. Further, the war is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of some 600,000 and at least as many wounded, out of a population of only 7 million.

This was the situation which faced the new government. It responded in a brutal, bureaucratic fashion. Its policies led to countless deaths (many people being murdered). The exact figure is difficult to determine amidst the imperialist lies and Stalinist counter-claims. However, given that sympathetic sources estimate at least 500,000 dead, it is probable that between that number and a million suffered death during the CPK's regime. The policies of the CPK exposed thousands to exhaustion, malaria (on a massive scale) and semi-starvation. The cardinal question is whether or not this terror was of a *qualitatively* different nature from that of Stalin or Mao which also led to countless deaths. The answer is that it was not. Despite its disgusting nature this was the terror of a bureaucracy based on post-capitalist property forms.

In the period April 1975 to January 1976 the RGNUK appeared to have the form of a popular front. Its initial gathering from April 25th to 27th was attended by 20 Buddhist clergy and 13 Sihanoukists. These delegates were outnumbered, however, by 125 'people's delegates', 112 army representatives and 14 FUNK delegates, all of whom were loyal to the CPK. Furthermore the RGNUK simply ceded real power to the Angkar (which means 'revolutionary organisation'– a shadowy body which was in fact always the leading cadre of the CPK – Ieng Sary, Saloth Sar, also known as Pol Pot, Son Sen, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Thirith etc).

No evidence exists that any non-CPK figures held any ministerial power. Thus, the 'popular front' was not a governmental alliance so much as a diplomatic charade that was designed to win and to further international credibility. Sihanouk, the nominal head of state, was actually kept out of the country by the CPK until it had got a complete grip on the country. This government must, therefore, be defined by its policies.

THE ATTEMPT TO FULFIL A REACTIONARY DREAM

The economic policies of the Angkar were based on the doctoral thesis of Khieu Samphan. In essence the policy consisted of; mobilising the energy of the peasants to reconstruct the country, in the first place via hydraulic management and increased rice production; imposed autarchy to reduce foreign competition and the penetration of the economy by foreign capital. Success with these two policies was supposed to create a sound basis for industrial development. Ieng Sary summed it up thus, **" After our total victory we extended to all Kampuchea the economic policy which had already been applied in the liberated zones. This policy consists of considering agriculture as the base and industry as the dominant factor. Our objective is to make our country a modern agricultural and industrial country."** [15]

This schema was a reactionary utopian one. It was the Stalinist conception of 'Socialism in One Country', mixed with various petty bourgeois nationalist notions, taken to extreme xenophobic lengths. As in Russia, abandonment of internationalism could only lead to coercion of the masses on a huge scale, thereby creating new contradictions that would in fact undermine the planned economy.

The first steps taken by the Angkar involved depopulation of the cities and a population transfer (mainly to the countryside) of massive proportions, a drive to manage the water supply, vital for increased rice production, via the building of dams, reservoirs, canals and irrigation channels and, lastly, the collectivisation of agriculture and its organisation into cooperatives often up to 10,000 strong (on the model of the Chinese Communes). This policy was carried through rapidly in early 1976, and involved total collectivisation, including the collectivisation of cooking utensils ! It was carried through *against* the wishes of the mass of peasants, going far beyond the simple communal organisation necessary for rice cultivation. At the same time, however, by breaking the smallholding system it did create the conditions for improved harvests which, according to Western and Yugoslav diplomats did come about in 1976/77. However, achieved by coercion, it also led to new contradictions and sparked uprisings in 1977 in the West of Kampuchea together with a steady flow of refugees to Thailand and Vietnam.

In addition to the measures outlined above, all industry and foreign holdings (such as rubber plantations) were nationalised. Kampuchean industry had always been a minor component of the country's economy, as it was in the other countries of Indo-China. Between April 1975 and late 1976, the regime kept it that way. Industrial production was used only to serve the agricultural 'revolution' that was taking place. However, it was never destroyed. In the early days Pol Pot talked of maintaining industry, *not* of destroying it *or* expanding it. Thus, on September 26th, 1975, the Far Eastern Economic Review reported that some 70 factories (mainly small workshops) in Phnom Penh were once again working although key installations, such as the oil refinery at Kompong Sam, were not.

By mid-1976, with the full collectivisation of agriculture more or less complete, the Far Eastern Economic Review Asian Yearbook (1977) reported over 100 factories back in operation. At the same time a construction drive resulted in the restoration of the Kompong Som to Phnom Penh railway, the country's seven airports and a traffic-worthy road system.

In 1977/78, a shift in industrial policy appears to have taken place and figures indicate that, compared with its pre-1975 levels, industry underwent a limited expansion. The New China News Agency reported in August 1977 that for the first time new factories were being built in Kampuchea. These included a shipbuilding yard, an acid works, a motor vehicle plant and a number of machine tool shops. That this is not fiction is borne out by trading figures for 1977. These show a dramatic increase as compared to previous years in the import of raw materials and steel products for construction



Before the evacuation of Phnom Penh began, Pol Pot's forces were greeted with enthusiasm - 17th April 1975.

purposes. In the first six months of 1977, Hong Kong and Japan supplied 13 million (US) dollars worth of steel products, spare parts, car generators, rubber processing plant, rice husking machinery and medicine. Trade with Hong Kong Japan and Singapore rose to 19 million dollars in 1978. These two figures compare with a mere 2.5 million dollars of total trade with the same countries in 1976. All of these indicators show a hesitant growth of the Kampuchean economy between 1976 and 1978.

Trade with workers' states was carried out from 1975 on. All trade with the capitalist world was monopolised by the state via the Ren Fung trading company, based in Hong Kong. Trade with other degenerate workers' states was absolutely decisive in allowing the Kampuchean economy to grow at all. China, in particular, supplied 4,000 technical advisors and in 1975 alone gave 1,000 million dollars worth of aid. Trading deals favourable to Kampuchea were also carried out with Yugoslavia, Rumania, North Korea and Albania.

These measures comprised the programme of the government of Kampuchea. They were carried out by the Angkar, acting as the central authority, with instruments of its rule acting at local and regional level in the numerous committees of the cooperatives. From mid-1976 the Angkar had definitely centralised planning in industry, agriculture and trade, all of which were under its control. It did this via a National Development Plan which, like the plans in other degenerate workers' states, set itself wild targets for agricultural production and for industrial development (e.g. 3 tons of rice per hectare for each crop, a quota that would have severely exhausted an already overworked peasantry). In no sense was the plan (referred to by CPK leaders with regard to water conservancy, rice production, control of malaria and industrial expansion) a democratic one. It was a bureaucratic plan that, in fact, *conflicted* with needs of the masses. However, it was a plan for an economy that exhibited none of the features of capitalism. The law of value had been suppressed through the state direction of investment and the abolition of an internal currency (which resulted in some barter but not in a barter economy). All industry and agriculture was in state hands, there was *no* private property at all and no bourgeoisie left in either the economy or the state. All foreign trade was controlled by the state. In other words the plan operated within a post-capitalist economy.

The means by which this post capitalist economy, a degenerate workers' state, came about roughly follows the pattern exhibited in China and Vietnam. In April 1975 a Stalinist dominated popular front came to power. Although the form of the popular front was maintained until January 1976 (when Democratic Kampuchea was declared) the establishment of direct rule by the Angkar, that is the CPK, indicates that from May 1975 to mid-1976 a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government was in power. It destroyed capitalism and it destroyed *all* the aspects and the personnel of the previous state machine. In doing this it also acted against the masses, riding roughshod over their needs and either killing or causing the deaths of many, many thousands. Like all such governments, its actions against capitalism were far outweighed by the counter-revolutionary manner in which they were carried out. There was no dual power situation in Kampuchea after May of 1975. Prior to that dual power on a territorial basis had existed between the KPNALF and the Lon Nol regime. The bureaucratic workers' government very quickly ended this.

With aid from China and the organisation of a transferred population into cooperative units, the Angkar, by mid 1976, was able to implement its National Plan. With the commencement of this plan we can say that a degenerate workers' state was created by the bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government. This degenerate workers' state made possible the economic growth that we have detailed. But it achieved this by coercing the masses and depriving them of many basic needs. As such it built up new contradictions. The masses began to resist. Revolts took place and there was passive resistance as well. The regime tried to play the card of anti-Vietnamese chauvinism and moved into a border war with the Hanoi regime which was anxious for its Western borders. Indeed, the long term goal of the Hanoi Stalinists was the creation of an Indo-Chinese federation under their control. The crisis, into which the Pol Pot regime ran because of its policies, provided an opportunity for them to take a step in this direction. They related to a wing of the fracturing Kampuchean bureaucracy around Heng Samrin, a wing historically sympathetic to them, and used it as a cover to legitimise their invasion. In late 1978, the Vietnamese Army sent its best regiments into Kampuchea. The most battle-hardened army in Asia encountered little difficulty in establishing its control. However, the fact that the war between the Khmer Rouge guerillas and Vietnam is still raging four years later indicates that Heng Samrin's pro-Vietnamese regime is far from stable.

Since Heng Samrin came to power the collectivisation scheme has been relaxed and a free market partially restored, but the economic system has not changed in any fundamental sense since the invasion. The measures taken by Heng Samrin's regime did end the internal coercion of the Pol Pot government and, in that sense, did temporarily offset the explosive crisis into which bureaucratic planning was leading Kampuchea.

The nature of the Kampuchean bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolution had a number of specific features that shaped the fortunes of the workers' state but, in essence, this revolution was no different from the ones carried out in China or Vietnam. The CPK leadership decided to emulate the CCP. They adopted wholesale the voluntarism and xenophobia that Maoism exhibited during particular periods of its history (Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution). In China the disastrous consequences of these policies became apparent to the CCP leadership before the Chinese economy was plunged into utter chaos. In Kampuchea these policies were carried out in a country proportionately more devastated by war than China, with a far smaller population, with far fewer natural resources and a less well developed industrial and agricultural infrastructure than China. In addition they were not checked by the CPK leadership and in a matter of months the hesitant revival of the economy seen by 1976 was facing constant crisis in 1977.

The immediate cause of the crisis was that the state was forced to expropriate *all* the peasants' rice in order to finance trade and industrialisation plans. This, in turn, meant starvation and, therefore, the resistance of the peasantry. This crisis led to a fracturing of the bureaucracy in 1977 – along pro- and anti-Vietnam lines. The way was paved for a second destructive war – with Vietnam and entirely suited to Hanoi's purposes.

Thus, we can say that the degenerate workers' state of Kampuchea began its spiral towards total disintegration far more quickly than has been the case, so far, with any of the other degenerate workers' states. The peculiarity of Kampuchea was the speed of this development. The tendency to disintegration, however, is a feature of all economies where the plan operates blindly and bureaucratically and where the proletariat is politically expropriated.

The invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnam temporarily checked the process of internal disintegration but, because this was done by a counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy (in Hanoi) and because it was carried out by purely military means and did not involve the masses of Kampuchea at all, it has only offset the process of degeneration. It has not and cannot definitively check it. The political revolution in Kampuchea is desperately needed. Only by placing the post-capitalist economy under the political control of the workers and peasants can the masses put an end to famine and war. The case of Kampuchea shows, in an almost chemically pure form, what is meant by the *counter revolutionary* nature of of Stalinist-led bureaucratic anti-capitalist revolutions. This dialectical formula was concretised in Kampuchea when the destruction of capitalism led, within a mere three years, to a process of degeneration the logical end point of which would have been, thanks to the Stalinists, the reintroduction of capitalism, probably courtesy of an ASEAN intervention - a course of action still being considered in Manila and Bangkok.

Footnotes

1. The Vietnamese Communist Party has existed under various names throughout this period — Indochinese Communist Party, People's Revolutionary Party, Association for the Study of Marxism etc. For convenience we will refer to it throughout as the VCP.
2. **International,** (London, 1972) Vol. 1 No. 2 , p.25
3. **International,** (London 1974) Vol.2 No.3, p.12
4. The Trotskyists: Though weakened as a result of Stalinist and imperialist repression, the Vietnamese Trotskyists had long enjoyed considerable support among the masses, particularly in the South. They were divided into two groups. The Struggle Group was led by Tha Thu Thau, after a period of collaboration with the Stalinists in the early Thirties it was attacked by them for criticising the Popular Front Government in France. The other Trotskyist group was the International Communist League which produced a daily paper, The Spark, and played a major role in the People's Committees. Both groups suffered massive repression and had their leaderships physically wiped out by the Stalinists in 1945.
5. cf. **Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam,** Spartacist League Pamphlet p.21
6. Quoted in D.Jenness, **War and Revolution in Vietnam,** (New York 1965) p.8
7. Quoted in E.Hammer, **The Struggle for Indo-China,** (Stanford 1954) p.183
8. To illustrate the degree of support for Ho as compared with Diem it is worth comparing two bourgeois assessments. Eisenhower said of Ho, "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo-Chinese affairs who did not agree that if elections had been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80% of the population would have voted for Ho Chi Minh". Quoted in I.Birchall, **Workers against the Monolith,** (London 1974) p. 159 The Economist magazine said of Diem, "Diem's problem is that he is not a leader who has been merely **helped** by the West; he has been **created** by the West ... The objectionable word, 'puppet' so often used by both sides in a propaganda war, is in his case literally true." Quoted in D.Horowitz, **From Yalta to Vietnam,** (Harmondsworth 1971) p.14
9. Quoted in Hoang Van Chi, **From Colonialism to Communism,** (London 1964) p.259
10. cf. C.Nyland, "Vietnam, the Plan/Market Contradiction and the Transition to Socialism" in **Journal of Contemporary Asia,** Vol.11, No.4, p.431
11. Key clauses in the NLF programme were, "It (the NLF -Eds) has successfully consolidated its base among the broad masses of the people; at the same time it has engaged in joint action with man political and religious forces, and won over large numbers of manufacturers and traders, official functionaries of the puppet administration, and officers and soldiers of the puppet army." **Programme of the NLF** (Giai Publishing House). And, the NLF's aim was to establish. " a broad democratic national union administration, build an independent, democratic, peaceful, neutral and progressive South Vietnam." (ibid) For workers it promised, "To settle disputes between employers and employees through negotiation between the two sides and mediation by the national democratic administration." (ibid) In short this programme contained not a whiff of independent working class power or of socialism or anything approaching it. It was designed to forestall such things in order to appease the capitalists who were being robbed of their imperialist paymasters.
12. Quoted in G.Hildebrand and G.Porter, **Cambodia:Starvation and Revolution,** (New York 1976) p.65
13. L.Trotsky, **On China,** (New York 1976) p.527
14. M.Gomes, **The Kampuchean Connection,** (London 1980) p.40
15. Quoted in Hildebrand and Porter, op. cit. p.88
16. The following figures also suggest a significant degree of economic growth within the country: 200 factories reported in operation in 1977, a rubber factory producing 15,000 bicycle tyres a day; a Phnom Penh textile mill producing 14,000 metres of cloth a day; Battambang Bag Factory - 10,000 bags a day; rubber processing plants - 40-50 tons of cured rubber a day. Imports of medicinal compounds indicate a re-opening of laboratories in Phnom Penh. Each region possessing at least one reservoir with a capacity of 100-22 million cubic metres of water. One-third of the countryside made cultivable. A steel mill under construction in 1978. The Bor 3 Plastic factory at Chak Angee- 9,000 metres of plastic sheet, 1,500 metres of rubber hose and 100 fifteen litre containers per day. 1977-79 saw a population increase (the first significant one since the war) of 392,000, taking the population to a post war record of 7.8 million. Exports to Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore rose from US dollars 357,000 in 1976 to US dollars 680,000 in 1977, including 130,000 tons of rice.Figures from **Far Eastern Economic Review, Year Book 1978/79**

Castro's 'Cuban road' from Populism to Stalinism

The "unique" features of the Cuban revolution have produced endless confusion in the "Trotskyist" movement, rivalling the programmatic chaos and ensuing revisionism engendered by the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. The fundamental problem the Cuban revolution poses is how can a petit-bourgeois nationalist movement not only overthrow a pro-imperialist military dictatorship (a political revolution) but pass on under the same leadership to overthrow capitalism and establish a self-proclaimed "socialist state" indistinguishable in type from China, Vietnam etc?

From this problem flow questions relating to the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxist theory. Does the experience of the Cuban revolution contradict the Marxist notion of the historical limits of the petit-bourgeoisie as a class and of petit-bourgeois nationalism as a programme for social revolution? Does the experience of the Cuban revolution contradict the Marxist theory of the state?

The "adaptations" made to the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism, by all sections of the movement which claimed to be Trotskyist, to "account for" the Cuban events were all, in fact, revisions of the first magnitude. Permanent Revolution is reduced to an objective force, a historical process that works its will independent of the consciousness of human beings even with regard to the socialist revolution. Its petit-bourgeois agents can be "unconscious marxists" or unconscious Trotskyists". Therefore a revolutionary party is a desirable, but not essential , instrument of this process. Revolutionary Workers' Governments can exist without the "norms of proletarian democracy" ie without soviet-type bodies to express and exert the revolutionary pressure of the working class. Lastly the proletarian dictatorship can exist "without the norms of proletarian democracy" yet be qualitatively a healthy workers' state - not in need of a political revolution.

These positions, developed by Joseph Hansen and the SWP (US),and providing the basis for the re-unified United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), repeated in a starker manner the theoretical and the programmatic collapse that occurred after 1948. The importance of the Cuban revolution was re-raised in the context of the Nicaraguan revolution and the consequent split in the USFI (1979/80). The issues it raises, therefore, are not matters of idle historical curiosity, but have a burning relevance for the struggle for revolution today.

Cuba's whole history prior to 1959 was dominated by its colonial and then semi-colonial status. From being a Spanish colony it passed into the hands of US imperialism. Formal independence was an empty shell under both parliamentary bourgeois nationalist regimes and under repressive military dictatorships. Attempted constitutional "revolutions" like that of 1933/4 were rudely aborted by US backed military coups. The underlying cause of this was Cuba's integration with, and subordination to, the US economy. As with all semi-colonies in the imperialist epoch, this integration had not transformed Cuba into a balanced and developed capitalist economy. Cuba was dominated by sugar production for the North American market. At the beginning of the 1950s sugar production accounted for 36% of Cuba's GNP, for 80% of its exports revenue; and 83% of all cultivated land was under sugar cane. With 41% of labour tied to agricultural production and 20% to tourism, Cuba's economy was tied to the sweet tooth of the North American populace and the pleasures and vices of its bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie directly owned a large part of the economy, 35% of capital invested in sugar was US-based. In the late 1950s over one billion dollars of US capital were invested in Cuba.

A small class of latifundists (less than 3,000 of them owned 70% of the land) and a comprador and rentier bourgeoisie acted as the agents of US imperialism. Only a tiny fraction of the Cuban possessing classes were capable of any sustained opposition to US imperialism and even these turned sharply against the Castroite revolution as soon as it began to take limited measures of agrarian reform. The Cuban revolution confirmed to the hilt the Trotskyist assertion that in the epoch of imperialism the colonial and semi-colonial bourgeoisie are completely incapable of leading the struggle for national independence and independent (capitalist) economic development.

On the other hand the popular classes were not dominated by a peasantry chronically deprived of land. Cuban society was more urban than rural (57% urban to 43% rural in 1959). Moreover, the countryside itself was dominated not by land-hungry, small peasants but by rural proletarians suffering from chronic and massive unemployment, job insecurity, low wages and appalling social conditions. The sugar refineries were well organised in trade unions, as were the urban workers generally. The CTC(Cuban Trade Union Federation) unionised half the total workforce.

Cuba was possessed of a revolutionary nationalist tradition, that of Jose Marti and Antonio Maceo and the insurrectionary war against Spain and then US colonialism (1895-8); a tradition with parallels in the early years of the imperialist epoch (in China, Mexico, Turkey, Iran etc.) The island also had seen a reformist, constitutional attempt to break with US dominance. In 1933/4 the democrat Dr. Grau San Martin was brought to power and driven from it 100 days later, by a military coup d'etat engineered by Fulgencio Batista. Castro's July 26th Movement was politically, programmatically a continuation of these movements. There were no differences with Grau's Autenticos of the 30s or Chibas' Ortodoxos of the late 40s. Fidel Castro was a member of the latter party. The programme Castro was thus committed to was of political and economic independence and democracy.

"History Will Absolve Me", Castro's heavily doctored (and re-written) speech from the dock after his trial after the 1953 attack on Moncada Barracks was pure "Chibasism" in its political programme. It promised restoration of the 1940 constitution, a "Government of popular election", a land reform to *restrict* large land holdings and nationalisation of US-owned electric and telephone companies. By December 1956, Castro had even renounced the nationalisation of the utilities and declared "Foreign investment will always be welcome and secure here." [1] His differences with the Chibas and the Ortodoxo party, which carried on the tradition after Chibas' death, was that whereas they (and Grau and the Autenticos before them) were bourgeois nationalist *reformists* , he was (like Maceo and Marti) a bourgeois nationalist *revolutionary* ie he employed revolutionary methods of struggle not constitutional ones.

The July 26th Movement (J26M) however, never formulated a precise programme. It never held a conference or elected a leadership. It was in essence a military apparatus for overthrowing Batista. It was itself a miniature popular front. On its left wing stood figures like Raul Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara

who were strongly influenced by Stalinism and secretly had no objections to an overthrow of capitalism, and on its right wing stood the anti-communist figures like Hubert Matos and Faustino Perez.

THE JULY 26th MOVEMENT – A COALITION ACROSS CLASSES

In the cities the J26M leaders, known as "the Plain" ('Llano') were anti-communist bourgeois nationalists to the core. Nor were they an insignificant force. Frank Pais in Santiago and Faustino Perez in Havana controlled large movements of resistance and sabotage and supplied the rural guerrillas with arms and money. The Plain leaders were fiercely anti-communist and open defenders of private property. Faustino Perez reflected the views of this group in his attitude to the "extremist" Castro when he stressed in Spring 1958 **"Castro will not be part of the Provisional Government...We shall create a climate of confidence and security for the investment of national and foreign capital".**[2]

On the left there were figures like Raul Castro, an ex-member of the CP youth and resolutely pro-communist (Stalinist). Guevara probably considered himself a Marxist from 1954 onwards. His experience of the American backed coup against Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 and a reading of Lenin's "State and Revolution" led him to reject the "peaceful road" to revolution.

All wings of the J26M were highly suspicious of, if not hostile to the PSP, the Cuban Stalinists. The PSP had a history of collaboration with Batista and openly condemned the Castroites before 1958 as "adventurous". But by the Spring of 1958, Blas Roca, the veteran Stalinist leader threw his weight behind Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, leader of the pro-Castro wing of the PSP and against Anibal Escalante. A number of PSP cadres including Rodriguez were sent to the Sierra Maestra, base of Castro's guerrillas, where a secret pact was made between the PSP and the Castroites in March 1958. Thus it is clear that the J26M was not simply a petit-bourgeois movement but rather a coalition of bourgeois *and* proletarian (albeit politically petit-bourgeois ie Stalinist or proto-Stalinist) forces.

In January 1959, the two year long civil war between the J26M, its "rebel" army and the Batista regime culminated in the overthrow of Batista. Batista had led a corrupt military dictatorship that had acted as an agent for US imperialism in its Cuban semi-colony since 1953. The 1959 revolution was not however a mere putsch or coup d'etat. In the countryside it assumed, during 1958, the character of a serious movement of the rural proletarians and poor peasants. In the cities it had the support of important sections of the nationalist bourgeois and petit-bourgeois strata grouped in the Directorio and the Civic Resistance

Under attack from such a wide spectrum of Cuban society and deserted by its US backers, Batista's regime collapsed after the failure of its summer offensive of 1958. A general strike in Havana assured the complete disintegration of the old regime. The high command and much of the officer caste of the army, the judiciary and high state bureaucracy fled en masse. Castro subjected the remaining forces to a far reaching purge with hundreds shot and thousands imprisoned. The units of the old army were integrated with the Rebel Army and placed under J26M officers and commanders.

From January 1959 there was as a result of this disintegration, a specific form of dual power, a fragmentation of the state power. The bourgeoisie's hold on the army was very weak because of the loss of most of the officer corps and the whole of the high command, but substantial sections of the airforce and the old regiments existed and would have formed a basis for a reassertion of the bourgeoisie's control over the army. On the other hand was the 3,000 strong Rebel Army which by January 1959 was made up of "three fourths to four fifths' of rural proletarians and small scale peasant proprietors under the leadership of pro-PSP or populist and centrist tendencies. [3] The effect of this where the left-wing of the J26M was in command (Raul Castro in Oriente for example) was an immediate push to grant peasant-worker demands. In February, 22,500 families were awarded 67 acre plots. In Camaguey on the other hand, rightists under Hubert Matos and backed by figures like Diaz Lanz (head of the old airforce) held up reform. Thus the duality of power ran through the army *and* the J26M itself. Fidel Castro played the role of a bonaparte - the "lider maximo" balancing between, and obscuring, this division .

However the actual balance of forces was heavily unfavourable to the bourgeoisie. Its real strength lay in the pro-bourgeois, class collaborationist politics of the J26M, in Castro's unwillingness to break from the utopian project of national independent *capitalist* development for Cuba. It also lay in the Raul Castro/Guevara wing's inability to break with the "lider maximo" and put themselves at the head of (and therefore potentially under the control of) the workers and poor peasants. They refused to openly express class demands against the bourgeoisie. They would not give voice to the proletariat's historic goal. Lastly it lay in the PSP's popular front/ stagist programme which gave the weakened bourgeoisie pride of place in the popular front. These forces, not the Cuban bourgeoisie's intrinsic strength, accounted for the nine-month period of dual power.

The Castroite project throughout this period was to maintain the popular front whilst striking at the working class/poor peasant or bourgeois elements should either of these classes attempt to decisively tip the balance in their own favour. Thus a wave of strikes and land occupations in January and February caused a serious breach between the "lider maximo" and the PSP (a military bloc had existed from March; a trade union pact from November 1958).

In April 1959, Castro classified communism,Peronism and fascism as merely different kinds of "totalitarianism". Castro declared that the Cuban revolution was "humanist" - capitalism bred hunger whilst communism "took away liberty". The Cuban revolution was not red but "Olive Green"[4].

Early in 1959, the J26M officered police stood by as members of the Havana Civic Resistance ransacked the offices of "Hoy", the PSP's newspaper, an action which led its editor, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to declare the PSP had gone underground before and could do it again.[5] By May 1959, a vitrolic campaign was being conducted in the pages of "Revolution", the J26M's paper, against the PSP. The Stalinists were denounced as "anti-revolutionary", similar to the counter-revolutionaries. Particularly singled out for attack was their encouragement of strikes for wage increases, and their involvement in peasant land seizures in San Luis.[6]

CASTRO IS FORCED TO BREAK WITH HIS BOURGEOIS ALLIES

However, Castro's anti-communist campaign inevitably encouraged the Cuban landowner bourgeoisie's resistance to his own land reform. Though a moderate capitalist *reform*, its operation and implementation lay with INRA (ie effectively with the armed guerrillas of the Rebel Army), in a situation where the peasants' and rural proletarian masses' expectations had been aroused by the revolution. The first attempt at nationalisation and the methods used to enforce them touched the US and Cuban companies and land owners to the quick. Confirming the thesis of Permanent Revolution that none of the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution can be carried out in colonial or semi-colonial countries under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, or any alleged "national" or "revolutionary" fraction of it, the Cuban landowning and capitalist class passed in its totality into the camp of counter-revolution. Castro was forced to move against the most vociferous oppponents of agrarian reform in his government. A group of bourgeois ministers were sacked in June. In July he mobilised the workers and peasants in a general strike and mass demonstration, to remove the bourgeois president Urrutia, and to purge the airforce.

Castro's reluctance to break his ties to the bourgeoisie can be seen in his hesitancy to purge all the bourgeois ministers. However, the activities of US imperialism and their agents in Cuba was to leave him no choice. On June 11th, the US issued a



Castro's guerillas in the Sierra Maestra: (from left to right) Raul Castro, Juan Almeida, Fidel Castro, Ramiro Valdes, Ciro Redoudo.

strong protest on the Agrarian Reform measures, demanding "prompt, adequate and effective compensation". Castro was faced with a choice: either concede on the agrarian reform and strengthen the bourgeoisie and its alliance with US capital, thus alienating his peasant base, or push ahead with the reform and strike out against the right wing.

He chose the latter. The day after the US note, Castro demanded the resignation of various bourgeois ministers - Sori Marin, Minister of Agriculture; Elena Mederos, Minister of Health; Luis Orlando Rodriguez, Minister of the Interior; Angel Fernandez, Minister of Justice and Agramonte, the Foreign Minister.

All these ministers were replaced by trusted members of the J26M, often close intimates of Castro. While the "political representatives" of the bourgeoisie were purged, the "economic representatives" were left untouched - bourgeois figures like Fresquet (Finance) and Bunilla (Commerce) remained in their posts, while Pazos remained in charge of the Bank of Cuba.

These actions forced Castro into close reliance on his own left wing and consequently back into a bloc with the PSP. In October/November, counter-revolutionary activity and economic crisis caused by US and native Cuban capitalist sabotage forced Castro to strike decisively at the bourgeoisie outside and inside the J26M effectively ending the latter as a popular front, or indeed as a "movement" at all. Hubert Matos was arrested and tried and the J26M purged of "anti-communists". The army was reduced by 50%, and renamed the "Revolutionary Armed Forces". The Defence Ministry was completely purged and put under Raul Castro's command. The organisation of a mass armed militia of workers and peasants was launched and the standing army was integrated with the militia. Castro, forced to act with the left wing of the J26M, his brother, Guevara and Rodriguez,against the political and military agents of the Cuban capitalists, drove all the bourgeois ministers from the government. Fresquet at the Finance Ministry was the sole exception, *but* Guevara took over the National Bank, and effectively economic power and policy emanated from there. Thus by November 1959, the popular front had been ended, along with the duality of power.

These actions all necessitated a rapprochement with the principal political force within the Cuban working class, the 18,000 - strong PSP. Having ousted them from the CTC leadership completely in February / March, and formed a bloc with the pro-bourgeois labour bureaucrats in the Frente Obrero Humanista, in November / January 1959/60, Castro was now forced to strike a new alliance with them, and purge his former supporters. The left wing of the J26M were now in the ascendant, and the process of founding a unified party apparatus to replace the movement began in December 1959. Whatever Castro's differences with sections of the PSP leadership, he had now irrevocably cast in his lot with the PSP. This process of fusion with a politically petit-bourgeois Stalinist workers' party did not however immediately mean a break with US imperialism or a conscious and determined march towards socialism. If the Castro fusion with the PSP gave the government the appearance of a workers' and peasants' government, it was *not* a *revolutionary* workers and peasants' government.

It was not anti-capitalist in its action or programme, *and* it was not under the control of democratic armed organs of workers' and peasants' power ie soviets and a democratic workers'-peoples' militia . It commenced its life as a *bourgeois* workers' and peasants' government, but one born under special circumstances. Firstly, the bourgeoisie had lost all vestiges of control of its armed apparatus (the fundamental bastion of the bourgeois state had been smashed). Henceforward the bourgeoisie could only recover its rule by armed counter-revolution, ie by armed revolt from outside the state machine. Secondly the bourgeoisie, aided and abetted by the right wing of the American bourgeoisie (Nixon and the CIA) were in fact renewing counter-revolutionary civil war. Thirdly, the workers and peasants were being armed, and whilst they had no effective alternative leadership to the left J26M/PSP leaders, they formed an armed bulwark against capitulation, and a pressure for decisive measures against the counter-revolution.

This government was in effect a "government of the parties of petit-bourgeois democracy". Its programme and the intentions of its leaders did not go beyond bourgeois limits, its social

roots were the urban and rural workers and poor peasants. It was in this sense a bourgeois "workers' and peasants' government", ie one which is described in the Comintern's 1922 theses as being **"tolerated by the enfeebled bourgeoisie in critical times as a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the state, or to ward off, with the help of corrupt workers' leaders the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and gain time",**

However the growing class conflict in Cuba, the increasingly organised expression of the expectations of the armed workers and peasants, the response via sabotage, guerrilla activity etc, of the Cuban bourgeoisie and its agents in the state bureaucracy, and the hostile blows of US imperialism *forced* this government **"to go further than they themselves wished along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie".**[7]

Attempts by this government to ease the stranglehold of US imperialism over its economy by entering into a trade agreement with the USSR led to a dramatic worsening of relations with America. In June 1960, US oil companies (and the European controlled firm Shell) refused to refine Soviet oil. The Castro government replied by nationalising them. In July, the US responded by cancelling the agreement to buy the sugar crop - only an agreement with the USSR and China to buy sugar saved the economy from disaster.

Between August and October 1960, the government nationalised all the US-owned sugar mills, electricity facilities and telecommunications industry, all the banks and all American and Cuban-owned large and medium industrial concerns. By the end of 1960, 80% of Cuba's industrial capacity was nationalised and the agrarian reform had been dramatically speeded up. Under the pressure of imperialism, the Castro government had been faced with a choice: either to submit to imperialism, or take the measures necessary to break the power of imperialism and its agents in Cuba by expropriating it.

While the Castroite government was forced to break with the bourgeoisie and take anti-capitalist measures, the form that this took was different to that envisaged by Trotsky. From the summer of 1960, the Castro government had become a *bureaucratic* anti-capitalist workers' government - a government forced to attack and break the economic power of the bourgeoisie, but through carefully controlled bureaucratic measures and mobilisations. The Castro government was able to carry out this expropriation relatively "peacefully" because it had already broken the political and military power of the bourgeoisie within the state, and was able to use the Revolutionary Armed Forces/Militia against internal resistance. The major threat to the government came from intervention by US imperialism either directly with US troops, or indirectly through armed Cuban counter-revolutionaries.

CASTRO FUSES WITH THE STALINISTS

It was this threat that necessitated the controlled mass mobilisations under the control of the Castroites (loyally supported by the PSP). Thus the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) were set up in September 1960 while the militia, integrated with the RAFs, reached 150,000 by the summer of 1960. The militia, which was made up of workers who did eight hours military training after work, had at its centre the purged rebel army, its officers trusted Fidelistas. The heads of the militia in the provinces were often heads of G2, the military/political intelligence organisation. The CRDs were headed by Jose Matar, a leading PSP member.

The militia was down-graded as the threat from US imperialist intervention receded. After the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, divisional command structure was reintroduced into the RAF, and by 1964, the militia was disarmed, leaving the RAF as the sole armed force of the state.

By November 1960, a US trade embargo was in effect which completely cut off Cuba from its traditional markets of North and South America (80% of Cuban imports came from the USA and from US oil companies in Venezuela). Only the support and aid from the Stalinist bloc (primarily the USSR) allowed the Cuban government to develop a workable economic strategy. At the end of 1960, Guevara led a trade delegation to the USSR and the Eastern bloc, which resulted in the entire 1961 sugar crop being taken up. At the same time (end of 1960), a team of Czech technical advisors arrived to help set up a planning agency. In February 1961, the government departments and agencies were completely reorganised to fit in with the tasks of the new planned economy. JUCEPLAN was transformed into the central planning agency, which evolved the first plan which was in operation from the start of 1962.

The massive nationalisations of 1960, the expropriations of the US imperialists and Cuban bourgeoisie and the establishment of the monopoly of foreign trade laid the pre-conditions and established the necessity for state planning. From the implementation of the first Five Year Plan in 1962, we can speak of the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba.

The PSP cadres were central in the staffing of the administrative apparatus of this plan and this increased importance, plus their vital role in maintaining discipline within the trade unions was recognised in the fusion between the J26M and the PSP in the Integrated Revolutionary Organisation (ORI) in July 1961. This organisation was later to become the Cuban Communist Party in 1965.

The "fusion" in fact took the form of a takeover of the Stalinist party apparatus by the Castroites, a project which caused considerable conflict with "old guard' Stalinists. When the National Directorate of the ORI was announced, it consisted of 25 members: 14 from J26M, 10 from the PSP, one from the Revolutionary Directorate [8]. By October 1961, offices of ORI had been set up in almost every town (100 out of 126 townships). Anibal Escalante, the veteran Stalinist who had been given responsibility for organising the ORI, ensured that trusted Stalinists staffed the leading positions in the towns and provinces. Recognising this threat, Castro denounced Escalante for "sectarianism" and for creating a "counter-revolutionary monstrosity", in March 1962. Escalante was expelled from the Directorate, having left hastily for Prague. A Secretariat of the ORI was set up with Fidelistas having five of the six places - Blas Roca being the only PSP member. PSP strength was further reduced in 1964 when the trial of Marcos Rodriguez, who had spied for Batista in the mid - 1950s, but also worked for the PSP, was used to expose PSP complicity with Batista, and led to further explusions of PSP members.

When the Cuban Communist Party was set up in October 1965, the strength of the Fidelistas could be seen in the fact that of the 100 Central Committee members, 72 had military titles, ie were trusted Castroites from the Rebel Army. The entire eight-man Politbureau were Fidelistas. From 1961, the Castroites had consciously set out to construct a Stalinist party in their own image - taking over the PSP apparatus and purging it of its old guard leadership. The struggle within the ORI explains the length of time it took to found the Cuban Communist Party.

By the summer of 1960, Castro had broken decisively with the remaining Cuban and US bourgeoisie. However, the absence of workers' councils (soviets) and a revolutionary communist party comprising the vanguard of the proletariat, ensured that the outcome of these events was not a revolutionary workers' government, ie a bridge to the full and direct political power of the proletariat, but a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government. This government under the Castro faction and the PSP, with the material aid of the Kremlin bureaucracy, became a bridge to a qualitatively bureaucratised workers' state, one in which the working class and its vanguard were from the outset deprived of political power.

In a speech in February 1961, Guevara referred vaguely to "workers' councils", which could "approve plans and directives". These became techincal councils which were to be transmission belts for government targets. In August 1961, the trade unions were reorganised to expedite work co-operation in fulfilling government production goals. By April 1962, Guevara was blaming the lack of labour discipline for the poor sugar harvest. In November 1962, the CTC congress and union congresses were held to "endorse" the government programmes. Guevara stated that

the reluctance of some trade union leaders to endorse the new contracts "would not be tolerated"[9]. In 1962, identity cards were introduced for workers and stringent laws on labour discipline were instituted. A law of 1964/1965 enforced sanctions for breaches of labour discipline. The Grievance Commissions established in 1961 were abolished as being "too lenient". In the words of Martinez Sanchez, Minister of Labour, the law would **"strengthen labour discipline and increase production and productivity. It will be applied to the kind of worker who is a residue of exploiting society...We still find workers who have not taken the revolutionary step and tend to discuss and protest any measure coming from the administration"**[10].

Whilst gains were made for and by the working class (the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, statified and planned economy, a state monopoly of foreign trade), the Castroite bonapartist clique and a privileged bureaucracy usurped power from the working class. Thus the Cuban overturn had a predominantly counter-revolutionary character. It was not **qualitatively** different to the overturns that created the other degenerate workers' states. In carrying through **this** programme, Castro proved himself a Stalinist. This regime from its foundation could only be removed by political revolution.

Many of the features of the petit-bourgeois populist origins of the Fidelista movement remained hybridised with the essential features of a Stalinist dictatorship. The "Peoples' Power" committees and so forth were never organs of working class power or proletarian democracy. Whilst the origin of the regime in an anti-imperialist revolution gave Castro's power an overwhelming popularity, not seen in the USSR or Eastern Europe, the avenues for a peaceful transition to the political power of the working class do not exist in Cuba.

In this same period the Cuban supporters of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (IS) were at first hounded out, then imprisoned by the Castroites and PSP. At the 1960 Youth Congress in Havana, the delegates identifying with "Voz Proletaria", the paper of the Cuban section of the IS, were denounced publicly in the PSP's press as CIA agents. In 1961, the paper's press and the plates of Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution", which was being published, were smashed and the paper was suppressed. Later the supporters of "Voz Proletaria" were either imprisoned or deported as "counter revolutionaries".

IS THE PETIT–BOURGEOISIE A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS ?

The contradiction which might appear to exist between the positions of Lenin, Trotsky and the great revolutionary Marxists with regard to the role of petit-bourgeois political formations dissolves if the full dynamic of the Cuban events is understood. The petit-bourgeoisie indeed cannot be a ruling class - ie it cannot establish a state power defending its own class rule just as petty commodity production cannot be a dominant mode of production, but is always dominated by a large scale property belonging to another mode of production - slave, feudal or capitalist . The Cuban revolution in no way contradicts this fundamental Marxist assessment of the intermediate class.

Petit-bourgeois parties and their personnel can however be the instrument of the rule of other classes. By a process of internal differentiation, the grouping around Castro evolved from petit-bourgeois nationalism to petit-bourgeois Stalinism. The Fidelista clique assimilated themselves to the Stalinist party and programme whilst ousting most of the latter's former leadership and hybridising its programme with elements of petit-bourgeois nationalism (central role of the peasantry, rural guerrilla warfare, etc), as Mao had done before. Thus Castro, who in 1959 was a bonaparte for the enfeebled Cuban bourgeoisie was, by 1962, a bonaparte "for" the politically expropriated Cuban working class. Trotsky considered in 1938 that "experience" (ie of Russia, Spain and France) confirmed the inability of the parties of petit-bourgeois democracy to create a "government independent of the bourgeoisie". He thought that exceptional circumstances might force them to go further than they wished, that the establishment of such a government was "highly improbable" and that even if it occurred, it would be **"merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat"**[11].

The realisation of this "highly improbable" alternative in Trotsky's prediction and then in a manner and with a result not foreseen by him, does not undermine either the Marxist method or the fundamentals of Trotskyism. It demands the application of that method to understand these events, developing the programme as a guide to action for the proletariat in situations unavoidably only dimly foreseen by Trotsky himself.



Cuban territorial troop militia in Havana 1981 - a far cry from the Sierra Maestra days.

The condition which opened the "Cuban road" to the establishing of a degenerate workers' state was the continued existence of the USSR and indeed, the proliferation of degenerate workers' states. Without the political, economic and military aid from the USSR, the Castro government would eventually have gone down to defeat - either at the hands of Cuban/US counter-revolution, or at the hands of the Cuban proletariat led by a Trotskyist vanguard party. The willingness of the Soviet bureaucracy to assist Castro in avoiding such alternatives was due to the Kremlin's tactical disagreements with imperialism and its strategic counter-revolutionary hostility to the seizure of power by the working class .

The desirability of Cuba as a missile base was prompted by the severe disparity in military capability between the USSR and the USA at the end of the 1950s. The refusal of the US bourgeoisie to discuss arms limitation talks, despite Soviet concessions on the siting of offensive missiles in NATO countries in 1958, led to the USSR seeking a counter-weight. Actions such as the walk-out of the 1960 summit by Kruschev signalled not an abandonment of "peaceful coexistence", but a search for a greater bargaining power. The Cuban revolution was just such a political counter-weight. The arms programme of Kennedy on assuming office in 1960 made this even more imperative. Hence, whilst the Kremlin oligarchy did not plan, or incite Castro to, the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba (any more than they did in Yugoslavia, China or Vietnam), they economically and military acquiesced, for their own state interests.

In many instances it can be seen that it was the Castroites themselves who pushed ahead faster than either the USSR or their agents in Cuba liked. The nationalisations of August 1960 were coolly received by the PSP. Escalante declared at the 8th Congress of the PSP that the revolution should try to keep the national bourgeoisie "within the revolutionary camp". Blas Roca goes on record as saying **"some nationalisations could possibly have been avoided"**, and that **"private enterprise which is not imperialistic...is still necessary"**[12]. While the PSP was trying to maintain its alliance with "peace-loving" sections of capital, Guevara was declaring at the first Congress of Latin American Youth: **"If I were asked whether our revolution is communist, I would define it as Marxist. Our revolution has discovered by its own methods the paths that Marx pointed out".**[13]

The considerable mass base of the Castro regime, the treachery of the Kremlin leaders over the Cuban missiles crisis in October 1962 (the decision to remove the missiles and the offer of United Nations observers in Cuba - both made without the consultation or participation of the Cubans), together with the limited economic aid, predisposed Castro, Guevara and co to a relatively independent foreign policy, especially in the years 1966 - 1968. In this period Castro advocated and Guevara practiced a guerrilla strategy aimed at producing regimes similar to Castro's. The policy led to sharp clashes with the Latin American Stalinists, and ended in complete fiasco.

By 1971/1972, this policy was completely abandoned in favour of support for an orthodox popular front in Chile, and a statement of the unique "national roads" to be followed in Latin America. From 1972, with Cuba's entry into Comecon, Cuba came to provide in return for USSR economic aid, an interventionist strike force in Africa. In Angola 1975/76, the Cubans aided the MPLA against South Africa, but also stiffened the MPLA leaders' crack-down on the left nationalists and on working class action. In Ethiopia, in 1978, Cuban troops assisted the nationally oppressive Dergue to impose its domination over Eritrea.

In short, the Stalinism that Castro tried to disguise with populism became more and more overt. His recent support for the crackdown on Solidarnosc is entirely consistent with his political trajectory since the early 1960s.

Footnotes

1. Quoted in A.M.Ritter, **Economic Development of Revolutionary Cuba,** (New York 1974) p.66
2. Quoted in H.Thomas,**Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom,** (New York 1971) p.981
3. L.Huberman and P.M.Sweezy, **Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution,** (New York 1960) p.78
4. T.Draper, **Castroism: Theory and Practice,** (New York 1965) p.37 and H.Thomas, op. cit. p.1219
5. H.Thomas, op. cit. p.1199
6. op. cit. p.1220
7. L.Trotsky,**Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution,** (New York 1973) p.135
8. E.Gonzalez, **Cuba Under Castro** , (Boston 1974) p.102
9. **Hispanic American Reports,** (June 1962) Vol. XV, No.9
10. Quoted in P.Binns and M.Gonzalez,"Cuba, Castro and Socialism"in, **International Socialism** (London Spring 1980) No. 8, p.18
11. Trotsky, op. cit. p.135
12. Thomas, op. cit. p.1212
13. ibid, p.1212

The Permanent Revolution aborted

Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba have all been cited by the USFI as living examples of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. Here we have a series of revolutions in backward, overwhelmingly rural countries, all resulting in the establishment of workers' states. For the USFI, at various times, Tito, Mao, Ho and Castro all became (Castro still is) agents of the Permanent Revolution. To be sure they were *all* to a greater or lesser extent unconscious of this noble role, but the strength of the objective process, of the unfolding world revolution, compensated for this subjective deficiency. Hansen gives one of the clearest expositions of this version of Permanent Revolution: **"The question of the absence of direct proletarian leadership in the 1958-9 Cuba Revolution offers a complication, it is true, but on the main question - the tendency of a bourgeois democratic revolution in a backward country to go beyond its bourgeois-democratic limits - Cuba offers once again the most striking confirmation of Trotsky's famous theory. That the Cuban revolutionaries were unaware they were confirming something seemingly so abstract and remote makes it all the more impressive."** [1]

This interpretation is one-sided and therefore false. It is true that the objective factors of underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch create the essential objective conditions for the permanence of a revolution. It is not true that these objective factors, propelled in a revolutionary direction by their intrinsic features, can achieve a revolutionary communist outcome. Indeed one is forced to ask why the majority of anti-imperialist revolutions have *not* led to the establishment of workers' states if the objective process is so all-powerful. The truth is that in all imperialised countries that have become workers' states, the subjective factor, ie. the working class's political leadership, has been decisive. In Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Kampuchea *Stalinism* both in terms of the leadership of these struggles and the intervention of the pre-existing degenerate workers' states, has played a decisive role in establishing the new workers' states. Without Stalinism at the helm of government in such countries, the creation of a degenerate workers' state would be impossible. In Cuba the non-Stalinist origin of the Castroites was overcome in the course of 1961 by the rallying to Stalinism of Castro and the assimilation and transformation of his own petit-bourgeois nationalist movement into a Stalinist party. In all of those countries where the Stalinists did not control the government - Algeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Iran etc., - far from growing over into socialism, objective factors have pushed the rulers of such countries back into the arms of imperialism to one degree or another. Without the conjuncture of world and local Stalinism the option of the *conscious* creation of a degenerate workers' state does not exist. This was the stubborn fact that pushed Castro in a Stalinist direction.

However, while the creation of degenerate workers' states in imperialised countries *confirms* the tenets of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, it simultaneously aborts the programmatic fulfilment of this theory. The goal of Permanent Revolution is *not* the creation of degenerate workers' states that *block* the road to socialism, but the creation of healthy workers' states as links in the chain of world revolution paving the way to international socialism. Thus Castro and Co. are not unconscious agents of Permanent Revolution - they are its *conscious* enemies. The strength of the objective process can do little to alter this because the fulfilment of Permanent Revolution rests in the final analysis on the subjective factor, on consciousness, on the revolutionary party and a self-organised, self-conscious working class. This much is clear from all of Trotsky's key writings on the Permanent Revolution.

TROTSKY'S THEORY

Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution is not an abstract historical schema, not an objective process of "History". It is a coherent strategy for the seizure of power by the proletariat based on a scientific appraisal of the laws of motion and contradictions of capitalism. It is rooted in the theory of uneven and combined development. Out of the *unevenness* of the growth of capitalism in the world and the consequent existence of advanced and backward countries arises the phenomenon of *combined* development. The backward country does not simply follow the stages of development pioneered by the advanced, but is compelled to "leap over" stages of gradual evolutionary change. It does not thereby abolish its backwardness but combines it in a new formation. Thus Tsarist Russia combined bureaucratic absolutism and semi-feudal agrarian relations with a small but concentrated modern proletariat. Concentrated in huge modern factories in certain strictly deliniated areas, the Russian workers pioneered at the level of organization and tactics all the key aspects of the modern class struggle. They created the soviet; they developed the political mass strike. They gave their support to the most advanced Marxist party of the Second International, the Bolsheviks. Bolshevism learned all the lessons of the "advanced" West, of German Marxism and applied it critically and creatively to Russia and hence developed Marxism on the question of the relationship between the bourgeois revolution and democratic tasks and the proletarian revolution and socialist measures.

Lenin disagreed with Trotsky's theory before 1917, holding that the proletariat would have to *share* its dictatorship with the peasantry and consequently limit its programme initially to the most far reaching revolutionary democratic but not socialist measures. However life settled the dispute in Trotsky's favour. Lenin's "April Theses" and indeed all his major programmatic and tactical writings, ("The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It", "Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power" etc) express the clear recognition that the task facing the proletariat and its party was to seize state power. Whilst it had to limit itself in its *agrarian* programme to the "capitalist" programme of division of the large estates to the peasants, it was equally necessary to use the proletarian dictatorship to take measures transitional to socialism. Trotsky had warned in 1907 that "while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of victory." [2]

Trotsky's words proved prophetic - not with regard to Lenin but certainly with regard to his "Old Bolshevik"disciples Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, at various points in 1917 and after 1923. Since Lenin fully accepted tactically the seizure of full power by the proletariat, an alliance with the peasantry socialist measures and reliance on and support for the international spread of the revolution no further disputes existed between him and Trotsky on this question. Indeed it seemed entirely a question of party history until the troika -

Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev - started a campaign against "Trotskyism" based on unearthing all the disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky between 1903 and 1917. This unprincipled factional onslaught, whose real social and political content was the defence of bureaucratism, of necessity fixed on the theory which most clearly expressed the socialist and international goals of the Russian Revolution. The most consistent expression of this attack was Stalin and Bukharin's theory of "socialism in one country". No resurrection of Lenin's "democratic dictatorship" slogan was possible - though Zinoviev tried to do so first against Trotsky's theory then against Stalin's. In fact, these two completely counterposed theories had developed and transcended Lenin's theory. Trotsky's "permanent revolution" expressed everything positive and revolutionary in Lenin's theory, Stalin's everything potentially retrograde. Indeed it so developed the retrograde elements that it represented a complete Menshevik negation of Lenin's theory.

The conflict within the International, the social dynamics and goals of the Chinese Revolution, obliged Trotsky to reassess the importance of his own theory. Prior to this he had regarded it as a historical question specific to Russia. His bloc with Zinoviev in 1926-7 both obliged and persuaded Trotsky to keep open or algebraic the question of proletarian supremacy or of the duality of power between workers and peasants in a revolutionary government in China. The Chinese Revolution and Counter-Revolution convinced Trotsky of the general validity of the theory of Permanent Revolution in the Imperialist epoch. Stalin and Bukharin's stages theory led to murderous defeat for the Chinese proletariat at the hands of Chiang Kai Shek. In his work "Permanent Revolution" (1928) he summed up his theory thus; **"It is a question of the character, the inner connections and methods of the international revolution in general."** [3] With regard to colonial and semi-colonial countries, backward in terms of capitalist development, it meant that "the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses." [4] The vital importance of the peasantry arises not only from the agrarian but also from the national questions and necessitates an "irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie." [5] The peasant-worker alliance can only be led by the proletariat organised in the communist party and only the dictatorship of the proletariat can solve all the tasks of the democratic revolution. The peasantry has a great revolutionary role to play but not an independent one - "the peasant follows either the worker or the bourgeois." [6]

There is no intermediate stage between bourgeois regimes like those of Kerensky or the Kuomintang and the proletarian dictatorship. The former are counter-revolutionary bourgeois regimes disguised in "democratic" or anti-imperialist colours.

In a backward country the proletarian revolution will triumph because of the need to resolve the national-revolutionary and democratic tasks but their fulfilment will be accompanied by an assault on private property: **"The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution."** [7]

Conquest of power does not complete the revolution but opens it - heralding a series of civil wars and revolutionary wars.

The socialist revolution cannot be completed within national limits. It **"begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena and is completed on the world arena."** [8]

This is what Trotsky calls the "newer and broader" meaning of permanent revolution - ie its character as a world revolution. Whilst backward countries may arrive at the dictatorship of the proletariat sooner than advanced ones, "they will come later than the latter to socialism." [9]

To say that this whole process is grounded in the law of uneven and combined development is *not* to say that this law operates and wins through independently of the actions of the leaderships of the various classes. A *conscious* revolutionary programme is needed to utilise the consequences and potential of the objective laws. Against those, such as the USFI, who would disagree with this and claim that the "laws of history" can successfully overcome subjective difficulties, we would repeat Trotsky's criticism of the Chinese CP in 1928 who under the leadership of the Stalinist agent Lominadze, endeavoured to offload the responsibility of leadership onto "History":

"Now, Lominadze has made of the possibility of a permanent revolution (on the condition that the communist policy be correct) a scholastic formula guaranteeing at one blow and for all time a revolutionary situation "for many years". The permanent character of the revolution thus becomes a law placing itself above history, independent of the policy of the leadership and of the material development of revolutionary events." [10]

Hansen and the USFI seek to get round this problem by suggesting that the most conscious act in history - the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a bridge to the construction of communism - can be carried out by unconscious revolutionary communists. In saying this they in fact grant to Stalinism - the force that these unconscious agents invariably belong to or end up with - the capacity to carry out the programme of Permanent Revolution. This is a betrayal of revolutionary communism of the first magnitude.

As a political tendency Stalinism is absolutely opposed to the programme of Permanent Revolution. Instead, it deliberately subordinates the working class as a political force to the parties of the bougeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, and in so doing espouses the petit-bourgeois utopia of a national-democratic stage in the anti-imperialist struggle. Stalinism thus seeks to divert the proletariat's objective propulsion towards the leadership of the revolution and does so either through enforcing political alliances with reactionary classes, or physical liquidation of revolutionary leadership within the working class, or a combination of both.

This programme for the anti-imperialist struggle is bloodily self-defeating. The bitter fruit of the subordination of the interests of the workers and peasants to "progressive" bourgeois politicians, petty bourgeois nationalist demagogues or military bonapartes has been seen in China (1925 - 7), Spain (1936), in Egypt and Iraq (1950s and 60s), in Indonesia (1966), in Chile (1973) and in Iran in the 1980s.

But even should the Stalinists, exceptionally, outdistance their bourgeois "allies" and seize political power, as they did in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba, then their political expropriation of the working class creates a counter-revolutionary obstacle blocking the road of permanent revolution.

Both of these courses of action form part of the ever pragmatic and eclectic programme of Stalinism, and both of them are diametrically opposed to the programme of Permanent Revolution. They utilise and abuse the objective basis of permanent revolution to abort its fulfilment and defend their own bureaucratic interests.

The revolutionary variant of the opportunities presented by the law of uneven and combined development within imperialism retains all its validity and urgency. The experience of the the creation and history of the degenerate workers' states have proven that the cost of aborted permanent revolution is not only a blocked path to socialism, but a savage defeat for the democratic tasks of the revolution. The vandalism inherent in the forced collectivisation of the peasantry, the abolition of all freedom for progressive movements, the cultivation of national and ethnic oppression and the strengthening of the reactionary elements in the old bourgeois culture (eg. family life and religion) testify to this fact.

Footnotes

1. J. Hansen, **Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution,** (New York 1978) p.291
2. L.Trotsky, **1905,** (Harmondsworth 1973) p.332
3. L.Trotsky, **Permanent Revolution,** (New York 1965) p.152
4. ibid. p.152
5. ibid. p.153
6. ibid. p.153
7. ibid. p.154
8. ibid. p.155
9. ibid. p.155
10. L.Trotsky, **On China,** (New York 1976) p.349

Stalinism and the world working class

Its entire history proves that Stalinism has no qualitatively new or distinct programme or ideology. As a petty bourgeois political tendency it borrows ideologically from the two fundamental classes on a world scale - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Its programme of "peaceful coexistence" between social systems, of "peaceful competition" rooted in socialism in one country, is a petty bourgeois utopia, historically borrowed from social democracy. Its "peaceful" parliamentary road to socialism via social reform conducted in a series of stages is borrowed from bourgeois liberalism and its labourite / social democratic mimics.

The Stalinists attempt to conceal the counter-revolutionary content of their programme from the proletariat of the world with the emptied husks of Marxism and Leninism, which they have borrowed, or rather stolen, from the revolutionary workers movement. In the workers' states it identifies its police state dictatorship over the proletariat and its vanguard - a dictatorship which is the principal obstacle to the advance towards socialism - with socialism itself. It identifies the dictatorship of the proletariat with a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class. It poisons the very goal of the Marxist workers movement before the workers of the world.

Stalinism necessarily has a highly contradictory character. The Stalinist bureaucracies and parties rest upon proletarian formations - either workers' states or proletarian parties. The objective sharpening of the class struggle, which the bureaucracy is incapable of indefinitely avoiding, can force it, despite itself, to act against the bourgeoisie. When it acts thus it is forced to do so under the pressure of both the working class and the class enemy.

Whenever the bureaucracy is forced to against the bourgeoisie genuine revolutionaries, if they are not able to immediately overthrow and replace the Stalinist bureaucrats, must act together with them in a united front in order to defend the interests of the working class. In such struggles the Stalinists do not cease to be a counter-revolutionary force. If their leadership is not broken in struggle then either the workers' organisation or state will suffer defeat, or it will be defended or even extended, in a counter-revolutionary fashion. By this we mean that the working class will be denied proletarian democratic control of their own organisation or state. Thus they will be obstructed from utilising their conquests to serve their own historic goals. Their revolutionary communist vanguard and all tenacious defenders of the working class, will be subject to brutal police terror.

All such bureaucratic "victories" have the effect on the working class of atomization, demoralisation and the strengthening of petty-bourgeois and lumpen proletarian consciousness in its ranks (ie religion, nationalism, racism). Despite the *tactical* victory of fending off an attack from the class enemy, the victory for the bureaucracy retains its counter-revolutionary character, judged from the perspective of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class.

It is wrong to characterise Stalinism as monolithically reactionary - "counter-revolutionary through and through" - in the manner pioneered by the SWP (US) in its anti-Pabloite period. Such a view is dangerously undialectical. It can, and does, lead to thoroughly opportunist adaptations to Stalinism itself and to social democracy. Within the Fourth International in the 1940s this position led the movement to deny the Stalinist nature of the Yugoslav Communist Party under Tito. Because the YCP had led a revolution and because Stalinists were "counter-revolutionary through and through", it was deduced that the YCP could not be Stalinist. This "logical" deduction ignores the fact that Stalinists can and do lead revolutions, and can, and do, carry out acts which, taken by themselves, are progressive. However the predominantly counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism, which is a constant factor, means that where acts, progressive in themselves, are carried out by Stalinists, they are done in a counter-revolutionary manner and with counter-revolutionary results. Thus the "victory" of the YCP and its transformation of the property relations in Yugoslavia (an act in itself progressive) was accompanied by the political expropriation of the working class and the creation of planned property relations that, in the hands of the bureaucracy, remained an obstacle to the transition to communism.

The position that Stalinist parties are "counter-revolutionary through and through" has another logic - equally dangerous for Marxists. It can lead to Stalinophobia - ie a differential hostility to the Stalinist parties as opposed to social democracy. This position is best exemplified today by the PCI (formerly the OCI) in France, an organisation whose hostility to Stalinism has led them, repeatedly, to adapt to social democracy.

But it is similarly wrong to argue that Stalinism has a "dual nature". Theories of Stalinism's "dual nature" lead to the petty bourgeois eclecticism of choosing the "good" or "positive" acts or aspects of Stalinist policy and supporting *them* uncritically while rejecting the "bad" or "reactionary" ones. The Spartacists with their "Hail the Red Army" position on the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan typify this position.

Stalinism came to power in the Soviet Union under the slogan of "socialism in one country" against the International Left Opposition. Its fundamental political platform (from which all other positions were derived) was that socialism could be constructed in the Soviet Union, without the victory of the proletariat in an advanced capitalist country *as long as* the Soviet Union was protected against armed intervention. Turning their back on the International programme of the Comintern and the Leninist Bolshevik Party, the Stalin faction amalgamated with the philistine conservative Russian bureaucracy on the basis of a nationalist programme.

It follows inevitably that if socialism can be built "in one country", then there must be a series of national programmes, of national roads to socialism. The theory of "socialism in one country" propounded for Russia, leads inevitably to each Stalinist party adopting national programmes for its particular socialism. Trotsky pointed this out as early as 1928 (in "The Third International After Lenin"): **"If socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia, then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be achieved in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory. The draft programme empowered them to do so. The day after tomorrow The French will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social patriotism".**

The process of disintegration along the lines of social patriotism, of petty-bourgeois Stalinism, led it to accommodate to, and seek to amalgamate with, the labour bureacracy in the metropolitan countries and both the labour bureaucracy and

layers of the petty-bourgeois in the imperialised and semi-colonial countries. It means that the Stalinist parties cannot simply be understood as agents of the Kremlin.

In the imperialised and semi-colonial countries the Stalinists seek, via the Labour bureacracy, to bind the working class to alliances with the "national" or "progressive" bourgeoisie on a programme of realising the "stage" of national independence and "bourgeois" democracy. In practice such alliances can only mean the subordination of working class interests to those of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie. In every instance where the working class has attempted to act in its own interests the bourgeoisie have immediately broken the alliance and meted out violence and repression against the workers, and their parties, including the Stalinist parties. From 1927 in China to Chile in 1973, this strategy has proved a deathtrap for the proletariat and its vanguard.

Stalinism has necessarily accommodated ideologically and programmatically to the petty-bourgeois of the imperialised world. Its Menshevik programme for a national democratic revolution gives expression to the utopian horizons of petty-bourgeois nationalism. In concrete circumstances the model of the Soviet bureaucratic plan and economic assistance from the USSR can stand as a strategy for sections of the petty bourgeoisie in their struggle for freedom from imperialism's yoke, and in order to overcome the massive unevenness and underdevelopment of the productive forces that imperialism has maintained in these countries.

STALINISM IN THE WEST

The Communist Parties of Western Europe are in their domestic policies reformist (ie bourgeois) workers' parties. Their political programme is one of peaceful transformation of the capitalist state via a reactionary utopian cross class alliance ("anti-monopoly alliance", "historic compromise", "new" or "advanced" democracy, etc), a stage prior to "socialist" measures. A "peaceful" progressive anti-monopoly section of the Western bourgeoisie is appealed to for a common front to isolate the war-mongers. The origins of this policy of Stalinism lie in the Popular Front of 1935-39 and the war-time alliance of 1941 - 45.

The Communist Parties' programmes are in essence similar to those of "Left" social democracy with the addition of the central role of the Soviet Union as a force for world peace and socialism that must be defended. Powerful social democratic tendencies have developed within these parties ("Eurocommunism") which involve the junking of the long-dead ideological baggage of Stalinism, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" etc. The Eurocommunists reject the "Russian model" and express criticism of the USSR's "human rights" record. Carillo of the Spanish CP has developed this to the furthest point in an attempt to prove to the Spanish and the US bourgeoisie the governmental trustworthiness of his party. Both the CPE and the Italian CP accept NATO and the Western Alliance. Yet the Western bourgeoisie will not trust them with governmental office except in an extreme revolutionary crisis and then only temporarily, as in 1945-47.

The objective basis for this lies in the continued *Stalinist* nature of these parties. To the extent that they recognise the USSR as socialist, ie a higher historical form of society than capitalism, to the extent that they recognise the USSR as the force for world peace, their patriotic fervour rings falsely in the bourgeoisie's ears. They may peddle chauvinist poison to the working class in the place of communist internationalism but can they be relied upon to be patriotic *against* the USSR? Despite individual leaders' statements, none of these parties has definitively and historically put itself at the service of imperialism *against the Soviet bureaucracy*.

In Spain, Italy and France, these parties have repeatedly aborted revolutionary situations and mass movements of the working class. But unless - like the social democracy - they effectively deny that the USSR and the other workers' states are historic gains of the working class, ie deny their "socialist" or working class character, unless they espouse (bourgeois) democracy as a higher good to be defended against totalitarianism they remain *Stalinist parties*.

Are these parties then "defenders of the USSR"? No. They are defenders of the Kremlin bureaucracy and its international policy of class collaboration. They "defend the USSR" via the popular front and petty bourgeois pacifism and through the subordination of the class struggle in their own countries to these strategies. In so doing they abort the only decisive act against imperialist war and capitalist restoration - the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries.

An important contradiction exists, however, within the make-up of these parties. Added to the contradiction that exists within social democratic reformism (ie between its working class base and the bourgeois programme of the Labour bureaucracy) these parties are historically committed to the defence of the bureaucracies of the workers' states. They are counter-revolutionary workers' parties which serve the bourgeoisie to the extent that its interests are at one with the bureaucracy of the workers' states.

The bureaucracies of the workers' states *strategically* pursue collaboration with imperialism whilst *tactically* being forced to engage in actions which conflict with imperialism in order to buttress and extend its bargaining position. Imperialism, in its turn, has struck only a tactical compromise with the workers' states - crisis and decay will force it to seize the opportunity to reverse the overturns in these states.

War presents the Stalinist parties with the decisive choice of loyalty to "its own" bourgeoisie, or the Kremlin. There can be little doubt that the largest section of the apparatus of these parties and their trade union and municipal functionaries - indistinguishable in their social conditions and integration into bourgeois society from their social democratic peers within the labour bureaucracy with which they have historically amalgamated - will serve the fatherland in war as in peace.

But large sections of the proletarian base of these parties consist of the more militant spontaneously class conscious sections of the proletariat. They are isolated from the bourgeois public opinion by the same bureaucratic apparatus that stifles workers' democracy in their ranks. They have not experienced the same degree of integration into bourgeois society via the labour bureaucracy.

It is this section of Stalinism's base, hardened by isolation in bourgeois society, that will turn from the social patriotic apparatus with revulsion. The task of unfalsified Trotskyism is to provide the programme, the rallying point for internationalist opposition to the war drives of the bourgeoisie, for defence of the USSR and the other bureaucratically degenerate workers' states, for unremitting struggle for a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies, for socialist revolution in the imperialist heartlands based on proletarian soviet democracy, and led by a Leninist democratic centralist party.

The programme of Political Revolution

The task of the political revolution is to take political power directly into the hands of the working class. This means destroying the political rule of the bureaucracy and the apparatus of repression through which it has been exercised. Only once the working class is organised for and capable of, exercising political power can the international expansion of the revolution and the transition to socialism be resumed.

The indispensable mass organs of the political revolution are the soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies. Experience of Hungary in 1956 where workers' councils were formed and Poland in 1980 where the inter-factory strike committees of the summer constituted embryonic soviets, shows that these bodies come into being as organs of struggle against the bureaucracy. They are organs of economic and political struggle, organising centres for the general strike and the armed insurrection. With Trotsky we raise the slogan of freedom for all soviet parties, ie for representatives of all parties that accept and defend soviet legality. We oppose all attempts to ban political factions within the soviets - a position which can only be an attempt to have "Soviets without Bolsheviks"! The experience of social and political revolutions demonstrates clearly that the workers' council, left to "spontaneity" can be immobilised, de-valued and rendered impotent by false political leadership. The open competition of political tendencies allows for the working class to learn the correct road in debate and action and rally to the revolutionary communist programme. However as organs of struggle the Soviets should not tolerate saboteurs, agents of the class enemy or of the bureaucratic oppressors in its midst.

As they are the organs of struggle against the bureaucracy we fight for the exclusion of the bureaucracy from the Soviets. Self-evidently, workers' soviets must refuse to recognise the "leading role" of the bureaucracy's party if they are not to to declare their bankruptcy from the outset.

But the Soviets can only become conscious instruments of political revolution under the leadership of a new revolutionary communist party committed to the fight for political revolution. We therefore oppose all attempts to limit or dissolve embryonic Soviet-type bodies into organs for negotiation and collaboration with the bureaucracy under the guise of establishing a permanent trade union for the working class in the bureaucratically degenerate workers' state.

The limited programme of establishing a trade union in a bureaucratically degenerate workers' state is a utopian one. Under capitalism trade unions represent workers against individual capitalists in a market over which neither employer nor worker has control. The very dynamics of the market economy keep alive trade unionism as a form of representation of the working class within bourgeois society. Within a healthy workers' state trade unions would initially continue to represent the interests of **sections** of workers within a state that was under the direct control of the working class **as a whole.** They would be instruments for exposing and combatting bureaucratism, for resisting the crystallisation of a bureaucracy. They would be essential training grounds for workers to learn control and manage the economy., "schools for socialism", as Lenin liked to call them.

But in a bureaucratically degenerate workers' state, neither the market mechanisms through which workers bargain with individual employers, nor the above prerequisites of the functions of trade unions in a healthy workers' state are in existence. Every major demand of the workers - on the length of the working week, the sacking of an individual manager, the allocation of goods or wages - inevitably pits the working class against the central bureaucracy which monopolises the central planning mechanism. No lasting success for the workers can be secured by bargaining with the bureaucracy. The nature of its power and privileges is such that it cannot for long coexist with any independent organisations of those that it oppresses.

Its brutal usurpation of the proletariat's political power, its scandalous privileges, its unnecessary role within production, easily identify it as a parasite, given the most elementary self-organisation of the working class. Thus the bureaucracy must seek to atomise the working class, to prevent the smallest forum of free discussion, of communication and of resistance coming into existence.

The bureaucracy maintains a massive standing army and specialised armed squads to defend its privileges in times of political revolutionary crisis. The working class will need to build its own workers' militia to defend its organisations against police and military attack. It will in the course of the political revolution have to create armed forces capable of dissolving and defeating all the armed forces loyal to the bureaucracy. It will seek its weapons in the arsenals, and from the hands, of the conscript army. To win the troops to the side of political revolution the proletariat must advance the slogans:

* Full political rights for soldiers, culminating in the call for soldiers' councils to send delegates to the workers' and peasants' Soviets.
* Dissolution of the officer corps, abolition of the titles and privileges of the generals and marshalls - commanders, officers and NCOs to be democratically elected or selected.
* For the immediate dissolution of the paramilitary repression apparatus, the secret police and militia.

The victorious political revolution will arm and train all those workers capable of bearing arms. The workers' state will rest upon the armed proletariat. For the military defence of the workers' states against imperialism the maintenance of a standing army is necessary. The political revolution will however transform the existing armies - instruments of bureaucratic tyranny as well as defence - into Red Armies of the type founded by L. D. Trotsky. This will necessitate the conversion of a majority of these forces in time of peace into a territorial militia linked to that of the workers' and poor peasants' soviets - a minority of fully professional soldiers, sailors and airmen as "frontier guards" will, of course, be necessary as long as world imperialism remains capable of counterrevolutionary onsluaght. Internal counter-revolution may necessitate emergency or extraordinary bodies for detection and repression, like the Cheka, but such bodies will require the strictest inspection and control. Trotsky observed in The Revolution Betrayed that "The army is a copy of society and suffers from all its diseases only at a higher temperature". The military caste will have to destroyed as will the state and party bureaucracy. Its destruction will likewise be "at a higher temperature", ie in armed conflict, as the experience of the Hungarian revolution has demonstrated.

As we have shown, the distortion of planning by the bureaucratic caste condemns the degenerate workers' states to stagnation and recurrent crises. Not only are large amounts

of surplus syphoned off to maintain the luxurious privileges of the bureaucratic caste, and to provide "incentives" for the labour aristocracy upon which they rest, but bureaucratic planning is incapable of developing production and technology beyond certain limits. Increasing economic dependence on imports reflects not the failure of "socialist planning", but the inability of an alien bureaucracy to direct the conscious creativity and initiative of the workers.

As Trotsky pointed out in The Revolution Betrayed: **"Under a nationalised economy, quality demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative, conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery".**

In the struggle against the bureaucracy and its vice-like grip on state planning agencies, we call for the immediate opening of the plan to the workers' representatives, an end to bureaucratic secrecy to enable the workers themselves to take control of the plan.

The experience of bureaucratic planning will have led millions of workers to view with scepticism the very programme of centralised planning. Against those who counter "market socialism", "the profit motive" and "free prices", to Stalinist bureaucratically centralised planning, our slogan is for a *democratically centralised plan* under the management of the toilers themselves.

As a "school for workers' management", we support partial and immediate struggles in the degenerate workers' states to impose workers' control over management appointments and decisions, over work speed and to open all books and proceedings to workers' inspection. The struggle for workers' management against bureaucratic management is an indispensable component of the struggle against oppression and inequality. However workers' management requires that the working class be organised as a class to control its own state. We oppose all tendencies that seek to develop workers' control movements either into advisory or participatory bodies with local management or as a means towards decentralisation and "market socialism" under the slogan of "self-management".

The political revolution will effect the revision of the plan from top to bottom in the interests of the producers and consumers. "Bourgeois norms of distribution" which are at present reinforced and exaggerated by the bureaucracy will be confined within the limits of strict necessity and, in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to socialist equality. We stand for the democratisation of the plan, for workers' management in factories, for the democratic workers' organisations nationally to determine the priorities of the plan - eg the proportions of resources to be devoted to consumption, accumulation, the defence of the workers' state and aid to the world revolution.

The democratic organisations of the working class can take no responsibility for the debts to imperialism that the bureaucracy has entered into in order to solve the crisis of its planning system. All deals must be investigated by the workers and their representatives and repudiated where they do not serve the interests of socialist construction, subject to the tactical considerations of the relationship of the workers' state to world capitalism.

Nowhere is the bankruptcy of bureaucratic planning more visible than in the dismal record of agricultural production in the bureaucratically degenerate workers' states. Either bureaucratically established collective farms have stagnated and failed to guarantee the basic food needs of the urban population, as in the USSR, or, as in Poland, the bureacracy has encouraged the survival of anachronistic small plot peasant farming in the interests of its own political stability, thus retarding the forces of production in the countryside and allowing the small peasant farmer - via the private market - to dictate prices of elementary foodstuffs and withhold goods from the state distribution network.

Rural society in the workers' states is comprised of agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians on the collective and state farms, small peasant farmers, as well as a layer of rich private farming peasants or collective farm aristocrats depending on the agricultural regime of the given workers' state. The proletarian political revolution must win the poor peasants and agricultural proletarians as its allies. The programme of revolutionary communism is that these layers be won to the democratic collectivisation of agricultural production on the road to its complete socialisation.

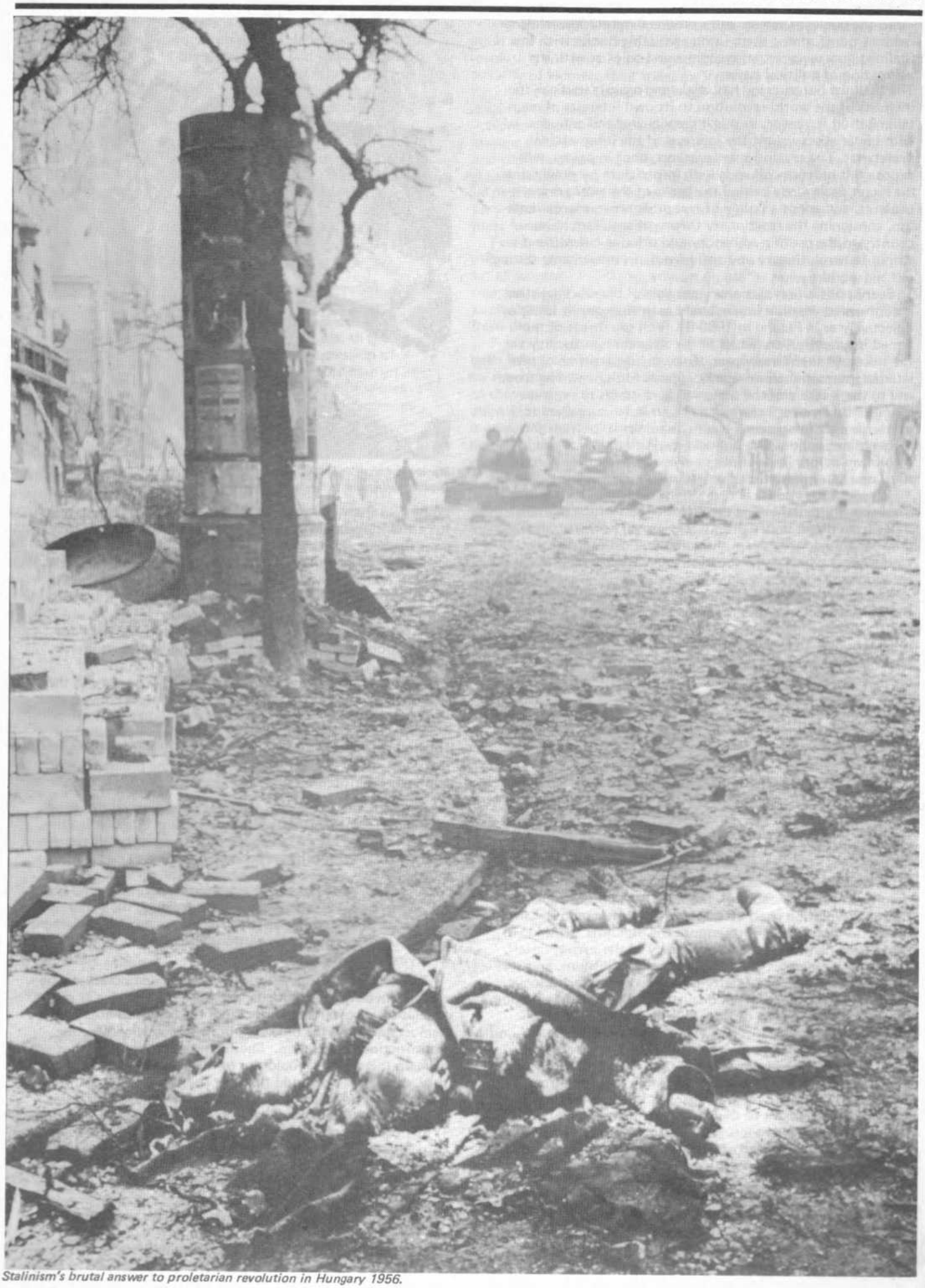
Stalinism by force and fraud has driven the peasantry into collective farms or communes. The high productivity of private plots and the stagnation and decay of the collectivised lands has objective and subjective reasons. Objectively bureaucratic planning with its concentration of investment in heavy industry and its neglect of the means to raise the physical and cultural level of the masses has starved agriculture of investment. Subjectively the forcible nature of collectivisation and the total absence of democracy in the so-called cooperatives demoralise the peasant. Far from being a school for socialised production it appears as a continuation of feudal or tributary modes of exploitation and indeed increases their individualistic aspirations. The real incentive to collective farming must be resources provided by the workers' state - machinery, fertiliser, building materials, agronomists, health and welfare provision, etc.

To create anew the alliance with the great mass of the peasantry, the proletariat must advance demands and measures which raise it in active struggle against its bureaucratic tormentors, whilst preventing it from becoming a tool of reaction and restoration.

* For the formation of councils of peasants and agricultural workers - organs of struggle against the bureaucracy, the collective farm aristocracy and the rich peasants.
* For the conversion of the "collective farms" or "communes" into democratic cooperatives with an elected management. A mass return to individual ownership would be of course a serious retreat and should be opposed by the working class with all the means of persuasion, education and rural class struggle at its disposal, the most effective of which will be the orientation of the planned economy to raise the level of collective farming above that of private husbandry.
* Where a considerable number of private peasants remain - as in Poland - in order to overcome the anachronistic system of small peasant farming, a triumphant workers' political revolution would commit itself to a programme of i) taxation of the rich peasants; ii) investment in and production of tractors, fertilisers and agricultural implements, iii) credits and education to provide the material base for, and win the mass of the poorer peasants to, co-operative farming as part of the planned economy.

A workers' state where the working class held political power could nevertheless continue to experience bureaucratism since the services of administrators, rooted in the separation of mental and manual labour would not be able to be dispensed with in one blow. Trade unions are indispensable to the workers' state as 'schools for socialism" ie as training grounds for the management of planned production, as an inidspensable channel of communication between the conscious vanguard, the party and the mass of workers. They also have an indispensable function of defending sections of workers, and even the wage earners as a whole, against managerial, bureaucratic *and party* arbitrariness. Therefore we support the slogan "For free trade unions". We fight to abolish the fake police-unions that exist in all the workers' states and support the ending of the legal guarantee of the "leading role of the party" (ie. of the party bureaucrats). With regard to its internal regime the programme for democratic trade unions in the capitalist states applies in all its essentials.

In the struggle to create such unions we struggle to defeat the social democratic reformists, Stalinists and clerical reactionaries who will fight to lead them. But we do not make a condition of our support for free trade unions against the Stalinists that they be under revolutionary leadership. Stalinism cannot co-exist for long with trade unions that are genuine independent representatives of the working class whose rights will be consolidated through political revolution. For this reason we struggle to transform the organs developed by the working class in struggle for trade unions - strike committees, inter-factory committees, workers' defence formations



Stalinism's brutal answer to proletarian revolution in Hungary 1956.

- into the nuclei of soviets and a workers' militia *against* programmes transforming them into negotiating bodies with the Stalinist bureaucracy that recognise and co-exist with its usurpation of political power.

The Stalinist bureaucracy has, again and again, sacrificed the interests of the world revolution to its own interests of maintaining itself in power. In this it manoeuvres and colludes with imperialism against the interests of the international proletariat. The revolutionary workers, once in power, will expose this hideous collusion with imperialism by publicising the secret deals made behind the backs of the workers and peasants, and adopt a policy of real proletarian internationalism, consigning the reactionary theory of socialism in one country to the dustbin of history and offering aid without strings to revolutionary and anti-imperialist movements throughout the world.

Every political-revolutionary struggle of the working class is confronted whether immediately as in Hungary in 1956, or objectively as in Poland in 1980-81, with the threat of the armed insurrection on behalf of the Kremlin bureaucracy via the troops of the Warsaw pact. Only the programme of proletarian internationalism - direct appeals to the invading troops and to the workers of the other workers' states to organise in solidarity by overthrowing their particular bureaucratic overlords - can guarantee a healthy workers'state from this threat of extinction. The political revolution, like the social revolution before it, can only survive and develop as part of the victorious international proletarian revolution.

The victorious political revolution will committ itself unconditionally to defending the historic gains of the workers' states from direct imperialist attack. It will however withdraw its armed forces from the command structure of the Warsaw Pact which is the international armed wing of the reactionary Kremlin-based bureaucracy.

But while we raise the slogans 'Russian Troops Out', 'Leave the Warsaw Pact', we link these slogans indissolubly with the position of unconditional military defence of the USSR and other workers' states against imperialism; with defence of the historic conquests of the working class against counter-revolution; with support to the proletariat of the workers' states against their bureaucratic oppressors.

For this reason we oppose the slogan of 'neutrality' between the USSR and imperialism. In the concrete circumstances of the degenerate workers' states this must, of necessity, strengthen the position of imperialism against the USSR.

Because the bureaucratic political counter-revolution in the USSR and the bureaucratised overturns of capitalism have not solved all the historic tasks of the bourgeois revolution the political revolution has to take up the remaining progressive element of these tasks –ie. to provide the arena for the mobilisation of the proletariat itself and the means whereby it rallies all the oppressed strata around it. This it must do despite, or rather because of, the fact that bourgeois *social* counter-revolution itself attempts to use democratic slogans as mobilising factors. Furthermore the Stalinists' crushing of proletarian democracy - the democracy of the soviets - itself fuels and re-generates bourgeois democratic illusions, and illusions in the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy (Social Democracy, peasant and nationalist parties). In different countries different elements of the unfillfilled tasks of the revolution exist. In the USSR *national* oppression exists in the non-Russian republics. Here to prevent these grievances playing into the hands of reaction we may raise the slogan of the independent workers' council republic, free to secede from the Soviet Union of the Kremlin oligarchs. In Eastern Europe (and in the Baltic republics of the USSR) the tempo of the self-emancipation of the toilers was violated, the working class was bureaucratically deprived of parties which represented the existing consciousness of the workers and peasants. The 'social gains' were forced upon these nations as an accompaniment to their national oppression. In Hungary and Poland the political revolutionary crises had a powerful element of a national uprising against Russian domination. The key question is how to prevent that national element from becoming i) a cover for counter-revolution and ii) a self-isolation of the proletariat from the workers of other oppressed nations and from the Russian proletariat itself. The Warsaw Pact which gives the Kremlin bureaucracy the legal pretext to intervene against political revolution is naturally hated by the proletariat itself. While we support the elementary right and indeed the self-preservation involved in withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, we oppose the call for 'neutrality' which must mean a lurch towards a bloc with imperialism and fight for unconditional defence of the USSR and all other workers' states.



Member of the "People's" secret police being rescued from the people during the 1953 rising in East Germany.

In other countries the bureaucratic overturns came as the partial fulfillment of the anti-imperialist 'national' revolution. In China, Korea, Vietnam - where uncompleted tasks of national re-unification existed for a whole period, or still exist. The policy of 'socialism in one country' is a betrayal of these tasks and its completion becomes part of the programme of political revolution.

Because the Stalinist bureaucracy has crushed the organs of proletarian power - the soviets - replacing them with a lifeless imitation of bourgeois democratic forms (parliament, elections by universal suffrage etc) the call for free elections, for multiplicity of parties, for the secret ballot, all find a powerful resonance in the masses themselves. Our programme is for proletarian soviet democracy with freedom for soviet parties, *for all power to the soviets*. The existence of a parliament with bourgeois (counter-revolutionary) parties in it would be a rallying point for counter-revolution.

Therefore this demand is not ours. The democracy of the soviets, involving the workers, peasants, in executive as well as legislative power is superior from the outset to bourgeois democracy *and* is the only state form which allows for the construction of socialism. Should nevertheless the masses take up this slogan, should the workers' councils, as in Hungary, espouse it we would fight for the following measures to guard the proletarian dictatorship and expose in practice the reactionary essence of parliamentarianism.

i) Fight to strengthen and centralise the soviets themselves into a national congress of soviets

ii) Ensure that any elections to a parliamentary body were conducted under soviet control debarring any candidates actively seeking the overthrow of the workers' and peasants' power.

iii) Place before a 'constituent' parliament or assembly the project of a purely soviet republic

iv) Seek, on the authority of the soviets, the dissolution of the assembly either when it had ratified soviet power, or should

it fail to do so, to disperse it as a tool of counter-revolution.

We stand for the introduction of complete freedom of assembly and criticism in the degenerated and degenerate workers' states subject to democratic workers' control of the media, press and printing industry. While recognising that the bureaucracy reserves its most terroristic measures for opponents who base themselves on the working class and the traditions of October, we deny the right of the bureaucracy to repress 'social democratic' or pro-capitalist dissidents in the name of the working class. The working class must decide - in workers' courts - who is counter-revolutionary and constitutes a real threat to the workers' interests. For the release of all political prisoners into the hands of the workers' courts. Down with the bureaucracy's closed and fraudulent legal system! For open courts, public trials and worker juries!

Just as the Thermidorian reaction destroyed the socialist basis of dealing with the national question in the USSR, so it destroyed many of the gains made by working class women under the revolutionary government of the soviets. In the degenerate workers' states of East Europe, the oppression of women is intensified by the lack of socialised child-care and domestic facilities, accompanying a very high level of women's employment in industry and agriculture. The lack of consumer goods to ease the burden of housework, and the queueing for basic necessities further worsens the double oppression of women in the degenerate workers' states.

We support all struggles of women in the degenerated and deformed workers' states for adequate child-care facilities, nursery provision, equal access to supervisory and professional occupations etc. Political Revolution would of necessity commit itself to a massive programme to provide expanded nurseries, cheap and decent social canteens, socially controlled laundry facilities without which the enormous burden carried by women in the degenerate workers' states - as workers and as domestic slaves - will not be lifted.

The emancipation of women requires their active mobilisation and participation in political revolution. The political revolution will have in its programme the full liberation and equality of women, their freedom from the ties of the family, through socialised domestic labour and full economic and political independence.

Women must be given access to jobs and positions at present denied them - this will require propaganda, education and positive discrimination in favour of women leaders in industry and political life. In workers' councils this means special provision to ensure representation and mobilisation of working class women and their right to organise to voice and press for their own interests.

Free contraception and abortion on demand must be provided, alongside decent maternity leave and health provision for all women. Family legislation should be revised to enable free and simple divorce, no alimony or other ties, and freedom to choose on life style, sexuality etc. without interference from the state.

For too long women in the USSR and East Europe have been left to the ideological corruption of the Church. Political revolution must break this if it is to win this major section of the working class behind its banner. Since the full liberation of women from all the effects of their age-long slavery is attainable only along the road of the abolition of class society itself, women, once involved in struggle, will become the vanguard fighters for socialism and communism.

We demand an end to the social and legal discrimination against gays in all the republics of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states. We condemn unreservedly the blatant oppression and harassment of gay people in Cuba.

Only the full programme of political revolution can open up the liberating road of socialist reconstruction - the road, necessarily international, to communism. For the proletarian political revolution, indispensable ally of the world revolution against capitalism!

The defence of the USSR and of the degenerate workers' states

The Soviet Union and the other degenerate workers' states rest on property forms that are qualitatively different from, historically superior to, and globally irreconcilable with capitalism.

Capitalism's own remorseless inner logic drives it to attempt to subordinate the whole world to its laws and needs. Its survival ultimately depends on this. But the very existence of the degenerate workers' states means that huge markets and vast natural resources are closed to direct imperialist exploitation. Capitalism's crises drive it to attempt to reconquer these areas of the world and subject them again to its exploitation.

Only *war* and *counter-revolution* can return these states to the imperialist orbit. In and of itself Imperialist war in the last quarter of the twentieth century threatens the whole of humanity with unimaginable barbarism, if not with complete annihilation. Even if this were not the case, the destruction of the degenerate workers' states by imperialism, the re-establishment of capitalist property relations, would represent an epochal defeat for the working class and oppressed peoples of the world. It would immeasurably strengthen the class enemy on a world scale. For that reason the gains of the proletariat of the whole world - the destruction of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the degenerate workers' states- must be defended. Capitalism's drive to break up the workers' states must be resisted despite the political tyranny of the bureaucracy in those states, despite its monstrous privileges, and despite its betrayal of the historic interests of the proletariat of the workers' states and of the capitalist world.

The political counter-revolution of the Stalinists has stifled the voice, the initiative and enthusiasm of the working class in the degenerate workers' states. The bureaucracies, motivated only by the defence of their privileges, represent a mortal threat to the preservation of post-capitalist property relations. These property relations can only be preserved and qualitatively expanded on the road to socialist construction by being extended internationally. But the bureaucracy's historic abandonment of the goal of communism was enshrined in the nationalist doctrine of "socialism in one country".

The Stalinist bureaucracies attempt to strike strategic deals with imperialism. They sacrificed the German, Spanish and French workers to their alliances with German and Italian imperialists before the Second World War. After that war they sacrificed the European revolution - in Greece, Italy and France - handing back power to an enfeebled bourgeoisie and its transatlantic backers. In return, Stalin attempted to regulate a new division of the world between himself and Anglo/American imperialism. But for imperialism, the agreements and understandings reached at Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam were to be kept only as long as the USSR and anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist forces, world-wide, obliged them to. For the imperialists these agreements are tactical and *not* strategic. However the highest goal of the Stalinist bureaucracies is to render them permanent. This utopian and reactionary programme has been variously christened "peaceful competition of social systems", "peaceful co-existence", and "detente".

Imperialism itself has been forced by upheaval and crisis in its own world system to restrict its direct military onslaughts on the degenerate workers' states to the smaller powers - Korea, Vietnam, Cuba - and to utilise "cold war" economic blockades and boycotts against China and the USSR. Its murderous wars in Korea and Vietnam do indicate that as long as imperialism exists it will never historically reconcile itself to the "loss" of these states.

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state, the state monopoly of foreign trade and the mechanisms of planification, represent historic conquests of the working class. They are the property forms objectively necessary for socialist construction. The absence of workers' democracy, the monstrous bureaucratic tyranny does not alter this nor can it remove from communists the obligation to defend these gains and therefore the state that defends those gains. In any war with imperialism, we unconditionally defend the Soviet Union and other degenerate workers' states. In the imperialist states we are for the defeat of our "own" exploiters and for the victory of the workers' states. Whilst we give no political support to the bureaucracy, our support for the workers' states' self-defence is unconditional. This means that we do not impose pre-conditions for that support such as the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies, the cessation of repression against revolutionary communists, or the pursuit of an internationalist policy. But our support for the workers' states ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracy is not unconditional support for that bureaucracy. Our support for the defence of the workers' state solely means that we subordinate the overthrow of the bureaucracy to the defeat of imperialism and its agents.

This does not mean that we shelve the task of overthrowing the bureaucracy or that we will sacrifice the interests of the workers to the rapacious defence of the bureaucracy's privileges. We agitate for the defence of the workers' conditions, for proletarian democracy in the conduct of the war, and for soviets of workers and soldiers, as the means of mobilising the enthusiasm of the masses and defeating the imperialist enemy. Whenever the bureaucracy's defence of its privileges or its attempts to surrender to imperialism threaten the workers state with collapse, then an armed insurrection is necessary and justified.

In a degenerate workers' state the decision to organise for insurrection is *conditional* on the defence of the proletariat's gains against imperialist attack.

As supporters of the internationalist tradition and programme of Lenin and Trotsky we subordinate the defence of the workers' states themselves to the interests of the world proletarian revolution just as a tactic is subordinate to a strategy. For example, if successful political or social revolution provoked a counter-revolutionary intervention by a degenerate workers' state and the successful defence of a workers' political or social revolution threatened a bureaucratically degenerate workers' state with destruction at the hands of imperialist powers, then we would always say that a living revolution must not be subjected to the defence of post-capitalist property forms if that means subordinating it to the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy.

Trotsky made this clear at the onset of the Second World War: **"If the USSR is involved in the war on the side of Germany, the German revolution could certainly menace the immediate interests**

of the defence of the USSR. Would we advise the German workers not to act? The Comintern would surely give them such advice, but not we. We will say 'we must subordinate the interests of the defence of the Soviet Union to the interests of the world revolution'. " [1]

In capitalist countries allied with the USSR or other degenerate workers' states – Germany 1939-41, Britain 1941-5 – we remain strictly defeatist with regard to the bourgeoisie.

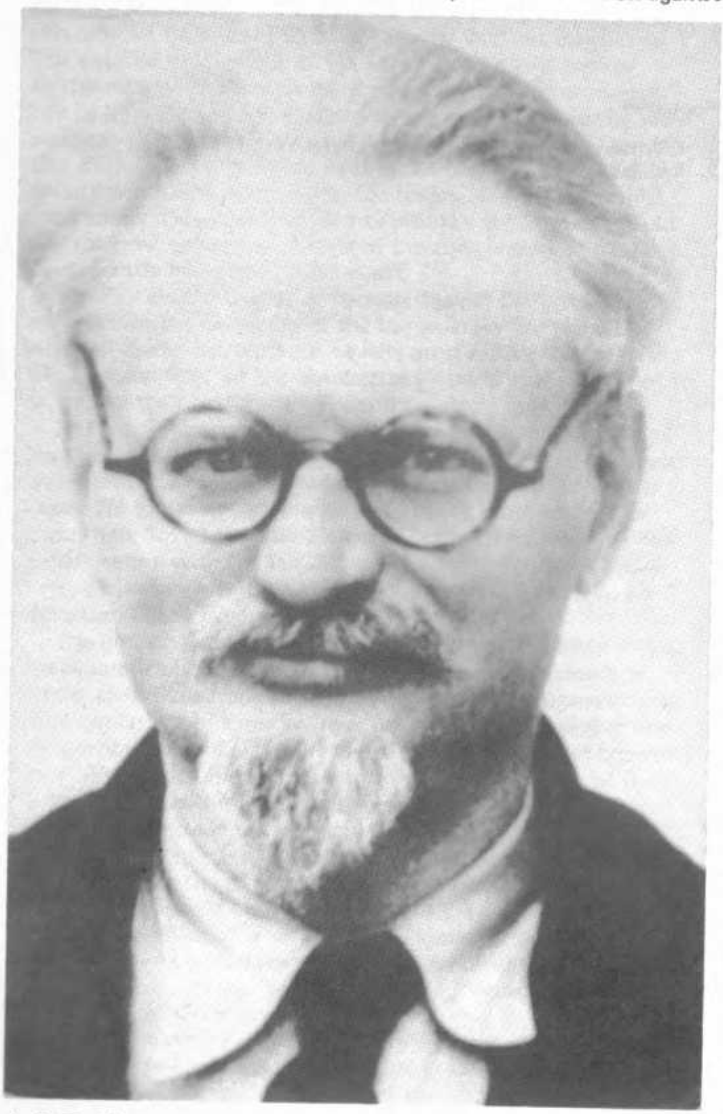
THE WORKERS' STATES AT WAR

Historically five major types of invasion or intervention by the troops of degenerate workers' states have been seen. Different forms of defencism flow from each of these.

a) Interventions against imperialist powers

On the eve of the Second World War the USSR invaded Poland and Finland for military strategic purposes. In those circumstances Trotsky correctly condemned the criminal policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy which led to these invasions (for example the reactionary Nazi-Soviet pact which preceded the Soviet invasion of Poland), the manner in which they were carried out and the reactionary consequences that flowed from them. However in the circumstances of war between the Finnish White Guard regime and the USSR it was impossible for revolutionary communists to be neutral. The Fourth International retained as the bedrock of its position defencism in the USSR and defeatism in Finland.

During the Red Army's advance into Europe in 1944 and 1945 it was the task of revolutionaries to support the entry of the Soviet forces and rouse the workers and peasants to action against the Nazis and the bourgeoisie of central and eastern Europe. But a military united front with the Red Army could not have been allowed to condition or truncate the struggle for the implementation of the full programme of proletarian revolution. Quite correctly the Fourth International called for the withdrawal of Soviet as well as imperialist troops as soon as the Nazi bourgeois forces were defeated.



L. D. Trotsky

b) Intervention to protect a regime allied to the USSR that is threatened with overthrow by imperialism or internal counter-revolution

In the face of South African and UNITA attempts to overthrow the Angolan MPLA regime - itself the product of an anti-imperialist revolution - Cuban troops played a vital role in defending the Angolan regime. For that reason it was justified to support the intervention of Cuban troops and their victory against the South African and UNITA forces. But in such circumstances the troops of a degenerate workers state do not lose their strategically counter-revolutionary character. This was demonstrated in Angola by the role of Cuban troops in helping to bolster the bonapartist MPLA's repression of workers' organisations and its own left wing. Therefore, while supporting them against the armies of imperialism, revolutionaries would from the outset fight for the subordination of these forces to democratic organs of the Angolan workers and peasants and for the creation of soldiers' committees in the Cuban forces.

In Afghanistan the Soviet Union intervened to instal the minority Parchamite faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in power because, in its view, the Khalq faction was faced with defeat at the hands of a reactionary mass movement (a Vendee) and that defeat would have imperilled the security interests of the Soviet bureaucracy through creating a directly pro-imperialist regime on the USSR's southern border.

Revolutionaries could not support the Soviet ousting of Amin, the installation of the Karmal regime or the "assistance" of 85,000 Soviet troops. That this intervention was not in the interests of revolutionary change is shown by the Soviet support for Parchamite retreat from nearly all the progressive measures of the 1979 revolution. It has served to isolate, and stigmatise as foreign agents, the principal anti-reactionary forces in Afghanistan. Parchamite-Soviet repression in the major towns has served to further undermine the cohesion and organisation of independent progressive forces.

However the entry of the Soviet Armed forces does not alter the character of the war between the Soviet backed Afghan government and PDPA forces on the one side, and the reactionary muslim tribes on the other. The latter are systematically opposed to democratic land reform, to democratic rights for women and national minorities and are tied to aid from imperialism and its agents in the Middle East and Central Asia. Therefore revolutionaries would have to accept a military united front with the Soviet Army. But only to the extent that the revolutionaries were incapable of inflicting lasting defeat on reaction through their own efforts. While opposing the intervention, revolutionaries would therefore suspend the call for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops and armed struggle against them, *until either* sufficient progressive forces emerge to defend and extend the revolution *or* counter-revolution is defeated in Afghanistan.

c) Interventions to protect another degenerate workers' state against imperialist or counter-revolutionary overthrow

In Korea for example, China, ruled by a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers government in the process of constructing a planned economy, intervened directly in support of the Korean Stalinists against the US-British Empire forces that used the cover of the United Nations. Here revolutionaries should have given unconditional support to the Chinese-Korean forces against UN troops.

d) Interventions to smash a developing political revolution

In Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 the invasions by Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops were reactionary in character. They served to re-impose bureaucratic rule and suppress the working class, the only force that could destroy the parasitic bureaucracy and open the road to socialist construction.

In the first instance revolutionaries would fight for the withdrawal of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops by propaganda and fraternisation in order to win them to the side of the political revolution and in order to internationalise the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. However in the face of counter-revolutionary force from the Soviet Army and Warsaw Pact revolutionaries would support armed resistance to ensure the expulsion of the invaders.

e) The invasion of one degenerate workers' state by another

Despite the repugnant sight of workers' states sending their armies to slaughter one another the existence of such military rivalry and competition between Stalinist bureaucracies holds no surprises for Trotskyists.

"Socialism in one country" poisons proletarian internationalism at root, replacing it with virulent social patriotism - a defence of the bureaucratic fatherland, in other words the national privileges of the rival bureaucracies. Thus the Vietnamese bureaucracy invaded Kampuchea *not* to save millions from genocide but in order to prop up Vietnamese hegemony in Indo-China. In general terms we are opposed to these wars and defeatist on both sides. The task of the workers is to overthrow their bureaucracies, not to make war on one another. However the poisonous rivalries between the bureaucracies of China and the USSR, between Vietnam and China, allow the imperialists the opportunity of using one or another of these states as their agents. China's attack on Vietnam - though it had the pretext of Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea - was designed to co-ordinate with US imperialism's revanchist project against Vietnam. In these circumstances we would call for the defence of Vietnam against invasion by a degenerate workers' state working in concert with imperialism. The determination of the US and China to force Vietnamese troops out of Kampuchea and re-instal a pro-Western capitalist regime, with or without the participation of the KPNALF, means that (while we did not support the Vietnamese bureaucracy's invasion of Kampuchea and were defeatist on the was between the Kampuchean and the Vietnamese bureaucracies) it is now necessary to suspend the call for Vietnamese troops to leave Kampuchea, to subordinate that call to the defence of the abolition of capitalism in Kampuchea.

In the context of accelerating rounds of nuclear armament by the imperialist powers since the Second World War, we recognise that the workers' states cannot guarantee their own defence without the ability to match the imperialists weapon for weapon, technology for technology. For that reason we recognise that as long as imperialism has nuclear weapons the workers' states cannot repudiate their manufacture or deployment without seriously weakening the defence of post-capitalist property. While we oppose every measure that strengthens the armed might of our class enemy - not a penny, not a man for this "system" - we defend the right of the workers' states to maintain nuclear weapons in defence against imperialism's drive to restore capitalism on a world scale. We oppose all pacifist and neutralist campaigns against the self-defence of the workers' states.

For Trotskyists the highest good is always the independent mobilisation of the working class for its historic revolutionary goals. Within this context we defend the post-capitalist economies against attack by imperialism or its agents. Trotsky summed up the perspective clearly: **"We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy) and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."** [2]

Footnotes

1. L.Trotsky, **In Defence of Marxism**, (New York 1973) p.40
2. ibid. p.21

Centrism and Stalinism: the falsification of Trotsky's analysis

The Fourth International after the war

Between the European conference of 1944 and the Third World Congress of 1951, no section of the Fourth International (FI), nor any tendencies within the sections, developed a correct appraisal of the role of world Stalinism in East Europe. Up until the Second World Congress of 1948 this did not preclude the Fourth International from making a series of meaningful insights into the nature of and role of Stalinism. Nor did it lead to the abandonment of the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary. However the errors were to become amplified and extended, under the impact of the Stalin-Tito break of 1948, into a qualitative revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism.

The resolutions of the 1944 and 1946 gatherings of the FI made two interconnected errors on Stalinism and East Europe. On the one hand they *underestimated* the counter-revolutionary role of the Kremlin in Eastern Europe; on the other they *overestimated* the instability of Stalinism and the potential for its revolutionary defeat at the hands of the working class. The perspective of the coming "death knell" of Stalinism with which the Trotskyists entered the war continued to operate, unmodified after the war. In the theses passed by the 1944 Congress, the Fourth International declared: **" The war, sharpening intolerably the contradictions of the Russian economy, has sounded the knell of the inevitable liquidation of the Bonapartist Stalinist bureaucracy. The latter is destined to perish without fail, under the blows of world imperialism or under those of the proletarian world revolution."** [1]

This perspective was contradicted by events in Russia itself, in the buffer zone, in Italy, Greece and France. However the FI in its later theses, refused to abandon or even partially correct its original perspective. Consequently, although the FI recognised the counter-revolutionary role played by the Red Army in demobilising the independent struggles of the masses, they suggested that these struggles would quickly throw aside Stalinism. Trotsky's statement that the "laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus" (true at a general level) was used to justify a prognosis for the *immediate* future. This prognosis left out of account both the subjective weaknesses of the masses (the absence of revolutionary parties) and objective difficulties (such as the armed might of the Soviet Bureaucracy, and its enhanced prestige after the defeat of Nazism.) In short, it was a wrong prognosis. Refusal to acknowledge this led the FI to overestimate the "revolutionary" developments taking place in the buffer zone. In 1946 the FI argued:

"The Soviet occupation and control have given an impetus, although in varying degrees, to civil war and the development of a regime of dual power." [2]

This was untrue. The occupation checked and arrested the development of civil war. Moreover, the regime of dual power consisted of the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie, *not* the Stalinists and independent workers' organisations.

This error of prognosis did not have an immediate programmatic consequence. The programmatic tenets of Trotsky still held good for the FI. The theses of 1944 and 1946 do clearly and unequivocally call for the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinist rule and the capitalist economies in Eastern Europe, and for the building of independent sections of the FI to lead such overthrows. In a resolution of the International Executive Committee published in the June 1946 issue of **Fourth International**, the FI made clear their refusal to compromise with Stalinism: **"The Fourth International demands the withdrawal of all foreign armies, including the Red Army, from all occupied territories"** [3] Further, the FI raised a programme of transitional demands for the East and the West which argued for political revolution, defence of the USSR and the overthrow of capitalism in the buffer zone and the west by the independent organisations of the working class under Trotskyist leadership.

THE PROBLEM OF STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION

The leadership of the FI, particularly the young European leader Germain, developed an analysis of the buffer zone as capitalist states, but ones which could potentially become "structurally assimilated" into the Soviet Union. By this Germain meant that the states of the buffer zone could, under certain conditions, be geographically integrated into the USSR and at the same time be economically transformed - from capitalist into degenerated workers states like the USSR. But Germain, dogmatically clinging to Trotsky's analysis of the pre-war bureaucratic social overturn in Eastern Poland, insisted on maintaining that the condition for "structural assimilation" was the independent intervention of the masses.

"But in order to completely assimilate a given territory, that is to say, in order to expropriate and destroy as a class the landed proprietors and capitalists, the bureaucracy is compelled - even if in a limited way and with the aim of always controlling it and crushing it when necessary - to call upon the autonomous action of the masses. It is precisely for this reason, among others, and precisely because the bureaucracy fears the autonomous action of the masses like the plague, that it will be unable to accomplish assimilation except on a relatively limited scale." [4]

While such an intervention of the masses (free of Stalinist control) is a condition for the creation of a healthy workers'

state, this is not as a general rule necessary for the creation of degenerate workers' states. Germain, however, only approached the problem at a general level. He ignored the specific features of the buffer zone - dislocation from the world market, decimation of the indigenous capitalists, monopoly of control by the Stalinists over the repressive apparatus, demobilised working class - that were all crucial to facilitating precisely an overturn of capitalism without the intervention of the masses.

In circumstances where, as Germain rightly states in his document, the principal foreign policy objectives of the Kremlin were the creation of a military buffer to rebuild "Socialism in One Country", his theses appeared plausible. However after 1947, when conditions changed dramatically and Moscow was forced to carry through overturns in the buffer zone to counter the plans of the imperialists, Germain's maintenance of his preconditions for an overturn of capitalism proved his theory to be a rigid and useless dogma. This became apparent by 1948 and, disarming Germain in the Yugoslav question, led him to support Pablo's revision of the Trotskyist position in 1951.

Germain's insistence on the need for mass mobilisations to accompany an overturn had a definite opportunistic kernel. Tied to the prognosis of the imminent collapse of Stalinism, this analysis caused the FI to constantly look for and anticipate the development of such mobilisations. Further it was conceded that such mobilisations could lead to a turn in the policies of the Communist parties themselves: **"All of these countries, including Yugoslavia, will however be exposed to an especially powerful pressure from imperialism. It is not excluded that in this case the Communist Parties, basing themselves firmly on the revolutionary aspirations of the masses, will move forward and abolish the remnants of bourgeois power and property".**[5]

Such a development, it was thought, could only testify to the *crisis of Stalinism.* However, when the FI applied this prediction in practice to the Tito-Stalin split, they insisted that Tito had split from Stalinism. In so doing they believed that their prediction about revolutionary upheavals in the buffer zone had been fulfilled. This belief had serious consequences for the revolutionary integrity of the FI. The 1948 Congress and its resolution on "The USSR and Stalinism" did little to guard the FI from these consequences. In fact it merely codified all of the earlier errors of perspective. The theses detailed the counter-revolutionary role of the Kremlin in the preceding years, yet still insisted on the same artificial pre-conditons for the carrying through of bureaucratic social revolutions as before (the need for mass mobilisations and geographical assimilation). They maintained their fundamentally erroneous perspective with regard to the crisis of Stalinism. At no point between 1944 and 1947 did the FI make an exception of Yugoslavia in its analysis of Eastern Europe.

THE TITO–STALIN SPLIT CAUSES THE F.I. TO RE-EXAMINE STALINISM

After 1948, the liquidation of the capitalist economies in Eastern Europe and the Tito-Stalin split propelled the FI leadership into a further re-examination of the nature of Stalinism. Defining Stalinism narrowly as the subordination of each CP to the interests of the Kremlin, the 1948 Theses stated: **"under Stalinist leadership they have turned into organisations whose *only function* is to serve the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Soviet bureaucracy."** (our emphasis) The FI concluded that the Tito-Stalin split signified that the YCP had ceased to be Stalinist. Unable, or unwilling, to recognise that Stalinism remains true to itself even while breaking up along nationalist, social-patriotic lines, the FI used the split to re-read events in Yugoslavia from 1943 onwards. The FI saw the split as a verification of their perspective with regard to the crisis of Stalinism. They saw it as the latest manifestation of a break with Stalinism that had been effectively completed when the YCP in 1945 was said to have led the masses, under pressure, in a genuine proletarian revolution, which successfully overthrew capitalism and created a "deformed workers' state" *not* in need of political revolution.

Michel Pablo was the principal advocate of this position. In August 1948 Pablo hesitantly began to lay the foundations for his revisions of Trotskyism on the Yugoslav question. In the article "The Yugoslav Affair" he claimed: **"As against all the other Communist parties in the 'buffer zone' which won their power thanks to the direct support of the Kremlin and the Red Army, the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) during the war led a real mass movement with distinct revolutionary tendencies which brought it to power."** [6] The revolutionary tendencies of the masses had imparted to the YCP a special character. At this stage Pablo did not claim that the YCP was as yet centrist. He did, however, suggest that independence from Moscow gave the YCP, as a whole, the potential to break from Stalinism thus rendering the need for a new Trotskyist party in Yugoslavia obsolete. His programmatic conclusion in this article was that the Fourth International should seek to pressure the YCP onto the road of self-reform.

By September 1949, building on his incorrect appraisal of the potential for self-reform of the YCP, Pablo *correctly* designated Yugoslavia as a workers' state. It was his definition of it as a *deformed* workers' state that was fundamentally wrong. In using this term, Pablo implied that the bureaucratic deformation of the Yugoslav workers' state was only qualitative. That is, political power *to some extent* lay in the hands of the working class: **"Within this framework of a *workers' state,* defined in this sense, can be contained for a long time a partially bourgeois content both in the sphere of distribution norms as well as in several aspects of political power."** [7]

Such a formulation is true for a healthy workers' state as well. It will contain bourgeois features in its economy and its political superstructures. But what distinguishes a healthy workers' state or even a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations, is that political power still lies with the working class or in the hands of a *revolutionary party, not* in the hands of a consolidated bureaucratic caste set against the working class and with its own distinct interests. The existence of such a caste, and one clearly existed in Yugoslavia, signified a *qualitative* difference between a healthy and a degenerate workers' state and necessitated in the latter case a political revolution to take political power back into the hands of the working class. Failure to make this distinction led Pablo at first to fudge the question of political revolution in Yugoslavia and later to completely abandon the call for it. Instead Pablo merely called for the extension of the world revolution as a means of gradually undermining the material base (backwardness) of bureaucratic deformations in countries such as Yugoslavia. In February 1950, therefore, he argued: *"between capitalism and socialism there will be an entire historic period and a whole gamut of transitional regimes* **which, while ceasing to be capitalist, will undergo various degrees of evolution with regard to one another and in relation to socialism in which the state (state apparatus) will be more or less deformed by the bureaucracy; in which the (deformed) laws of capitalism will continue to operate to some extent or another, and in which all these difficulties and obstacles will be overcome only by the extension of the revolution on the world arena."** [8]

Not only was the programme of political revolution rendered irrelevant in this formula, so too was the Marxist programme for the struggle against bureaucracy in the transition period.

Pablo compounded these errors by claiming that, given the experience of Yugoslavia and the YCP (a Stalinist party transformed into a centrist party by the pressure of the masses) Stalinism *generally* could be transformed by such pressure. Thus in his report to the 1951 Congress of the Fourth International he argued: **"We have made clear that the CPs are not exactly reformist parties and that** *under certain exceptional conditions they possess the possibility of projecting a revolutionary orientation.* **"** [9]

Pablo's positions on Yugoslavia were adopted by the FI at its 1951 Third World Congress. It was subscribed to by all the major sections and leading figures of the FI. There was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's centrist position that : **"In Yugoslavia the first country where the proletariat took power since the degeneration of the USSR, Stalinism no longer exists today as an effective factor in the workers' movement, which, however, does not exclude its possible re-emergence under certain conditions."** [10]



USFI leader, Ernest Mandel. *Picture:John Sturrock (Report)*

Germain's objections to this position had become obsolete in the face of the reality of the Yugoslav workers' state, and useless in terms of explaining the counter-revolutionary nature of the party that brought that state into being. At the same conference the FI did recognise the rest of Eastern Europe as deformed workers' states in need of political revolutions. But the resolutions of Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia were seen as a complementary whole and this whole entailed a *right centrist* revision of the Trotskyist position on Stalinism.

STALINISM'S 'DUAL' NATURE

This revision entailed redefining Stalinism as having a "dual nature". The bureaucratic social revolutions in the buffer zone were seen as examples of the *counter-revolutionary* role of Stalinism. The progressive side of Stalinism is regarded as being the ability of some of the CPs, acting under the pressure of the masses, to break with the Kremlin and project a "revolutionary orientation". This was what the FI claimed had happened in Yugoslavia and later in China. It fell to Germain, now obediently following Pablo's line, to give this revision theoretical expression in his "Ten Theses" on Stalinism: **"The contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy is only partially reflected in the Stalinist parties. The dual nature of these parties is of a different social origin; it does not flow from the special role of a parasitic bureaucracy in a workers' state but from the *dual function* of these parties, which are working class because of their mass base in their own country as well as international instruments of the Soviet bureaucracy."** [11]

It was only the latter characteristic that defined them as Stalinist. The former characteristic could, under certain conditions, serve to negate this Stalinism. Thus: **"The Yugoslav and Chinese examples have demonstrated that, placed in certain exceptional conditions, entire Communist parties can modify their political line and lead the struggle of the masses up to the conquest of power, while passing beyond the objectives of the Kremlin. Under such conditions these parties cease being Stalinist parties in the classical sense of the world."** [12]
That is, they became centrist parties.

We reject the view that Stalinist parties are defined as such exclusively by virtue of their relationship to the Kremlin. This forms only one important constituent part of a Stalinist party's programme and overall nature. Further we reject the notion that Stalinism has a dual nature and that it can be pushed in a revolutionary direction without first breaking up and being replaced by a revolutionary party.

Against this notion of Stalinism as possessing both a progressive and counter-revolutionary side, each weighing equally in the scales and separated in time and space, we re-assert the Trotskyist conception of Stalinism as predominantly *counter-revolutionary* but with contradictory characteristics. We recognise this contradiction as an intensely dialectical one; that is, that Stalinism is capable of achieving (in exceptional circumstances) results which, taken in isolation are progressive (the liquidation of capitalism). But Stalinism achieves these results by counter-revolutionary means. In recognising this we by no means equate the progressive and reactionary elements. We recognise that the progressive *part* is permeated and dominated by the counter-revolutionary whole. By dissolving this dialectical understanding of Stalinism into a pair of formally opposed and separable elements - progressive and reactionary - the FI after 1951 opened the way to a liquidation of the revolutionary programme in favour of an orientation (deep entryism) which sought to pressure the national CPs into taking the progressive path.

Finally the FI's revisionism on the question of Stalinism cannot be fully understood without reference to the positions taken on the FI's other major concern of the period - the continuing instability of imperialism. Up to 1948 this instability was understood in terms of chronic economic stagnation. After 1948 this instability came to be expressed, according to the FI, more and more in terms of preparations for a Third World War against the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The errors on Stalinism and East Europe and on the prospects for imperialism came together in the 1951 Congress resolutions on "Orientation and Perspectives". These argued that a new world war was imminent, that the balance of forces was weighed against imperialism in favour of the workers' states, and that the newly discovered potentially progressive character of Stalinism would mean that the new war would take the form of an *international civil war.* The end result of this would be a series of revolutions at least as healthy and progressive as the Yugoslav one.

An opposition that purported to defend Trotskyism against Pablo's revisionism on the question of Stalinism was the Vern/Ryan tendency inside the SWP(US) 1950-53. This tendency argued that the FI had been wrong to delay for so long in characterising Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia included, as workers' states. They argued that the only decisive criterion for the characterisation of the class nature of a state was which class's representatives controlled the repressive apparatus of the state machine. Thus in Eastern Europe the entry of the Red Army (the repressive apparatus of a workers' state) marked the establishment of *workers' states* - ie. as early as 1944-5. They reasoned that it was **"Here in this superstructure of society, is where the revolution of our time takes place."** [13] Stalinism is rooted in the working class - therefore the Stalinists in power always equal a distorted form of workers' power. Stalinism *could not* possibly rest on capitalist property relations, or prop up a capitalist state, even for a limited period, because it itself rests on the post-capitalist property relations.

These undialectial positions of the Vern/Ryan tendency which failed to recognise the contradictory nature of Stalinism, foreshadowed many of the errors of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) on the Russian question. Their position can be defined as Stalinophile.

It rests in the first place on an incorrect analogy with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Because the Bolsheviks in state power presided over private property in whole sections of the economy the Vern/Ryan tendency disregarded economic criteria altogether. They equated a healthy revolution, in which the capitalist state was decisively smashed by the direct action of the masses led by a revolutionary party and a new type of state established, with the Stalinist led bureaucratic overturns of capitalism and the establishment of degenerate workers' states. The same criterion was applied to two distinct historical phenomena. This was done because the Vern/Ryan tendency regarded the

counter-revolutionary bureaucracy as only qualitatively different from the early Bolshevik state functionaries. They define the bureaucracy solely as part of the working class, ignoring their nature as a caste within Soviet society, that is based on the working class but with interests distinct from, and opposed to, the working class. They deny the predominantly counter-revolutionary nature of the bureaucracy. They deny the reality of Stalinism in Eastern Europe after the war. They ignore the reality that Stalinism did defend capitalist property relations for a period and that it did hand back countries it controlled, like Finland and Austria to the imperialists rather than abolish capitalism in them. This tendency's one-sided analysis of Stalinism grants to the Soviet bureaucacy a revolutionary dynamic it does not possess. The criterion for establishing whether a degenerate workers' state exists is not, in the first place dependent upon whether the Stalinists have secured political power. As we have shown, this is a precondition for the creation of a degenerate workers' state. But it does not follow that fulfillment of this condition will inevitably lead to the establishment of planned property relations. This fact was proved beyond doubt by Austria, Finland and Vietnam (in 1945).

In the period 1948 to 1953 (in 1953 the FI split into the International Committee (IC) and the International Secretariat (IS) there was no revolutionary opposition to Pablo's revisionist positions on Stalinism. The American SWP, the British Healy group and the French PCI (all of which joined the IC) repeatedly expressed their support for the FI's positions, up to and including the 1951 Congress documents on Yugoslavia. Ostensibly the IC's split with Pablo involved a rejection of his tactical orientation towards Stalinist parties and his organisational methods, *not* his analysis and understanding of Stalinism.

The Germain opposition to Pablo on the Yugoslav question was not able to sustain an alternative position. Their dogmatism proved to be increasingly at variance with reality in Eastern Europe. Their conversion to Pablo's viewpoint was made easy by the fact that throughout the debate they accepted all of the premises that Pablo drew his conclusions from - the exceptional nature of the Yugoslav revolution, the centrist nature of the YCP and the conception of the Tito-Stalin split as a "proletarian revolt against the anti-proletarian, counter-revolutionary policy of the Kremlin" (Germain).

At the 1951 Congress Pablo's centrist position on Yugoslavia and on Stalinism was passed unchallenged by any section of the FI, or even any section of a section, on a revolutionary basis. This was quickly to take programmatic effect in the tactics and slogans raised by the FI (eg. in 1953 during the East German uprising, the FI (IS) refused to call for political revolution). That is why we recognise the 1951 Congress as the point at which the FI codifying its errors instead of rectifying them, and abandoning the Trotskyist position on Stalinism, completed its collapse into centrism.

Mandel's 'orthodox' revisions

In the demonology of the "anti-Pabloite", Fourth International International Committee (IC) tradition, the chief demon was, and remains, Michel Pablo. Now, while it is certainly true that he ushered in the "theoretical rearmament" of the Fourth International (FI) that was to rob it of every vestige of authentic Trotskyism, he rapidly lost the role of principal theoretical revisionist of the FI after the 1953 split. The IC's constant harping on "Pabloite revisionism" was actually a testimony to their own theoretical bankruptcy. It replaced any attempt to take on and theoretically combat the chief spokesman for the FI's International Secretariat (IS), Ernest Germain, later to become better known as Ernest Mandel.

He was the architect of the analysis of the crisis within Stalinism after Stalin's death in 1953, and was chiefly responsible for formulating the IS programmatic response to the events surrounding the "crisis" of Stalinism at the 1954, 1957 and 1961 Congresses of the IS. He played a leading role in the re-unification discussions with the main grouping in the IC, the Socialist Workers Party (US), reaching agreement with its leader, Joseph Hansen over the analysis of the Cuban revolution. From the re-unification in 1963 - when the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) was established - to the present day, Mandel has retained his position as the major USFI theoretician on Stalinism, the USSR and the degenerate workers' states.

After 1950, Germain (Mandel) was forced to concede his error on the Yugoslav revolution. Pablo had been right to characterise Tito's Yugoslavia as a "deformed workers' state", he had been wrong. His defeat - or rather his collapse - on this question prompted him to carry out a task that has since become the trade mark of his books, pamphlets and articles. He set to work to disguise the FI's revisions of Trotskyism with the gloss of Marxist "orthodoxy". In 1951, he reaffirmed the Trotskyist position on Stalinism in the USSR, but revised it with regard to other Stalinist parties. In his "Ten Theses", he argued:

"The contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy is only partially reflected in the Stalinist parties. The dual nature of these parties is of a different social origin; it does not flow from the special role of a parasitic bureaucracy in a workers' state, but from the *dual function* of these parties, which are working class because of their mass base in their own country as well as international instruments of the Soviet bureaucracy...For the Kremlin, the usefulness of this mass base consists exclusively in serving its diplomatic designs. But these designs periodically involve a political line diametrically opposed to the most elementary aspirations of the masses. From this flows the possibility of the outstripping of the Communist parties by their own base, which, in action, can go beyond the objectives set by the Kremlin and escape from its control. This possibility has always been one of the fundamental perspectives of the Trotskyist movement".[14] In the event of this happening, claims Germain, such parties cease to be Stalinist.

This analysis leads to a practical capitulation to what remain, in essence, Stalinist parties. Mandel uses the apparently orthodox analysis of Stalinism as contradictory to obscure the real nature of Stalinism behind a spurious "dual nature", a bad side under Kremlin orders; a good side under mass pressure. When the latter becomes predominant, Stalinism turns into "centrism" or an "empirically revolutionary tendency". This fails completely to comprehend why Stalinism is counter-revolutionary.

As we have shown, wherever a break with the Kremlin takes place and the indigenous Stalinists carry through an overturn of capitalism, as in Yugoslavia and China, this is prompted by the need for self-preservation on the part of the already-established bureaucracies of these parties, not as a result of pressure from their mass base. Where such pressure is involved, it plays only a secondary, coincidental role, and is usually accompanied by increased repression against the masses. While the possibility of such fractures within world Stalinism has indeed always been part of Trotskyism's perspectives, the belief that parties breaking from Kremlin control thereby cease to be Stalinist has never been part of those perspectives.

Germain applied this position to the Chinese Revolution. Mao became a second Tito. The position of the Chinese Trotskyists on the1949 revolution [15] which attacked Mao's Stalinist popular frontist project, was replaced by Germain's analysis of the Chinese coalition government as a "workers' and farmers.' government", following the Yugoslav road:

"Many reasons permit us to hope for such a development (a

left turn - Eds). More than any other Communist Party the Chinese CP has been obliged to keep a less bureaucractic and centralised structure, to maintain a constant metabolism between its own aspirations and pre-occupations and those of the masses. The objective situation pushes it along this road"[16]

In 1977, Mandel maintained that the Chinese CP, which had ceased to be Stalinist, did indeed take the sought-after left turn: **"The victory of the third Chinese revolution in 1949 was the most important gain for the world revolution since the victory of the October socialist revolution".[17]**

This assessment, stemming from his false analysis of Stalinism's dual nature, ignores the massive counter-revolutionary setback for the Chinese working class that this revolution involved. Since 1949 the Chinese Stalinists have excluded the masses from any real political power, but have rather used them as cannon fodder for their inter-bureaucratic faction fights.

The programmatic logic of this analysis of Stalinism in China (and Yugoslavia) was to return to Trotsky's pre-1934 position, namely a position calling for the political *reform* of these Stalinist regimes. The 1954 Congress resolution, subscribed to (if not indeed written by) Germain, explicitly rejects political revolution for China and Yugoslavia together with the perspective of a new party. It argues instead for the creation of Soviets, as forms of proletarian democracy, and factions inside the Chinese and Yugoslav CPs, whose objective should be to replace the "centrist" leaderships of those parties through a democratic process of reform:

"Since both the Chinese and to a certain extent also the Yugoslav CP are in reality bureaucratic centrist parties, which, however, still find themselves under the pressure of the revolution in their countries, we do not call upon the proletariat of these countries to constitute new revolutionary parties or to prepare a political revolution in these countries".[18]

This position had the advantage of pre-1934 Trotskyist "orthodoxy". But whilst Germain borrowed the term, his purpose was to wipe out the historical gain of Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinism after 1934. Moreover, Germain's position ignored the reality that the working class had been politically expropriated by a bureaucratic caste. It ignored the fact that in all fundamentals the ruling parties practiced the Stalinist programme of "socialism in one country", the stifling of any independent political life for the masses, the bureaucratic operation of the plan, the subordination of international revolution to the strategic deal of the bureaucracy with imperialism, etc.

1953 AND AFTER – THE EVOLUTION OF PROGRAMMATIC REVISIONS

Since the 1950s, the brutal reality of Stalinism has impinged on Mandel's consciousness, and has led him to change his stance on these countries. His method, though, remains exactly the same, and the USFI has on various occasions found replacements for China and Yugoslavia as non-Stalinist workers' states, in Vietnam and Cuba.

With regard to Eastern Europe, 1954 witnessed the beginning of a new stage of the FI's revision of the programme of political revolution. The crisis of Stalinism after Stalin's death and the East German workers' uprising, threw the bonapartist clique in the Kremlin into a turmoil, and led to a relative loosening of the bureaucracy's stranglehold on the political life of the masses of Eastern Europe. Mandel recognised that the measures promulgated by Stalin's successors in the USSR and Eastern Europe were, in fact, measures of self-preservation, concessions designed to buy them time for retrenchment.

Nevertheless, he did argue that the rumblings in Eastern Europe did open up a persepctive of fragmentation in the national CPs, with a section (defined as being "closest to the masses") placing themselves at the head of the struggle for political revolution. While the fragmentation has occured, Mandel went further and argued that the IS programme should centre on developing such a split as the best means of achieving the political revolution. To this end, an entry tactic was advocated, and the prioritised programme of political revolution was reduced to the call for a series of reforms that would be palatable to a potentially revolutionary section of the bureaucracy:

"1. Freedom for working class prisoners.
2. Abolition of repressive anti-labor legislation.
3. Democratisation of the workers' parties and organi sations.
4. Legalisation of all workers' parties and organisations.
5. Election and democratic functioning of mass committees.
6. Independence of the trade unions in relation to the government.
7. Democratic elaboration of the economic plan by the masses for the masses.
8. Effective right of self-determination for the peoples".[19]

The programme fails to link these demands to the struggle to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish genuine workers' power. Indeed, calls for this course of action are not raised precisely because of the IS's new view of the bureaucracy as containing within it potentially centrist elements.

Between 1954 and the Fifth World Congress in 1957, further enormous upheavals occurred in the degenerate workers' states and the USSR. The 20th Congress of the CPSU "Secret Speech" by Kruschev and the ensuing concessions, the revolutionary uprising against the bureaucracy in Hungary and in Poland - all in 1956 - made a deep impression upon the IS's perspectives. Mandel gave the report to the Congress on the crisis within Stalinism. The reactions of the YCP and the CCP leaderships to the Hungarian events, whilst uneven, were held to be progressive, confirming the perspective of reform.

Yet a major change in orientation to the buffer zone and the USSR was outlined by Mandel. For him and the IS leadership, the Hungarian and Polish events had proven that a wing of the bureaucracy would follow the Tito-Mao road: in Hungary - Nagy in Poland - Gomulka. In the USSR the "centrist" faction of Kruschev was crowded on its left by Malenkov and Mikoyan, who whilst not of the Nagy-Gomulka mold, presaged the emergence of such a tendency.

In a bid to facillitate the development of such tendencies in the bureaucracy, the programme of political revolution for Eastern Europe and the USSR was completely revised. Since the prospect of political revolution was seen to depend upon a section or wing of the bureaucracy, soviets could not be organs of struggle *against* the bureaucracy. Political revolution was considered as (ie was replaced by) competition between an "FI faction" and the rest of the bureaucracy for the leadership of the working class.

From this point onwards, the notion of workers' councils or soviets as revolutionary organs of struggle is lost, and replaced by the conception of soviets as organs of *administration*, for bringing the masses into democratic life, to participate in the plan. The political revolution is thus reduced to the peaceful withering away of the bureaucratic caste.

This programme of political "revolution" emerges from the Fifth Congress as a unified strategy for all workers' states. It was merely a question of the ease and rapidity with which the objective crisis in Stalinism would produce the necessary tendencies and splits within the bureaucracies.

In 1961, the Sixth Congress , and again the 1963 Reunification Congress, merely repeated these same formulae, and added nothing new by way of programme.

During the last decade, Mandel has further revised the programme of political revolution. As we have shown, he first revised it by degutting the soviets as organs of struggle against the bureaucracy. At that time (1957), he was still clear that soviets should at least exercise the workers class's dictatorship against restorationists. But in the 1970s, a social-democratic wing emerged within the Stalinist parties - "Eurocommunism" - which identified Bolshevism with Stalinism, and advocated greater use of bourgeois parliamentary institutions as a guarantee against the "natural tendency" to dictatorial/bureaucratic abuse that is supposed to accompany rule by soviets.

Whilst Mandel has attacked such conceptions, he has made unwarranted concessions to this wing of Stalinism. He has done so by accepting that soviet power must include representatives of the bourgeoisie, at least in the transition period, if not in the

struggle for political power. Mandel explicitly rejects Lenin's and Trotsky's justifications for such exclusion, a justification which he himself accepted in earlier years.

In short, Mandel, most particularly in his *"Theses on Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat"*, passed at the USFI's World Congress in 1979, obliterates the repressive character of the workers' dictatorship, in a way similar to Kautsky's denial of the repressive character of all political forms of the bourggoisie's dictatorship. Applied to the programme of political revolution, this can only mean support for open restorationists or counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucrats - sworn enemies of the proletariat - in the workers' councils.

MANDEL'S ECONOMIC REVISIONS

Mandel's political perspective is intimately tied to his economic understanding of the Soviet Union and the degenerate workers' states. Mandel laid down his basic position in *"Marxist Economic Theory"*. While not uncritical, he presents a picture of the Soviet economy as an ever-expanding one:

"This progress is not to be explained primarily by the enormous backwardness it had to overcome, in comparison with the industry of the most advanced capitalist countries. It has continued after this backwardness has already been, by and large, overcome. This progress is proceeding apace especially in the directions of increase and modernisation of the country's stock of machines and of striving to automatise production" [20]

This process is, for Mandel, proof of the superiority of planning over capitalist anarchy. However, he does recognise that managerial self-interest and bureaucratic control of the state - leading to hyper-centralisation - act as a fetter on the planned economy, particularly in the sphere of the production of consumer goods. But while Mandel accepts that the bureaucracy act as a fetter, he does not believe that they undermine the working of the plan and threaten to plunge it into reverse, opening the way to capitalist restoration. How this accords with his analysis of Kampuchea [21], which was a planned economy thrown into reverse, he has never deigned to explain.

The planned economy of the USSR is not without its contradictions, and the chief contradiction is, for the "orthodox" Mandel, the one that Marx pointed out would inevitably exist in the period of the transition from capitalism to communism:

"In fact, Soviet economy is marked *by the contradictory combination of a non-capitalist mode of production and a still basically bourgeois mode of distribution.* **Such a contradictory combination points to an economic system which had already gone beyond capitalism, but which has not yet reached socialism, a system which is passing through a** *period of transition* **between capitalism and socialism, during which, as Lenin already showed, the economy inevitably combines features of the past with features of the future".** [22]

In a 1979 work, Mandel elaborated on this point: **"Just because a transition is more complex and - to put it paradoxically - less dynamic, since it transits less rapidly than expected, is no reason to say that it is not transitional".** [23] Thus, as well as planning, the other key feature in Mandel's analysis of the USSR is that is is a transitional society in the classical Marxist sense.

A further element of his analysis to be noted is his position on the Soviet bureaucracy. He regards it, as a whole, as becoming objectively weaker, even redundant, as the productive forces grow, since its social role as an arbiter in the distribution of scarce goods declines as production increases. The growth of the working class concomittant with this is a further objective factor operating against the bureaucracy. He developed the kernel of this position in 1952: **"The level of development of the productive forces has become incompatible with bureaucratic management".** [24] Once again this position has the advantage of orthodoxy. It starts with Trotsky's prognosis of Stalinism as a regime of crisis and objectively creating its own grave digger. However, through the 1950s and 1960s, Mandel added his own prognoses to this orthodoxy, and built out of it constant predictions of developing centrist/reform wings of the bureaucracy, in turn citing this as evidence for his essentially "objectivist" view of the bureaucracy's crisis.

Taken together, Mandel's positions on planning, the transition and the bureaucracy constitute a thoroughly false, non-revolutionary Marxist understanding of the economic and political nature of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states. They lay the basis for his reduction of the programme of political revolution to a series of structural reforms which can, potentially, be carried out in alliance with a wing of the bureaucracy.

Mandel's explanation of the progress of the Soviet economy is based on a one-sided assessment of the planned economy which ignores the bureaucratic and blind nature of the plan itself. By attributing this bureaucratic plan with the power of unlimited economic growth (albeit at a slower rate than would be possible with a democratic plan), Mandel overlooks the existence of a series of intrinsic contradictions that the planned economies of the USSR and of the degenerate workers' states suffer from.

The bureaucracy, according to Mandel, undermines the efficiency but not the existence of the plan. In his view, the main threats to the plan are external to it - imperialism and the plan/market contradiction inside the workers' states.

But these threats would inevitably exist with regard to a healthy workers' state. The problems facing the plans of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states are of a different order. Poland, Yugoslavia, China, the USSR itself and other workers' states have all suffered from serious economic crises that have included unemployment, wage cuts etc, features which Mandel suggests have been removed in these countries. Of course the bureaucracy (and Mandel) disguise such crises with figures indicating overall economic growth. Nevertheless this growth is increasingly artifical in that it is not, and cannot be, short of political revolution, qualitative economic growth. The bureaucratic plan has proved itself incapable of outstripping the highest economic and technical achievements of capitalism. It lags behind the world's largest imperialist power, the USA. This is an inevitable product of the plan's internal contradictions - its inability to mobilise the creativity of the masses, its tendency to increase disparity between branches of economic life, its tendency to increase inequality, and so on.

The dynamism of the plan that does exist (and has been shown by the industrialisation of backward countries), is strictly limited to the tasks of catching up with capitalism. Periods of economic growth in the planned economies, as Trotsky pointed out in *"The Revolution Betrayed"*, are those periods when the bureaucracy builds up industry by copying the industrial achievements of the capitalist countries. While this frees degenerate workers' states from the yoke of imperialism and facilitates growth rates that are unthinkable in imperialised countries, it does not enable those economies to create the material base necessary for socialism.

This is because the plan is not merely threatened by external factors. It is threatened by the caste that politically controls it - the bureaucracy. Trotsky was clear on this in a period when the economic growth of the USSR was dazzling fellow-travellers and enemies alike: **"While the growth of industry and the bringing of agriculture into the sphere of state planning vastly complicates the task of leadership, bringing to the front the problem of** *quality,* **bureaucratism destroys the creative intitiative and the feeling of responsibility without which there is not, and cannot be, qualitative progress"** [25]

In other words, bureaucratism is not simply an inefficient fetter on the functioning of the planned economy. It actually blocks and threatens the existence of the planned economy.

Mandel's inability to see this, his faithful retailing of official Soviet figures to prove his case, is tied to his position of the "transition" question. To accept that the Soviet Union is a transitional society is, necessarily to accept that it is still moving towards socialism. Mandel argues that this is so, but at a slower pace than expected by earlier Marxists. Mindful of orthodoxy on this question, Mandel justifies his position by arguing: **"First of all there is no "Marxist tradition" on this subject in the real sense of the word"** [26]. On the contrary! Marx, Engels

and the Bolsheviks were clear on the key aspects of a transitional society, and on the programme necessary to direct the transition to socialism (see the section on The Transition). Apart from the economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie, these aspects do not exist in the USSR or any of the degenerate workers' states. All the political features of a society transitional to socialism have been crushed except those which are left-overs of the old, corrupt, capitalist past. These features the bureaucracy have avidly developed!

In other words, in these post-capitalist societies, the transition in the Marxist sense (from capitalism to communism) has been blocked and thrown into reverse by the bureaucracy. These states are degenerating back towards capitalism, a process that can, of course, only be completed by an actual social counter-revolution. For the transition to be restarted, a political revolution is required. Contradictions will contine to exist after the victory of the revolution, but the political rule of a bureaucracy fanning the flames of those contradictions and preventing their resolution by the workers, will not.

The ever-upward motion of the planned economy detailed by Mandel in his writings as proof of the continuing "transitional" nature of the USSR, facilitate his interpetration of the bureaucracy's impending fate. To justify his old position on Yugoslavia, Pablo was forced to offer a different explanation of the power of the bureaucracy than the one put forward by Trotsky. Trotsky had been clear that the functional roots of the bureaucracy lay in the backwardness of Soviet Russia and the scarcity of goods that such backwardness implied. The bureaucracy arose as a gendarme over the distribution of scarce goods. However, the nature of that bureaucracy was qualitatively transformed when, from being an agent of the workers' soviets, it usurped political power and wielded it in its own interests, smashing the vanguard of the working class, the Left Opposition of the party, in the process.

Pablo ignored the political nature of the bureaucracy that this process resulted in (ie its counter-revolutionary nature), and analysed Stalinist bureaucracies purely from the standpoint of their functional roots. He was convinced by the colonial revolutions that the world revolution would spread from the periphery (backward countries) to the centre (advanced countries). Therefore, he concluded, bureaucratic deformations would be an inevitable, indeed necessary, feature of transitional societies for some time to come. However, as productive forces grew, and as the world revolution spread, so the material base of these bureaucracies would disappear as would the bureaucracies themselves. This conveniently left out the need for political revolution against the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy that rules in every existing post-capitalist society on the planet. Pablo explained this revisionist position in polemics with no less a person than Ernest Germain:

"Thus in the historic period of the transition from capitalism to socialism we shall witness the rise not of normal workers' states, but of more or less degenerated workers' states that is, states with strong bureaucratic deformations which can reach the point of complete political expropriation of the proletariat".[27] But Pablo did not despair at this prospect since the forward march of deformed revolution is guaranteed by the objective situation and with it the withering away of the deformations.

Mandel's position on the bureaucracy are taken straight from his one-time adversary and long-time master, Pablo. The plan guarantees growth. Growth guarantees that the proletariat will increase in size and culture and that the bureaucracy will weaken. When faced with this contradiction posed to it acutely, at times of crisis, a section of the bureaucracy will move closer to the masses and become a leading force in the process (Mandel's favourite word) of political revolution. Indeed, Mandel sometimes implies that the process has already made qualitative leaps forward:

"Can it be said that the Soviet Union in which oppositionists were found only in Gulag camps and the Soviet Union today with its ferment of political currents, *samizdat*, and discussions at all sorts of levels (not only among intellectuals, but also in the unions) are one and the same thing"[28]

Trotskyists recognise that for a real change to take place in the USSR and the degenerate workers' states, the power of the bureacracy must be smashed decisively by the working class. Therefore to Mandel's question - flowing from his crass impressionism - the answer would be YES, in essence the Soviet Union today is the same as the Soviet Union under Stalin. It remains the land of bureaucratic tyranny over the workers.

In his long-forgotten polemics with Pablo in the 1940s, the young and rash Germain argued vehemently:

"Any revision, either current or retrospective, of the results of this analysis (of the buffer zone as capitalist states - Eds) implying both a revision of the criteria employed and a revision of the Marxist theory of the state, could only have disastrous consequences for the Fourth International"[29]

At that time, Mandel was wrong in his characterisation of Eastern Rurope, but right in his estimation of the dangers of Pablo's position. However, having been defeated by 1951, Mandel has spent over thirty years providing a theoretical justification for those "disastrous consequences" with a sophistry and alacrity that Pablo was incapable of. His responsibility for the destruction of the international Trotskyist movement as a revolutionary force is far greater than Pablo's. And it continues up to the present. Authentic Trotskyism has no place for Mandel's "orthodox" concoctions - they are a mockery of the Marxism of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Hansen and Cuba

In the 1953 split within the FI the *analysis* of Stalinism developed by Pablo, and refined and modified by Germain (Mandel) was not really in dispute. Therefore once the immediate tactical issue in the dispute - orientation to national Stalinist parties - became irrelevant, unification of the International Secretariat and the International Committee again became a possibility. The Cuban Revolution showed that Mandel's theories had an advocate within the Socialist Workers Party of the USA. His name was Joseph Hansen.

In late 1949 Hansen emerged as a major protagonist in the debate on Eastern Europe arguing a line very close to that being defended by Pablo. Against those who continued to regard Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe as "capitalist states on the road to structural assimilation", principally Germain (Mandel) and the SWP/US theoreticians John G. Wright, Hansen asserted:

"This degenerated workers' state (the USSR - Eds) spilling over the frontiers fixed at the close of World War 1, has upset capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe and given rise to formations that are pretty much replicas of the USSR." [30]

Hansen observed that the European and American opponents of Pablo's crude impressionism were wrestling with the "norms" of Trotsky's programme - civil war, direct action of the masses, soviets, "real" planning. They were seeking to defend this programme against the revisions they instinctively felt would be ushered in by accepting these misbegotten Stalinist monsters as workers' states. Hansen, however, had no such misgivings and mercilessly mocked their "normative" method with quotes.

from Trotsky. He was easily able to trip them up in the contradictions of their own confused dialectic. After all by 1949 capitalism and the capitalists palpably did not exist in Eastern Europe. Here, a good American pragmatist, unhampered by "dialectical" baggage, could see and say that "the Emperor had no clothes."

In this assessment Hansen was not wrong. He utilised the empirical shrewdness which he later applied to Cuba. Against those who were *inventing* all sorts of new criteria for the existence of workers' states, Hansen insisted:

"In my opinion, in a country where ***the rule of the bourgeoisie has been broken AND the principal sectors of the economy nationalised,*** **we must place the state in the general category of "workers' state" no matter how widely or monstrously it departs from our norms. This change** *cannot* **occur without a civil war although this civil war may also be a mutilation of the type, differing in important respects from our norms."** [31]

This position contains two key errors that laid the basis for Hansen's acceptance of Pablo's revisionism on Yugoslavia and for his own application of that revisionaism to the Cuban events. Hansen is wrong to equate the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie and extensive nationalisation with the establishment of post-capitalist property relations. Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948 showed instances where the political power of the bourgeoisie was broken (crucially their control of armed bodies of men defending their property, was gone), the economy nationalised, the Stalinists in power and yet these countries (eg. Poland and East Germany) remained capitalist. For Hansen to be consistent he would have to date the creation of workers' states in these countries between 1944 and 1946- a position he did not hold. Thus his empiricism in 1949 did not enable him to isolate what was the defining aspect of the workers' states,nor the means by which they were created. As we have shown, the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie and nationalisation are pre-requisites for the establishment of a degenerate workers' state. But only when the economies are planned on the basis of suppressing the operation of the law of value can we talk of degenerate workers' states having been established.

Hansen's second error, and one that he shared with his opponents in 1949, was his insistence on the need for "civil war" for the creation of degenerate workers' states. Although he accepts that such civil wars can be of a "mutilated" type he does argue: **"Overturns in property relations cannot occur without the revolutionary mobilisations of the masses."** [32]

But Hansen's dating of such mobilisations in Eastern Europe takes him back to the time of the entry of the Red Army *not* to the actual times of the overturns. Precisely because the workers' states are degenerate from birth, their creation can be accomplished in the special circumstances detailed elsewhere in this document, without the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses by a Stalinist bureaucracy. Moreover as Czechoslovakia showed, even where mobilisations do take place, they are completely bureaucratically controlled by the Stalinists. No organs of working class democratic power - soviets - are formed. While Hansen in his 1949 document, "The Problem of Eastern Europe" attacks those who have a "normative" notion of civil war, it must be said that his alternative is really to operate with an idealist notion of civil war. That is, he is forced to invent civil wars where they did not take place.

The real weakness of this method was exposed when it was applied to Yugoslavia. Here there was a fairly "normal" civil war, though under a leadership "with Stalinist origins" as Pablo afterwards put it. Such a war is essential to the overturn of property relations. Thus the Yugoslav civil war ushered in a workers' state before this had happened in the rest of Eastern Europe. Further, as this civil war only deviated slightly from the norm, so, the Yugoslav workers' state itself must only have deviated slightly from the norm. That is, Hansen's method led him, by 1951, to concede that the Yugoslav revolution and the workers' state it created only deviated from the norm quantitatively *not* qualitatively.

Hansen rejected the normative method but not from the standpoint of the genuine materialist method which can evaluate what the deviations from the norm mean. Hansen effectively rejected the "norms" - soviets, proletarian democracy, direct participation of the masses in their own emancipation as "secondary", "not essential" or merely "formal" questions. The full flowering of Hansen's pragmatism was to take place over Cuba.

CASTROISM CALLS FORTH HANSEN'S OLD METHOD

In 1960 Hansen stepped forward to re-apply the method that had yielded these liquidationist conclusions with regard to Tito. The adaptation to Castroism copied the capitulation to Titoism. This methodology was unable to combat the petit-bourgeois "anti-imperialism" and Stalinism and twenty-two years later blinds its followers to the necessity for a political revolution.

Nevertheless Hansen did empirically register the decisive political and "economic" events and even stages of the Cuban revolution.

In this he retained the advantage over his "anti-Pabloite" critics. Thus Mage, Wolforth, Healy all constructed lifeless abstract and idealist schemas; classless "transitional state", "structural assimilation", "capitalist state"; which not only involved serious revisions of the marxist theory of the state but also blinded their authors to the major events and turning points of the Cuban revolution. However Hansen's evaluation of the significance of the Cuban revolution whilst able to perceive the breaks with imperialism and the Cuban bourgeoisie, the decisive importance of the material links with the USSR and the expropriation of capitalist property, was nevertheless hopelessly at sea when it came to the evaluation of political tendencies, governments and consequently strategy and tactics for the proletarian vanguard.

Whilst Hansen based his approach on the 1948-50 Fourth International analysis of Titoism, a "new" problem posed was the non-Stalinist origins of the July 26th Movement (J26M), indeed its non-proletarian origins both in social and political terms.

Hansen argued that the Castro movement was a radical petit-bourgeois movement with a bourgeois democratic programme. Its programme promised thoroughgoing agrarian reform and industrialisation to break Cuba's dependent status vis-a-vis the USA. The Castroites however, were serious about their programme and as a matter of principle insisted on "revolutionary methods" to oust Batista.

During the civil war phase in the Sierra Maestra Castro mobilised the poor peasants and the agrarian proletariat, "the decisive sector of the Cuban working class" by a reciprocal action the J26M leaders' "outlook became modified" [33] The urban workers on the other hand proved unable to bring their power to bear at this stage, but later rallied to Castro.

Castro destroyed Batista's armed forces and took power in January 1959 inaugurating a process of smashing the bourgeois state machine. It was a "popular political revolution" but "appeared to be limited to democratic aims." [34] The government was a coalition with important bourgeois democratic elements. The attempt to carry through the agrarian reform and other measures led to a clash with US imperialism and its Cuban agents. Castro broke with the bourgeoisie, expelled their representatives from the government and formed a "workers' and farmers' government" (Autumn 1959). [35]

Cuba's workers' and farmers' government could be so denominated because of its firm resistance to imperialism and its Cuban agents; its resolute pursuit of the agrarian reform; its disarming of reaction and its arming of the people; its carrying out of pro-working class measures at the expense of the bourgeoisie; its conflict with imperialism forced it to take increasingly radical measures.

The period of the workers' and farmers' government was completed by late 1960 with the establishment of a workers' state. The decisive measures were : the establishment of a

monopoly of foreign trade, the nationalisation of the latifundia, the expropriation of the US and Cuban capitalist holdings in all the key sectors of the economy. This process was completed in the August 1960 period and Hansen could therefore proclaim that "planning is now (Dec. 1960) firmly established."[36] In his view planning developed "concomitantly with the nationalisation of industry."[37] The procedure for planning the economy was based on a study of the USSR and Eastern Europe and **"thus in the final analysis the overturn in property relations is an echo of the October revolution in Russia"**[38]

The Castro movement and the state that it had created had however "unique" features. The Cuban workers' state was neither degenerate nor deformed, indeed "it was a pretty good-looking one."[39] However, it was "lacking as yet in the forms of democratic proletarian rule".[40] Though if it were to develop freely **"its democratic tendency would undoubtedly lead to the early creation of proletarian democratic forms."**[41] There were thus no bureaucratic obstacles to the advance to socialism in Cuba or to the international spread of the revolution. The Castro leadership by their failure to "proclaim socialist aims" during the course of the revolution demonstrated that "the subjective factor in the revolution remained unclear."[42] Nevertheless the Castro current was empirically revolutionary and above all *not Stalinist* "a fact of world wide significance"[43] The non-Stalinist and indeed profoundly democratic essence of Castroism meant that the Cuban CP could itself be purged of its legacy of Stalinism. There was thus no need to programatically counterpose Trotskyism to Castroism since there was no need to build a separate Trotskyist party. Hansen therefor rejected political revolution and a Trotskyist party for Cuba. He gives exceptionalist reasons to explain why a Trotskyist leadership is not necessary - capitalism is weaker in imperialised countries and there, a "socialist minded" leadership will do because of the strength of the objective process of revolution.[44]

HANSEN MAKES THE TROTSKYIST PROGRAMME REDUNDANT

Hansen's analysis is thoroughly liquidationist in its programmatic conclusions. In the first place by entrusting the tasks of a revolutionary communist party leading a working class organised in armed, democratic organs of direct power, to the Castroites his position represents a capitulation to an agent of the petit-bourgeoisie. Castro's programme in 1959 was absolutely clear. He held back on developing institutions of democracy - bourgeois or proletarian - because his role was that of a bonaparte demagogically appeasing the masses but acting in defence of capitalism. The fact that Castro had employed revolutionary methods - ie armed struggle - does not make him a communist, conscious or unconscious. Countless nationalists in the imperialised world - Chiang Kai Shek, for example - have used non-constitutional methods to achieve power. Hansen's attempt to distinguish Castro from other nationalist leaders by referring to his base amongst the rural proletariat is equally spurious. The rural proletariat was never as well organised as the urban workers and was never as class conscious as them. For this very reason Castro was able to utilise them in this guerilla war in exactly the same way as he was able to use the poor peasants. That is their form of struggle under Castro's leadership was not a specific proletarian form of struggle. Indeed against Hansen we would argue that it was the very absence of the well organised urban working class led by a revolutionary party from the Cuban revolutionary struggle that made possible the bureaucratisation of the movement and the creation of a degenerate workers' state.

His attempt to give the Castroites revolutionary proletarian credentials leads Hansen to ignore the popular frontist character of the J26M. In his "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution" (1960) Hansen concedes that the initial government was a "coalition" including in it "bourgeois democratic elements".[45] However this feature of the July 26th Movement, its limitation to a bourgeois programme, and the class polarisation that resulted when this coalition was placed under the combined and conflicting pressures of the Cuban masses and US imperialism, is completely ignored.

Castro can be portrayed as a revolutionary driven left *simply* by American imperialism: **"The conflict between American imperialism and the Castro forces precipitated a political crisis in Havana. This was resolved by a decided turn to the left."**[46]

The J26M becomes simply "the Castro forces", an undifferentiated bloc. This is vital for Hansen's analysis. This way he can paint Castro as a consistent revolutionary constantly evolving leftwards, albeit unconsciously. This obscures Castro's real role as a bonaparte for capitalism in the first nine months of 1959. It also provides Hansen with an explanation of why Castro was eventually able to create a workers' state. Castro's liquidation of the J26M into Cuban Stalinism, which was possible because a pro-Stalinist wing existed in the movement, and the creation of a degenerate workers' state by this force, are ignored in the interests of Hansen's capitulationist schema of Cuba as a healthy workers' state not in need of political revolution.

Hansen observes the anti-capitalist aspects of Castro's "workers' government" but assimilates it to the norm of the Comintern's revolutionary workers' government. He obscures the fact that the Cuban workers and farmers' government was not under the control of or answerable to the proletariat and the poor peasantry. For it to have been so, a democratic workers' militia and workers' and peasants' councils would have had to come into being. Such bodies did not come into being and in addition the existing workers' organisations, the trade unions, were purged of their pro-capitalist bureaucracy. This was immediately replaced with a *Stalinist* one. Whilst the anti-capitalist measures leading to the creation of a workers' state are observed even if in a telescoped form by Hansen, the bureaucratic exclusion from political power of the working class is completely ignored. In fact, if this latter process is taken into account, one is forced to conclude that Castro's government was not a revolutionary, but a bureaucratic, workers' and peasants' government.

The reason Hansen feels able to dismiss the fact that the Cuban proletariat had no real self-organised, armed, democratic bodies, is because he reduces such bodies to mere "forms



SWP (US) leader, Joseph Hansen.

of proletarian democracy" : **"If the Cuban revolution were permitted to develop freely, its democratic tendency would undoubtedly lead to the early creation of proletarian democratic forms adapted to Cuba's own needs."** [47]

Not only can a healthy workers' state be created without a revolutionary party, it can also be created on behalf of the masses, rather than by them, without soviets or a workers' militia. If this is the case, then the task for Trotskyists should simply be to encourage petit-bourgeois nationalists leftwards, to coax them to act on behalf of the masses. There is no need for a party, nor for a programme based on the struggle for the seizure of power by the working class organised in soviets. These things, Hansen assures us, will some day eventually evolve naturally!

Against this distortion of Marxism it needs to be re-affirmed that soviets and a workers' militia are not mere "forms of proletarian democracy". They are the indispensable weapons that the working class has in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and they are the means by which the working class exercises its direct political rule in a healthy workers' state. Their temporary atrophy can be offset by the existence of a consciously revolutionary party (eg. Russia 1920) but not by a petit-bourgeois nationalist movement that assimilated itself to Stalinism. Besides if the evolution of these democratic forms was really possible in Cuba then the followers of Hanse would have to explain why, twenty-two years later, such *orga of power* still do not exist in Cuba.

Hansen was unable to raise an independent revolutionary programme for Cuba. As happened with Yugoslavia, the SWP (US), fooled by one of Stalinism's disguises, reduced its own to that of being friendly advisor to Castro. If this applied to Cuba then it would equally apply to a host of other imperialised countries. Hansen's theory, building on and developing the Fourth International's earlier errors, cleared the way for r unification with Pablo and Germain's International Secretariat. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International was thus founded on a programme that bore no resemblance to authentic Trotskyism's characterisation of Stalinism.

The theory of structural assimilation

The theory of structural assimilation holds that the creation of workers'states in Eastern Europe, Indochina and Cuba was, *in essence,* the result of the assimilation of these societies into the USSR. For the theorists of structural assimilation - most notably in the recent period, T. Wohlforth - the process of the creation of new workers'states has *ultimately* been the process of the extension of the property relations established by the workers'revolution in Russia: **"Thus all post-war overturns were in essence extensions of the new property forms thrown up by the October Revolution and the bureaucratic caste which usurped these property forms".** [48]

The superficial attraction of this theory lies in the fact that, within its terms, neither Stalinist parties nor petit-bourgeoise nationalist forces are deemed capable of creating workers'states, even of a form degenerate from birth. They can do so only as extensions of the degenerate October Revolution.

"The theory of structural assimilation explained a *process* of the creation of deformed workers'states through the *extension* of the degenerated workers'state. That is it answered the question of origins without in any sense undermining the *revolutionary* role of the proletariat". [49]

By "proving" that the agency of social revolution remains, albeit in a highly refracted and degenerate form, the October Revolution, Wohlforth though he had discovered a "theory" which would ward off the opportunist deviations of Pabloism. Wohlforth's position has changed significantly over the years, particularly on the question of China and Cuba. But a common thread of an erroneous and non-Marxist position of the state links his positions from 1961 to the present day.

Wohlforth is never absolutely clear as to what precisely happened to the capitalist state in the countries of Eastern Europe following the victories of the Red Army, or in China in 1949 or in Cuba in 1959. One can interpret his position in two ways. Either the capitalist state apparatus was never smashed, *or* it was, but was immediately reconstituted by the Stalinists or petit-bourgeois nationalists. Thus on Eastern Europe he argues: **"(structural assimilation) was *not* carried through by the *destruction* of the old bourgeois state in its entirety and the erection of a new working class state apparatus. Not only has much of the administrative structure been kept intact to this day, but a good section of the personnel of the old state administration has been maintained".** [50] While on China he states the following: **"Rather it (the CCP) devoted its efforts to the creation of a *coalition* government with the remnants of the national bourgeoisie and petit bourgeois forces, guaranteed the sanctity of private property in the immediate period, and set to work to *reconstruct the bourgeois state apparatus".*** [51]

The confusion arises because Wohlforth *defines* the class nature of the state, not on the basis of what mode of production it defends (its class content), but on the basis of its *form*. What becomes important to Wohlforth in determining the class nature o these states is the fact that a standing army was recreated, and that the old personnel and administration were maintained. This also explains why he has no conception of the existence of dual power (except as "territorial" dual power in China) in this period of overturn.

The class nature of the state apparatus becomes subsumed by its form. Having relegated the question of which property form the state presides over to the level of a secondary question, the crucial events leading to the characterisation of these states as deformed workers'states therefore takes place at the level of the superstructure, *within the state apparatus:* **"The actual social transformation was carried through in the state sector by a process of *purging* a section of the state bureaucracy, the inundation of the state apparatus with supporters of the stalinists, and the fusion of the state and Communist Party bureaucracies".** [52] This virtual separation of base and superstructure leads Wohlforth into a serious error on the nature of the nationalisations during this period. Thus Wohlforth can argue **"The direct economic power of the bourgeois class in Eastern Europe had been basically eroded with the nationalisations which followed the war".** [53] And, **"When it comes to *social ownership* therefore, the structural transformation process simply completed a process basically finished".** [54]

But these nationalisations - by *capitalist states* in Eastern Europe in the period 1944 - 45 - did not decisively "erode" the economic power of the bourgeoisie, any more than they did for the Egyptian bourgeoisie under Nasser. What really "eroded" the power of the bourgeoisie in this period was the smashing of its coercive apparatus.

The crucial question for Wohlforth in the creation of workers' states therefore becomes, "In whose hands is the state power?": **"The completion of the destruction of the economic underpinning of the bourgeois forces in these countries did not represent such a drastic change as the destruction of their political power. In most of these countries, by 1947, the commanding heights of industry were in the hands of the state, *thus the critical question was in whose hands the state was,* rather than the mopping up operation on the remnants of private capitalist holdings".** [55] (The introduction of state planning, we should note in



Tim Wohlforth

passing, must have been part of this "mopping up operation!).

This gives rise to Wohlforth's concentration on the fusion of the CP's and the Social Democrats and the **"interpenetration of the monolithic party with the state apparatus"** (ie the tightening of the Stalinists' grip on the state, and that state's grip on society). as the decisive points that mark the creation of a workers'state albeit of a degenerate form. As Wohlforth himself describes the process:

"Essentially structural assimilation is a combined process of the *destruction* of the political and social power of the bourgeoisie through administrative means, the *consolidation* of a monolithic party which is essentially an extension of the soviet bureaucracy, the *purging* of the state apparatus of bourgeois elements and the *fusion* of the party and the state bureaucracies into a single ruling bureaucratic caste". [56]

Underlying Wohlforth's theory of structural assimilation is a conception of the state, and therefore of the transition from one type of state to another, which owes more to Kautsky than to Marx.[57] For Wohlforth it is possible for the proletariat, or a caste within it, to lay hold of the existing state machine and use it as an instrument for the creation of a workers' state, as a means of carrying through the social revolution. At no point in this process is the bourgeois state "smashed"; rather it its "purged". There is no qualitative break, rather the bourgeois state grows over through an evolutionary process into a degenerate workers' state:

"The problem of dating, like the problem of the destruction of the bourgeois state through "fusion and purging", is a reflection of the very *process* of structural assimilation. Wherever this problem occurs - as long as it is crystal clear that a social overturn has taken place - one knows one is dealing with this process". [58]

This method stands in sharp contrast to our analysis of the formation of degenerate workers'states which analyses at every point the class nature of the state and the programmatic and tactical implications which flow from it. For Wohlforth, and presumably for any party which adhered to his theory, they could only know a workers'state had come into existence, or even that the process had started, after the event!

Wohlforth's explanation of the creation of new workers'states is also based on an erroneous analysis of the nature of Stalinism and the Stalinist parties. In his original 1963 essay, the Communist parties were described as being in all essentials, extensions of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Hence it is the Kremlin bureaucracy, based upon the property relations established by a workers revolution, that is laying hold of these state machines and using them as a means for the transformation of bourgeois states into workers'states through a process of "purgation".

"The degenerated workers' state , which emanated from the October revolution, has extended itself through its agents into large contiguous areas surrounding the USSR - a process we call *defensive expansionism*" [59]. And again, in argument with the bureaucratic collectivists: **"But Stalinism did not expand in the post-war world on this basis. It did not grow out of the managerial strata of capitalist society at all. Rather it *extended itself from the USSR.* Thus the identity of Stalinism with the USSR - its extension through its own agents and in opposition to all strata of the countries in which the transformation took place - cannot be explained through the theory of bureaucratic collectivism.".** [60]

This analysis is extended, but only with difficulty, to Yugoslavia and China. On the Yugoslav Communist Party he argues:

"Once the buffer in general is *really* understood there are no theoretical problems connected with the Yugoslav developments in particular. The basic point is to recognise the nature of the domestic CP's as essentially an extension of the Soviet bureaucracy itself. Once this is recognised then social tranformations of a more "indigenous" character like Yugoslavia can be comprehended. Yugoslavia differed only *in degree* in this respect - this was not a *qualitative* difference". [61]

While on the question of the Chinese Communist Party the following analysis is put forward: **"To the extent that the CCP was and is independent of domestic social classes, it is dependent upon - *is essentially an extension of* - the bureaucratic caste of the USSR, the distorted product of a workers' revolution".** [62]

This is a fundamentally undialectical and therefore false characterisation of the national communist parties. Ever since the beginning of the bureaucratic thermidor in the USSR which was carried through under the nationalist slogan of "Socialism in One Country", the Comintern underwent a process of disintegration along the lines of national chauvinism. The national CP's accommodated to specific strata of the petty bourgeoisie in the imperialised countries and to the labour bureaucracy in the imperialist countries. This process of accommodation took an accelerated form in the civil wars in Yugoslavia and China. As Wohlforth himself in his second document points out, this process led to the crystallisation of a bureaucratic caste in those societies, with its own distinct interests, separate from, and counterposed to, not only the masses of its particular society, but also to the national interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The timing and speed of the social overturn in Yugoslavia, the very seizure of power in China, took place contrary to the immediate interests and desires of the Kremlin bureaucracy. These Stalinist bureaucracies have been capable of making their own alliances with imperialism, *against the Soviet bureaucracy*, up to and including breaking from the Soviet bloc and entering into military aliiance and cooperation with imperialism (for example, Yugoslavia and the Korean war, China's relations with the USA in the late 1970s).

In a more recent document, Wohlforth appears to recognise the untenability of his previous analysis of Stalinism, as he attempts to grapple with the problems of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. Thus he states:

"I have proven that *all* the post war social overturns have been initiated from on top by military-bureaucratic means and have led to the establishment of deformed workers'states identical in all essentials with the USSR. However the path which led to these social transformations differed significantly in the case of the Chinese Variant and the Cuban Variant. Yet none of these

processes were totally independent of the Soviet Stalinist State". [63]

Historical reality has pushed Wohlforth from a position where these parties were seen as little more than "extensions of the Kremlin bureaucracy" to one where they are seen as not "totally independent" of the Kremlin. The theory of structural assimilation, which argued that Stalinist and petit-bourgeois nationalist movements were incapable of creating deformed workers' states except as extensions of the Kremlin bureaucracy, has been stretched to breaking point!

It is false to see the Stalinist parties as simply extensions of the Soviet bureaucracy. The logic of this very argument led Pablo to conclude that the Yugoslav Communist Party had ceased to be a Stalinist one once it broke with the Kremlin! However, the ability of the forces of Stalinism to carry through bureaucratic social revolutions cannot be abstracted historically from the existence of the USSR and its strength vis-a-vis imperialism. In the case of Yugoslavia, China and Cuba, the bureaucratic revolutions were carried through in a situation where the world bourgeoisie was insufficiently strong in relation to the USSR to directly and successfully intervene to protect the native bourgeoisie and the capitalist property relations.

The very existence of the USSR can, of course, serve to materially aid the native Stalinist forces directly. That this will not always be the case, should those forces not be advancing the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy, is demonstrated by the Greek events of 1944 - 45.

The USSR *can,* by its very existence and armed might, undermine the possibility of internationally- backed capitalist retaliation and counter-revolution. It can serve as an alternative source of economic aid and cooperation to forces struggling to break the stranglehold of imperialism over their national economies, as in the case of Cuba. But such assistance will only ever be forthcoming from the USSR should the overturn potentially strengthen the bargaining position of the Kremlin bureaucracy without upsetting the Kremlin's strategy of peaceful co-existence with imperialism.

Within Wohlforth's theory of the state is a reformist political logic which stands outside the tradition of the Third and Fourth Internationals. This is most clearly seen in Wohlforth's most recent article, "Transition to the Transition" in New Left Review. Defining the class nature of the state according to its superstructural *form* rather than on the basis of what property forms it defends, has led him to question, like Kautsky before him, the soviet system itself.

Having looked more closely at the "Soviet type of the early period of the USSR", Wohlforth is obviously no longer sure as to whether it was "fundamentally different" from and superior to, the bureaucratic East European or Mussolini state types, which were both, for him, capitalist in form.

In this article, Wohlforth contents himself with attacking Soviet democracy as "undemocratic" and proposes instead a good dose of bourgeois democracy for the early Soviet State. If the early Soviet Union also has a "capitalist state form", then it is only logical to argue for capitalist forms of democracy. Thus the "failure" of the early Bolshevik government to transform the the Soviets into a "practical government structure" **"exposed the impossibility of directly combining the decentralised Soviet system with the needs of a modernised centralised state, as well as revealing the ambiguities *(sic)* in the Leninist counterposition of "proletarian" versus "bourgeois" democracy".** [64]

Wohlforth believes it is "utopian" to imagine the establishment of direct democratic rule and is only willing to defend "the vision and possibility" of such a system.[65] The Bolsheviks were forced to use "much of the old administrative personnel" and were forced to watch over **"what was in many respects the reconstitution of the old state apparatus"**[66] Rather than the "expansion of democracy" (class character not given), democracy was "restricted".[67]

Once again Wohlforth is allowing his preoccupation with the "form" of the state to totally blind him to the *content* of Soviet democracy. The early Soviet state represented the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat:* that was why the bourgeoisie were excluded from the suffrage, why the working class was given greater weight than the peasants in the soviets. Wohlforth, like Kautsky before him, empties democracy of its class content, protests against the violations of "democracy" in general. Lenin had this to say when Kautsky complained of restrictions in democracy in the young Soviet Republic: **"It is natural for a liberal to speak of "democracy" in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask, "for what class?".**[68]

Undaunted, the liberal Wohlforth continues: **"It is hard to view the young Soviet state as *structurally* superior to the systems of parliamentary bourgeois democracy excoriated in Leninist doctrine."**[69] He then proceeds to recommend a constituent assembly as a stage on the road to soviets *after* the seizure of power by the proletariat.

"The specific function of representative democracy, therefore is to ensure that the power that still rests at the centralised summit of the state is elected directly through pluralistic competition, universal suffrage and the secret ballot. Representative Democracy is necessary to mediate the contradiction between Sovietism and centralism, and to guarantee the space for the gradual transfer of power from centralised, representative institutions to decentralised, participatory bodies of a Soviet or communal type". [70] All this is nothing new of course, these were exactly the points on which Kautsky attacked the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the young Soviet Republic.

Thus Wohlforth now has agreement with Kautsky not only on the question of the state but also on rejecting the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. In 1919 in "Terrorism and Communism". Kautsky defined the USSR as a "bureaucratic dictatorship" where the bureaucracy represented a "new ruling class presiding over a "state capitalist economy". Having long had theoretical agreement on the state, it will undoubtedly not be long before Wohlforth reaches agreement with Kautsky on the class nature of the Soviet Union!

The Spartacist school of Stalinophilia

The Cuban Revolution created a new basis for agreement between the two principal camps of world 'Trotskyism'. It enabled Joseph Hansen and the SWP(US) and Ernest Mandel and the International Secretariat to reunite around similar positions on Cuba, that stemmed from their shared erroneous assessment of the Yugoslav revolution in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The SWP's positions on Cuba did not, however, go unchallenged within that organisation.

During the latter half of 1960, a minority tendency within the SWP(US) led by Mage, Wohlforth and Robertson, developed a alternative position to the SWP majority on the Cuban revolution. This led, in 1961, to the formation of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), later to become the international Spartacist tendency (iSt - sic). Wohlforth was quickly to abandon the positions he helped to develop within the opposition and, in alliance with Healy, was to side with the SWP majority in the bureaucratic expulsion of the RT. The initial positions were further developed within the iSt and have by implication rather than through theoretical elaboration, been extended to cover Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China etc. (Indeed it is astonishing that over twenty

years later barely a few lines have been written by the iSt on the Eastern European overturns). Motivated initially by a desire to avoid the chronic opportunism and liquidationism of the Hansen majority, the RT/iSt proceeded to make a series of major revisions of the Marxist theory of the state, which in their implications for the Marxist programme are no less erroneous and dangerous than those made by either Hansen or Wohlforth.

The core of the iSt's error lies in the characterisation of the nature of the state that existed in Cuba between January 1959 and late 1960. For then the government which controlled Cuba was, **"an inherently transitory and fundamentally unstable phenomenon– a *petty bourgeois government* which was not committed to the defense of either bourgeois private property or the collectivist property forms of proletarian class rule."**[71] The government came to power in a situation where **"a capitalist state namely armed bodies of men dedicated to defending a particular property form, did not exist in the Marxist sense."**[72] The armed force on which this state rested was led by commanders who had had their **"previous direct connections with oppositional liberal elements broken and had become episodically autonomous from their class...the Cuban bourgeoisie"**[73]

Thus despite the attempts to distance themselves from the original Mage/Wohlforth position of a "transitional state" with no defined class character - a position defined as "indefensible" in *"Cuba and Marxist Theory"* - this is precisely the characterisation the iSt itself used. *"Cuba and Marxist Theory"* declares: **"at no point was there a classless 'transitional' state in Cuba"**, there was **"a petit-bourgeois government - not a class neutral one"**. The use of the term "petit-bourgeois government" does not get round this problem. Does this mean we have a petit-bourgeois state, based on a petit-bourgeois mode of production? The iSt recoils from this further revision of Marxism by remaining silent on this interesting new state form. Instead it prefers to define this state negatively, as one which neither defends bourgeois private property nor proletarian property forms.

Either this is a "class neutral" state, or the iSt is trying to breed a unicorn. Such a position directly overthrows the Marxist analysis of the state as elaborated from the Communist Manifesto onwards, that the state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over others. It is an organ of class rule which defends, even in its bonapartist form, **one** set of property forms. A state which defends neither capitalist nor proletarian property forms is therefore a classless state, a state which is no longer an organ of class rule, and a contradiction of the Marxist theory of the state!

The iSt further argue that a state is defined as **"armed bodies of men *dedicated* to defending a particular property form"**[74] (our emphasis). This is an idealist notion of the relationship between property relations and the state machine. We judge the class nature of a state by its *actions*, not by the "dedication" of the individuals who make up its apparatus. This revision is essential for the iSt in giving a theoretical gloss to their notion of a "petit-bourgeois government", in which the property relations the state chooses to defend at any given time, depends upon indecision in the minds of those in political power.

This fundamentally false analysis has been extended to Nicaragua, where we are expected to believe that (at the time of writing) a government that has been in existence since the summer of 1979, presiding over an economy overwhelmingly in the hands of private capital, does not defend capitalism. It is, rather, not yet decisively "committed" to capitalism or to proletarian property forms!

Such an analysis of the Cuban events is unable to explain the class character of the popular front which came to power in January 1959, which the iSt assures was not capitalist. It ignores the pro-capitalist, bourgeois aspect of the July 26th Movement (J26M). When this aspect was dominant (ie during the popular front), the J26M crushed all attempts by the workers and peasants to go beyond the bourgeois limits set by the Castro leadership. Further, this analysis sows illusions in the petit-bourgeois leadership of the Rebel Army, declaring them to be somehow committed to no class interests, implying that the Army was somehow "neutral" between workers and peasants on the one hand and the capitalists and landowners on the other. It therefore cannot explain the struggle - in the form of dual power - between the bourgeoisie and its supporters in the army on the one side and the petit-bourgeois leadership around Castro representing, in however a distorted form, the demands and pressure of the aroused workers and peasant masses. The programmatic conclusions of such analysis are necessarily vague - because the Spartacists could not perceive the dual power situation, they had no programme for *resolving* it.

The basis on which Cuba is characterised as a "deformed workers'state" by the iSt is also wrong: **"Cuba became a deformed workers' state with the pervasive nationalisations in the Summer and Fall of 1960"**[75] The equation put forward here: "Nationalisations = deformed workers' state" is completely false. The monopoly of foreign trade, and most vitally the introduction of planning on the basis of the suppression of the law of value, as well as nationalisations, are the features which, taken together, define an economy as post-capitalist. Further, this position implies that a "petit-bourgeois government" can overturn capitalism and construct a "deformed" workers'state merely through massive nationalisations. On this basis, no real distinction can be made between Cuba and other "petit-bourgeois governments" which have followed a similar course, such as Algeria, Egypt, Burma, etc - expect on the basis of the percentage of the economy nationalised. Were all of these capitalist states "deformed workers' state in the process of formation?" By answering "No", the Spartacists are forced to contradict their own methodology.

The Spartacists also do not recognise in any form the essential role played by Stalinism in the Cuban Revolution. They do not recognise the proto-Stalinist wing of the pre-1959 J26M. They do not recognise the alliance of Castro with the Cuban Stalinists from November 1959. They do not recognise the essential assimilation of Castroism to Stalinism, and the reliance on the PSP bureaucratic apparatus during the period of the bureaucratic workers' government, complete by the onset of planning in 1962. Nor do they recognise that such a process would have been impossible without the economic and military support of the Kremlin. Consequently they assign to the petit-bourgeoisie the ability to form a "deformed" workers' state - a revision of Marxism with regard to the fundamental characteristics of this class.

THE SPARTACISTS CAPITULATE TO STALINISM

The fragmentary references of the iSt to the formation of "deformed" workers' states in Eastern Europe imply the existence of similar periods of "classless states" or "workers' states in the process of formation". From the entry of the Red Army, the class nature of the state is indeterminate. The only flaw which the iSt sees in the Vern - Ryan tendency's[76] equation of entry of Red Army with formation of "deformed" workers' state, is that in some cases the soviet forces withdraw - eg in Austria, leaving behind a capitalist state. But the preferred term "workers' state in the process of formation" is a designation of no use. It can only be used *after* the event, as a description. This is a position which, as in Cuba, will not define the class character of the state, its government, or what property forms its army defends at each stage, and thus fails to provide any coherent revolutionary programme during the period of dual power, or the period of an anti–capitalist bureaucratic workers' government.

Not only a revisionist position on the state emerges from this analysis. In echoing the positions of the Vern - Ryan tendency, the iSt have made a fundamental revision of the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism. For the iSt, Stalinism has a "dual character" - it has a "bad", counter-revolutionary side, and a "good", progressive one. Its bad side involves it in crushing workers' democracy, expropriating the proletariat from political power; its good side is that it can overturn capitalism, and the two weigh equally in the balance.

This position is evidenced in the increasingly Stalinophile programme of the iSt, particularly with regard to Afghanistan and Poland. In these countries, the "dual" character of Stalinism is

reflected in the supposed *ability* of the Stalinists to act as **"liberators in a social as well as national sense"**[77] in particular countries, and in its *inability* to carry through the proletarian revolution on a world scale. Both Mandel (in his "Ten Theses" 1951) and the Vern - Ryan tendency (in their description of Stalinism as centrist) articulated a similar position. This position is abolsutely false. It has nothing in common with genuine Trotskyism.

Stalinism does not have two competing aspects, one of which at any one time predominates over another. Rather, it has a *contradictory* character because its privileged caste existence in the USSR is based on the post-capitalist property forms established by the October Revolution. To defend these property forms, the very basis of this caste's existence, the Stalinist bureaucracy is sometimes forced to carry through measures which, if taken in isolation from the way they are carried out and the effects they have on the international class struggle, would be considered progressive. But these measures are never carried through in isolation, they are always carried through in a counter-revolutionary manner, and always involve the political expropriation of the working class in the country concened. Thus for us, the Stalinist bureaucracies have a contradictory character, but form a predominantly counter-revolutionary whole. We do not grant to this caste the potential for fulfilling the mission of the proletariat - genuine proletarian revolutions are the prerequisite for building world socialism.

The retreat from the revolutionary programme that the Spartacist position involves can be accurately gauged from the answers that they have offered to the Afghan and Polish masses.

In Afghanistan the iSt reject the perspective of Permanent Revolution for that country, because of its backwardness. They make a false analogy between the healthy Soviet workers' state of the early 1920s that assimilated certain backward Asian countries, and the counter-revolutionary international designs of the bonapartist clique in the Kremlin. Events in Afghanistan are viewed not from the standpoint of international class struggle (which would link the struggle of progressive Afghans with that of their fellow Afghan workers resident in Iran, Pakistan etc as part of a struggle for a Socialist Federation of South-West Asia), but from the abstract standpoint of "progress" **"now led by Russian tanks"**[78], versus "backwardness". The Spartacists call on the bureaucracy to extend the social gains of the October revolution. They "Hail the Red (sic) Army" as the agent of this process. That is, behind the radical verbiage, they call for, as part of *their own* programme for Afghanistan, the establishment of a degenerate workers' state. This is *not* a tactical united front, it is an abandonment of an independent programme. This reliance on the Soviet bureaucrats as second best given the weakness of the Afghan working class, leads inexorably to a *strategic bloc* with Stalinism.

On the events in Poland 1980 - 1981, the iSt have gone from simple hostility to the Polish workers' movement right up to a bloc with the Stalinists to help crush that movement. They started their analysis of Poland *not* from the revolutionary possibilities that existed, but from a supposed threat posed by the Polish workers' action to the property relations in Poland and the USSR. Their excuse for this stance was their exaggerated view of the immediacy of the Catholic church's restorationist intentions.

After trying to square the circle - giving limited support to the misled Polish workers, and opposing a Russian invasion (by "hissing at tanks" as *"Workers Vanguard"* advised), by late 1981 the iSt gave up and decided that Solidarnosc was counter-revolutionary to the core, and should be crushed, by Kremlin tanks if necessary: **"Solidarity's counter-revolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this . And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counter-revolution".**[79]

When the Jaruzelski variant on their advice was launched on December 13th 1981, when Polish tanks moved to crush the 10 million strong movement of Polish workers, the Spartacists were quick to offer their support. They warned the Polish workers against any resistance, and cynically described the crackdown as a "cold shower" for the Polish proletariat. Upset by over a year of class struggle, these miserable pedants, who can only imagine winning the working class to their cruel caricature of Trotskyism in the sterile atmosphere of the propagandists' schoolroom (separate from the actual struggles of workers), called for a return to Gierek's 1970's style of government: **"If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August, a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone - conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party".**[80]

The iSt have blood on their hands. The "good" side of Stalinism's "dual nature", the side that the iSt call on revolutionaries to support, has become its willingness and ability to crush the independent activity of the working class. Programmatic confusion on Cuba in 1960 has become metamorphosed into Stalinophile clarity in 1982. At no stage in this evolution did the Spartacists represent a revolutionary challenge to the bankrupt centrism of the USFI.

Footnotes

1. **Fourth International,** (New York, May 1945) p.153
2. **Fourth International,** (New York, June 1946) p.172
3. ibid. p.255
4. **International Information Bulletin,** (New York,March 1947) p.8
5. ibid. p.16
6. **Fourth International,** (New York,December 1948) p.241
7. **International Information Bulletin,** (New York, December 1949) p.27
8. **International Information Bulletin,** (New York, May 1950) p.18
9. **Fourth International,** (New York November/December 1951)
10. **Class, Party and State in the Eastern European Revolution,** (New York 1969) p.57
11. **Towards a History of the Fourth International,** (New York 1974) Part 4, Vol.1 p.17
12. ibid. p.18
13. D.Vern, "Method, Doctrine and the Buffer States" 1951, in, **Documents of the Vern -Ryan Tendency,** (Communard Publishers n.d.) p.13
14. **Towards a History of the Fourth International,** (New York 1974) Part 4, Vol. 1 pp.17-18
15. cf C.L. Liu, "China: An Aborted Revolution" in, **Fourth International,** (New York, January/February 1950)
16. **Fourth International,** (New York, January/February 1951) p.24
17. E.Mandel, **From Class Society to Communism,** (London 1977) p.
18. **The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism,** (New York 1970) p.20
19. ibid. p.23
20. E.Mandel, **Marxist Economic Theory,** (London 1968) p.558
21. cf **Intercontinental Press,** (New York) Vol. 17, No.13
22. E.Mandel, **Marxist Economic Theory,** op. cit. p.565
23. E.Mandel, **Revolutionary Marxism Today,** (London 1979) p.120
24. **Fourth International,** (New York, November/December 1952) p.192
25. L.Trotsky,**The Revolution Betrayed,** (New York 1972) p.275
26. E.Mandel, **Revolutionary Marxism Today,** op. cit. p.116
27. **International Information Bulletin** (New York, December 1949) p.2
28. E.Mandel, **Revolutionary Marxism Today,** op. cit. p.136
29. **International Information Bulletin,** (New York January 1950) p.43
30. **Class, Party and State and the Eastern European Revolution,**op.cit. p.24
31. ibid. p.35
32. ibid. p.31
33. J.Hansen, **Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution,**(New York 1978) p.73
34. ibid.p.73
35. ibid. p.74
36. ibid. p.74
37. ibid. p.74
38. ibid. p.74
39. ibid. p.85
40. ibid. p.75
41. ibid. p.75
42. ibid. p.75
43. ibid. p.76
44. ibid. p.202-3
45. ibid. p.73
46. ibid. p.74
47. ibid. p.75
48. T.Wohlforth, **The Post War Social Overturns and Marxist Theory,** (SWP-US internal discussion document, May 1979) p.72 (henceforth referred to as Wohlforth, 1979)
49. Quoted in T.Kerry, "The Wohlforth Way : A Methodological Mutation" in, **Class,Party and State and the Eastern European Revolution,** op. cit. p.6

50. T. Wohlforth, "The Theory of Structural Assimilation". This 1963 essay was reprinted in, **'Communists' Against Revolution,** (London 1978). All references are from this book, henceforth referred to as Wohlforth 1963 : Wohlforth 1963,p.28
51. ibid. p.71 (our emphasis)
52. ibid. p.47
53. ibid. p.23
54. ibid. p.31 (our emphasis)
55. ibid. p.24-5 (our emphasis)
56. ibid. p.35 (emphasis in original)
57. It is clear that Wohlforth's position on the state both predates and underpins the theory of structural assimilation. Thus, he argues in 1961 in a document that predates structural assimilation, "It (the concept of the transitional state) is said to be in contradiction with the Marxist theory of the state as at all times the instrument of the ruling class of a particular society ... I will expand on the challenge and state categorically all the emerging deformed workers' states — Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba — went through transitional periods of more or less extended periods of time during which a bonapartist state apparatus administering a capitalist economy was transformed into a state apparatus, still bonapartist, administering a nationalised economy. (T.Wohlforth, "Cuba and the Deformed Workers' States" 1961,p.12 in , **Cuba and Marxist Theory** (Spartacist League Pamphlet). Again we see a state which, because it is not defined in Marxist terms, i.e. in terms of property relations that it defends, is able to 'float free' from its economic base and become, 'transformed' from a bonapartist (capitalist) state into a bonapartist (degenerated workers') state without that state ever being smashed. (This is, of course, also the origin of the iSt's 'transitional state' which owes more to the 'Kautskyite Wohlforth' than they care to admit.)
58. Wohlforth 1963, p.87 (emphasis in original)
59. ibid. p.82
60. ibid. p.85 (emphasis in original)
61. ibid. p.62
62. ibid. p.75 (emphasis in original)
63. Wohlforth 1979, p.79
64. T. Wohlforth,"The Transition to the Transition" in **New Left Review** No. 130, p.69
65. ibid. p.68
66. ibid. p.76
67. ibid. p.78
68. **V. I.Lenin, Collected Works** (Moscow 1965) Vol.28,p.235
69. **New Left Review** op. cit. p.80
70. ibid. p.79
71. "Guerillas in Power" in **Workers Vanguard** No. 102
72. ibid.
73. **Cuba and Marxist Theory** op. cit.
76. cf. section of this volume on the Fourth International after the Second World War.
77. "Whose Poland" in **Spartacist Britain** No. 32
78. **Spartacist** (Theoretical journal of the Spartacist League) Winter 1979/80
79. "Stop Solidarity's Counter-Revolution" in **Spartacist Britain** No.36
80. "Power Bid Spiked" in **Workers Vanguard** No. 295

13/13 OUT

12mm

ISBN 0 9508133 0 3











