

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. EASTERN EUROPE AND THE NATURE OF STALINISM	1
By S. Ryan, Los Angeles	
2. METHOD, DOCTRINE AND "THE BUFFER STATES"	7
By Dennis Vern, Los Angeles	

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## EASTERN EUROPE AND THE NATURE OF STALINISM

By S. Ryan, Los Angeles

### Bury the Dead - But Properly

The former position of the Majority on the Soviet-occupied nations of Eastern Europe is dead. I venture to predict that we will no longer hear of "Bourgeois States on the Road to Structural Assimilation." The death-blow to this pernicious theory has been dealt with in passing by the Theses on the International Perspectives and the Orientation of the Fourth International Movement (International Information Bulletin, Jan. 1951). If the reader chooses to regard this as a wild statement, he has but to open the document to page 4 and read:

"The stratification of all the means of production and the planned economy which distinguishes the USSR and, to a lesser degree, the process begun in the 'People's Democracies,' are not the result of an organic evolution of the former capitalist regime into State capitalism but the specific product of a class struggle, however deformed in the case of the 'People's Democracies' by the bureaucratic-military intervention of Stalinism, which has culminated in the overthrow of the possessing classes and of imperialism." (My emphasis - S.R.)

This block-buster, aimed at the theory of State capitalism, demolishes the theory of "degenerated capitalist states." The lesson is clear; if you want to avoid the bombs, don't get too close to the target.

A dead theory must be given proper and open burial. Above all, it must be dissected and the infection it carried be brought to light. This is the only way to guard against any further infection. It is to be hoped that the leadership will perform this necessary act of sanitation.

### The Nature of the State

One of the germs carried by the theory of "Bourgeois States on the Road to Structural Assimilation" must be characterized as theoretical shallowness and abysmal confusion. Throughout the writings of the Majority comrades the concepts State, Regime, Country, and Society are used almost interchangeably. Separate for a moment "Bourgeois State" and "Structural Assimilation" and you can see at a glance that they refer to two distinct categories. A Majority supporter once taunted me: "You don't see structural assimilation, but you support the thesis of super-structural assimilation." There was more truth in this quip than the comrade perhaps realized.

The concept "State" refers precisely to the superstructure of society. Before the Soviet bureaucracy can assimilate the structure of its satellites, it must first assure its political -- that is, superstructural -- control. It has to have the power, the armed force, the means of coercion. In a word, it has to have the state power in these countries.

I repeat: the state is armed force; not class relations; not "the existence of the bourgeoisie in every pore of society"; not the consciousness of the masses; not even property relations.

This has long been unquestioned in our movement. But it appears necessary to refresh our memory of the classic Marxist positions. Let us examine these points one by one. The class nature of the state cannot be determined by the level of consciousness of the masses. This question has been adequately dealt with by Dennis Vern (Discussion Bulletin No. 5, Oct. 1950) and I could only repeat his remarks on the subject. Neither can you determine the nature of the state by looking at the property relations (though this is not so obvious). The workers need a workers' state in order to begin transforming property relations. The Soviet bureaucracy needs its own state in Eastern Europe (a Bureaucratic State? -- of course not!) for the same reason. Similarly with the structure of society, which can be changed only gradually, after the establishment of the workers' state.

What about the structure of the regime, the personnel of the government? Has that been changed in Eastern Europe? Isn't that still bourgeois? This has no decisive effect on the class nature of the state. The petty-bourgeois government bureaucrats naturally prefer to serve the capitalist class, but they are capable, when they have to, of working for the Soviet bureaucracy or even a healthy workers' state. The structure of the regime is similar to that of bourgeois regimes; that is true. But in what way? In that they are both bureaucratized. Surely we need not dispute with the Majority supporters whether this determines the class character of the state.

#### Murry Weiss Objects to a Word

Murry Weiss, in his otherwise excellent report to the National Convention (Discussion Bulletin No. 6, Jan. 1951), presents a truly weighty defense of the Majority position. "For us," he declares, "degenerated workers' state' is an inclusive definition, and included in that definition is a victorious proletarian revolution which suffered degeneration. This does not correspond to the real course of events in the Buffer Zone." This is his only argument on the question. He has not, as he says in his report, "felt forced to defend every utterance in a bitter factional spirit." \*

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\*Comrade Weiss' exact words are as follows (P. 19): "Another important feature of this discussion should be noted. Despite the fact that it deals with the most profound questions of the epoch, entailing a review of the basic criteria of Marxism, it has been carried on in the freest and most comradely spirit. No one has felt forced to defend every utterance in a bitter factional spirit." (My emphasis -- S.R.)

This is a startling statement from a comrade so well versed in the Trotskyist tradition. It is borrowed from the school of liberalism, which hides lack of principle behind ambiguous formulas. Though the statement appears to be concerned with the tone of the discussion, it actually refers to more profound matters, and its meaning is clear; Comrade Weiss ("No one") feels it impossible to defend the methodology ("every utterance") of Comrades Wright, Stein, Germain. This, you

see, would signify a "bitter factional spirit." Translated into the precise language of Marxism, Comrade Weiss' words mean: an unprincipled bloc.

Am I wrong, Comrade Weiss? It would make me extremely happy to be corrected. Naturally, I prefer a friendly, pedagogical spirit. But even a bitter factional reply would not detract from the high regard in which I hold you. And the education of the Party would be much better served thereby, which is the main thing.

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Comrade Weiss' objection is an empty one. Read again the passage from the Theses already quoted at the beginning of this article. It declares that what exists in the USSR and the "Peoples' Democracies" is "the specific product of a class struggle, how ever deformed in the case of the 'Peoples' Democracies'...which has culminated in the overthrow of the possessing classes and of imperialism."

Notice, first, that the change in property relations in the USSR and in Eastern Europe are bracketed together (is this workers' or bourgeois statification, Comrade Germain?). Notice, too, that both are the result of the same process, what the Theses call "a class struggle." One cannot help wondering why the Theses use such an equivocal formulation when everyone knows that what took place in Russia was a revolution. Well then, what took place in the "Peoples' Democracies"? A DISTORTED REVOLUTION!

The conclusion is inescapable: If a healthy revolution in Russia produced a healthy workers' state, a distorted revolution in Eastern Europe produced distorted workers' states. Thus by the simple change of a word is Comrade Weiss' objection overcome.

It may be objected that there is no precedent for a distorted revolution; but this is not true. The only one which was not distorted was the Russian October revolution. The others failed to replace the capitalist state with a workers' state just because they were distorted by the intervention of Social-Democracy and Stalinism. In Eastern Europe, however, a distorted revolution could succeed because of the weakness of the native bourgeoisie and the inability of imperialism to intervene. The victory moreover is less definitive just because it is distorted.

There is not an iota of neo-Stalinism in this position. I do not at all mean to deny that the Soviet bureaucracy could have propped up capitalist states in Eastern Europe with its army and GPU. That is essentially what it did in Spain. But it could not itself with its own forces constitute a bourgeois state. It would have to give the power to bourgeois armed formations. This, in fact, was Stalin's program. Stalin, with his faith in the peaceful coexistence of capitalism and "socialism" would, after crushing the working class, have built up bourgeois states (that is, bourgeois powers). These bourgeois states (still according to Stalin) would have remained friendly to the Soviet bureaucracy; they would have constituted in truth what they have been called in error -- a buffer zone neutral between imperialism and the Soviet Union.

But the Stalinist program came into conflict with reality. Imperialism would not and could not live and let live. It exerted an irresistible pull on the bourgeois elements in Eastern Europe; they

had to be crushed. It was the irreconcilable conflict between imperialism and the USSR which decided the class nature of the states of Eastern Europe.

Our movement has its foundation, its very being in this conflict, or rather in the world struggle between the classes, of which it is a part. Yet as it unfolded in Eastern Europe we failed to recognize it.

What was the reason for this?

### What Is Stalinism?

Our movement has always characterized Stalinism as a centrist current within the working class, having a dual character. Defending the special interests of the Soviet bureaucracy, it shackles the proletariat, yet finds its own interests fundamentally opposed to a decisive victory of the capitalist class. In case of a decisive struggle, we maintained, Stalinism could not remain a monolithic totalitarian machine but, like all centrist formation, pull apart into a proletarian and a bourgeois wing.

This thesis was first seriously challenged in our movement by Burnham-Shachtman after Stalin's "unforeseen" pact with Hitler and invasion of Poland. Stalinism had changed, Shachtman affirmed, while continuing to regard the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state, into a new type of formation; not between the classes and tied to the proletariat, but against both. From this followed third-campism, impartiality in the class struggle, and abstentionism. Our movement fought off this attack on our program, not without a sharp crisis.

After the war Stalinism surpassed itself in betraying the working class; all previous crimes of reformists and Stalinists pale into insignificance compared with those of the postwar period. On top of that we were presented with another "unforeseen" event -- the military occupation by the Red army of Eastern Europe.

These events engendered a subtle change in the evaluation of Stalinism, a change in the same direction as the one rejected in 1940. This is evident from a careful reading of the Thesis on the USSR and Stalinism adopted by the Second World Congress (F.I., June 1948). In these Theses we read:

"A real return to a pseudo-revolutionary orientation comparable to that of 1939-41 is no longer possible except in the case of outbreak of the US-Soviet war and the crushing of the mass movement. The Stalinists can take up arms only insofar as such action does not involve the risk of arousing a real workers' uprising. They can once more employ "revolutionary" language only insofar as this language does not actually incur the risk of starting the proletarian revolution."

As a result of this half-announced change in the line on Stalinism, the error was made on the nature of the states of Eastern Europe, we ignored the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, and we declared our impartiality between Moscow and Washington. The resolution of the Second World Congress, discussing Eastern Europe, declared: "The capitalist nature of these countries (notice the confusion of "countries" and "states" -- S.R.) imposes the necessity of the strictest revolutionary defeatism in war time." This congress advised the

East European Trotskyists to have nothing to do with the real struggle of the masses. It directed:

"Likewise, from the Russian occupation forces or from pro-Stalinist governments which are completely reactionary, we do not demand the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the setting up of a real foreign trade monopoly, an effective struggle against speculation and the black market." How else can the masses be mobilized?

Likewise in the field of theory disastrous results threatened. Without denying the class nature of the Soviet state, the majority supporters affirmed the capitalist and IMPERIALIST nature of the Soviet bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. Listen to John G. Wright, who rushes in where Germain treads lightly: "One can scarcely use the term parasitism for what they have perpetrated there. They have exploited the masses and economies of Eastern Europe in a way which differs in degree but not in substance from the imperialist brigands." (Discussion Bulletin No. 2, April, 1950. All emphasis mine - S.R.)

Our movement began to overcome this subtle Stalinophobia when the Yugoslav CP broke with the Kremlin. We recognized that this Stalinist party had been a centrist party long before the break. More important, we recognized that this Stalinist party had led a revolution.

But we failed to draw general conclusions. We cut Yugoslavia off from Eastern Europe and the Yugoslav CP from world Stalinism. It took the success of the Chinese revolution and the Korean war to force us to take another step forward. The latest Theses state:

"In the event of powerful revolutionary uprisings of the masses, like those which occurred during the war in Yugoslavia, in China, and recently in Korea, and like those which will inevitably occur in the perspective outlined above, it is not excluded that certain Communist Parties with the bulk of their forces can be pushed out of the strict orbit of the Soviet bureaucracy and can outline a revolutionary orientation."

"From that moment on, they would cease to be strictly Stalinist parties, mere instruments of the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy, and will lend themselves to a differentiation and to a politically autonomous course."

This is admirable; a complete rejection of Stalinophobia and abstentionism.

But one further step remains to be taken.

### Stalin Is No Master -- Not Even His Own

The Trotskyist conception of Stalinism has always been a unified one, a world conception. For us Stalinism in Russia has always been fundamentally the same as Stalinism in the capitalist world. Why now should our politics stop at the Russian border? Stalinism today remains a centrist tendency. The Soviet bureaucracy also feels the pressure of the contending classes on a continental and a world scale. It will also become differentiated into a proletarian and a bourgeois wing.

Has nothing then changed since 1929? Of course! Everything has changed! And the major change is one which brings world Stalinism, including the Soviet bureaucracy, face to face with its doom -- not historically, but in this period. Before World War II Stalin's major strategy was that of maneuvering between the rival imperialist cliques, using the various Communist parties as secondary instruments of blackmail. Today the inter-imperialist rivalries have an extremely minor importance. The Soviet bureaucracy is forced to maneuver between world imperialism, dominated by Wall Street, and the forces of world revolution. This fact is bound to bring further "unforeseen" developments -- unforeseen, that is, to empiricists.

The Kremlin has in fact already bent under the pressure of the revolutionary masses -- not once but at least twice. The Yugoslav break came because the Yugoslav CP could not be strictly Stalinist; that is, it could not be bound by the Kremlin's policy. But this break came in 1948, almost three years after the defeat of Germany. We can be certain that Stalin was in command of all the facts. Yet he had to tolerate the Yugoslav CP because it had led a revolution.

It is quite evident, first in the overthrow of the Kuomintang and then in the Korean war, that the Chinese CP is also not strictly Stalinist. Yet Stalin dare not break with the Chinese Stalinists. Mao is in a much stronger position vis-a-vis Stalin than was Tito. The USSR is face to face with Wall Street's atom bomb and must have the support of a revolutionary China. If the Chinese revolution were defeated, it would be a shattering blow to the defense of the USSR, including the bureaucracy. But only a more and more revolutionary proletarian policy -- that is, a less and less Stalinist policy -- can defend the revolution in China.

How far can Mao go in yielding to the pressure of the masses and still retain the friendship of the Kremlin? The Soviet bureaucracy will face this question and see its own doom in every one of the possible answers. The profound effects of this question are already foreshadowed in the existence of two lines within Stalinism, the Stalin line and the Mao line.

We must affirm that Stalin himself is no longer strictly Stalinist. He himself can no longer simply carry out the bureaucracy's policy.

Our Party has shown that it is capable of learning from the mass movement and this fills us with confidence. But we must not continue to follow behind events; we must not allow ourselves to be surprised in Eastern Europe and the USSR as we were in Yugoslavia and China. We must look with deepest suspicion on those who cry "Unforeseen!" This watchword has been raised at every sharp turn in events by petty-bourgeois philistines and semi-Marxists in order to cover a retreat from Marxism.

For Marxism nothing that has happened has been unforeseen, and this is true also of the future. This applies, of course, not to concrete predictions but to the general unfolding of the class struggle. Only with a genuine and general Trotskyist analysis can our Party become the master of events and not their plaything.

February 23, 1951

METHOD, DOCTRINE AND "THE BUFFER STATES"

By Dennis Vern, Los Angeles

It is still necessary to call things by their right names. The new resolution from the IEC, in International Information Bulletin, Jan. 1951, seriously endangers the ideological heritage of Trotskyism. This is said with every necessary restraint. But it is not a question of an isolated formulation or of an individual's own opinion: the Majority of the IEC and of the SWP have strayed a considerable distance into the by no means virgin wilderness of petty-bourgeois socialism.

It is impossible to be silent about this. Nor is it possible not to recognize this provided we take the time to think things out.

But that requires first of all the Marxist method. It is here that the Majority has replaced Trotsky's method with subjectivism and impressionism. That makes it impossible for them to call up the body of Marxist doctrine. Proceeding in this fashion they occupied toward the expansion of the USSR all the essentials of the petty-bourgeois position of the 1939-40 opposition.

It was inevitable that this would lead to a new definition of the USSR. That is now upon us. Taken in its proper context, the new resolution of the IEC not only does not help matters toward a Marxist solution, but places a question mark over the nature of the USSR itself. We propose to demonstrate this below.

It is not a question of new facts, or of facts copyrighted by others. It is a question of Marxism, the materialist method and the fundamental laws! This is what is involved. If the Majority claims to use Trotsky's brush but paints eggs under roosters and mustaches on suckling babes, then something is obviously wrong.

From that derived the enormous importance of the discussion of the Buffer States. It was not that these states are so important in contemporary history -- (though they may become so) -- it was that the nature of these states was surrounded by so many confusing factors that the discussion could only be developed by the use of basic Marxist theory. The Buffer States may not be too important, but the ability to recognize them as workers' states is of crucial importance. If we are unable to find our way here, then we will inevitably lose it elsewhere also.

First of all is the matter of subjectivism.

Neither in Heaven, or Free-Will, But in Nature

It is necessary to start from material reality, with the materialist method. Indeed we raised this matter in a previous article and had no difficulty in demonstrating that Germain, Stein and Wright had deviated from the materialist method. It was not, therefore, too greatly surprising to find on Page 6 of Comrade Wright's "Memorandum on Yugoslavia," the following: "In other words, the genuine organs of workers power, the freely elected Soviets and mass organizations are



yet to appear, the working class itself, above all, its self-acting vanguard organized in the Revolutionary party, is still in a formative process. This situation is neither a mere shortcoming, a 'deformation,' nor a coincidence. Historical results can never be superior to the policies that produced them." (Vern's emphasis)

Now it is undeniable that from a certain point of view Comrade Wright sees clearer and better than his opponents. This point of view is developed from the programmatic objectives of our movement. Wright wants "genuine" organs of workers' power, freely elected Soviets and mass organizations. Nor is he inclined to pass lightly over the question of the revolutionary party, the question of all questions in our time. We have established over a long period certain programmatic objectives which we set for ourselves and our class in the struggle for socialism. It is to Wright's credit that he takes these objectives seriously and proposes to struggle for them.

But from the bureaucratized character of the organs of workers' power in Yugoslavia, from the rather backward centrism of the past and present line of the YCP, what conclusions should be drawn? It is not a coincidence that at this point Comrade Wright draws a totally incorrect conclusion: that Yugoslavia is not yet a workers' state. It is not surprising nor a coincidence because Wright is functioning under an incorrect historical method: historical results can never be superior to the policies that produced them.

This is a clear statement of historical idealism, including therein the conception that it is the ideas, the consciousness, the policies of men and organizations which determines the evolution of humanity. This is demonstrably false.

Yugoslavia and Hungary, we trust the comrades will admit, actually exist: living, working, struggling human beings have been brought together upon a certain portion of the materially existing earth, Yugoslavia and Hungary do not exist because we think of them; we think of them because they are actually there, appreciable by our senses. We think of them, moreover, as societies; nor is this some arbitrary construction of our minds alone: we think of these countries as societies because they have, in fact, arranged a certain organization of human labor around the productive forces available to them.

When we, therefore, come to an examination of these societies we can approach our task in two main ways. In either case we are, of course, going to consider the ideas which these people hold. But in one case we will regard the past and present history of these people as being the result of their ideas. In the other case we will regard their history, past and present, as being the result of the material evolution of men and things, and we will include the ideas as a result.

This necessarily brief description serves to differentiate the two main historical conceptions, the idealistic and the materialistic. Marxism, needless to say -- (or is it indeed so needless?) -- embraces the materialist conception. Marx said that he did not judge a man by what that man thought of himself. A man could think of himself, for example, as a dialectical materialist without actually being one; just as he could think of himself as a humming bird without being thereby able to fly.

If we do not judge a man by that man's conception of himself, then it is no different when we consider man in groups and organizations. Groups, organizations and classes create the history of a given epoch; but just as we are unable to judge a man by that man's own evaluation of himself, so are we unable to judge an epoch by its consciousness of itself. In addition to the consciousness, there is the material world of men and nature underlying it; and the material reality evolves in accord with its own laws. These laws, unfortunately, are inadequately understood by men. Reality, therefore, almost always evolves differently from man's conceptions of it.

Men make history, it has been written, but they do not make it from the whole cloth. They do not make any history that they desire or will: the material reality underlying consciousness, bends and shapes even the conscious action into results not identical and oftentimes contradictory to the subjective intention. In addition to the conscious action of humanity, unfortunately a minor fraction of the whole, there is also its unconscious activity. For these reasons historical results are almost always different from the policies that produced them.

A rather obvious example of this is to be found in the CIO. This organization, we remember, was the result of the policies of Lewis and the other labor bureaucrats around him, of the Stalinists embarking on Peoples Frontism, of the maneuvers of the New Deal politicians and Roosevelt, and of the rebelling production workers whose rebellion was, by and large, unconscious. The CIO resulted from these not too laudable policies; but the CIO was and is a result far superior to the policies themselves.

Such examples could be multiplied at length. The alchemists of the middle ages accidentally laid the basis for modern chemistry; the American railroads resulted from some of the most despicable land-grabbing, rate-gouging, legislature-bribing and pure swindling which the world has ever seen. Chemistry, the railroads, the CIO are all the result of a complex of policies which the material reality shaped into results far superior to the policies themselves.

There is nothing teleological in this: superior policies sometimes produce inferior results. The intentions of Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian Revolution were substantially the same as the intentions of Comrade Wright and all of us in the Yugoslav revolution. We could sum this up as the creation of a healthy workers' state without deformations of any kind. The policies of Lenin and Trotsky, resulting from these intentions, projected the creation of such a state in Russia. What, however, resulted from these superior policies? A workers' state which Lenin described in 1920 as a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations.

This result did not brand the policies of Lenin and Trotsky as inferior or incorrect, though a few subjective anarchists did declare as much. But the superior policies alone did not determine the result: the evolving material reality bent and shaped the historical result to conform to its own nature and evolution.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is not that policies and intentions are not important. They are! But behind the subjective,

says Trotsky, rises the objective reality. Since this reality has its own laws of development, since it is the material reality which, in the long run, determines the historical result, then the intentions and the policies of men must be in accord with the evolution of material reality.

For that reason it is first of all necessary to analyze the material world, to set up certain categories of recurrent phenomena, to outline the material criteria which separates category from category, to describe the fundamental laws which describe material evolution, and to create a terminology expressing these things. This is the purpose of Marxist doctrine.

To Tell a Hawk From a Handsaw....

Marxist politics, along with much else, would be impossible if we were unable to tell our comrades, friends and fellow-workers from the apes. For that reason the remarks of Comrade Wright in regard to method in Discussion Bulletin No. 2, April 1950, may proceed from or lead to some confusion. Misconceptions may arise or exist from Wright's criticism of what he refers to as the "normative" "formalistic" method, the method of "comparative sociology."

In declaring such sociology worthless Wright is, of course, correct; and its worthlessness derives above all from the factor that Wright cites: that it shunts aside living classes and class criteria,

But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that Marxism, which does not shunt aside the classes or the class criteria, is because of that a non or anti normative or comparative sociology. Quite the contrary. No science can function without norms and criteria. Nor can any science avoid comparing its criteria with reality and one aspect of reality with another. The proof of dialectic, says Engels, is in nature; the laws of dialectic generalize the actual transformations which are taking place constantly in all spheres of the material world, etc. But this can be known only through compari-son.

And when Trotsky explained to Shachtman and Co. how, without any particular facts not known to them, he was able to outline the course of development of the Soviet-Finnish War, he wrote: "At the beginning of December, true enough, I had at my disposal only a part of these facts. But against the background of the general situation, and I take the liberty to add, with the aid of an understanding of its internal logic, the isolated symptoms enabled me to draw the necessary conclusions concerning the direction of the entire struggle. Without such semi-a priori conclusions one can be a rationalizing observer but in no case an active participant in events." (Defense of Marxism, P. 135 -- Vern's emphasis.)

As a matter of fact, a great deal of Marx's work is devoted to the creation of such a priori conclusions: about society, the productive forces, the classes, class struggle, the state, and so on. The existence of these categories does not, naturally, absolve one from the examination of reality. But it makes it unnecessary for that examination to start each time from the first beginning. When Marxism encounters a group of people maintaining a certain organiza-

tion of human labor, we know at once, a priori, that we are dealing with a society, that the heart of this society is its productive forces.

If, examining the productive forces, it was disclosed that the people had different relationships toward them, then we would know, again a priori, that inequality existed, that a state power acted as the instrument of the privileged class, that the struggle between the classes was the basic dynamic of that society, etc. It is not, or it should not be, necessary to again prove everything, to start again in the first beginning with the struggle for survival and re-create Marxism from its initial proposition. The Marxists who proceeded us, not to mention not a few non-Marxists, have left us a heritage of basic definitions, criteria, fundamental laws, together with a terminology expressing these things. This, we repeat, is Marxist doctrine.

The normative method of comparative sociology is worthless not because it sets up criteria but because it sets up the incorrect, classless criteria. It does that because it functions under the idealistic point-of-view, this method being forced upon it by the necessity of justifying bourgeois rule. From a materialistic appraisal of society Marxism sets up one or another aspect of its class criteria. Marxism sets up various class criteria for aspects of the material world, and, in proper context, considers that criteria immutable.

This will doubtlessly surprise many who have learned that dialectical materialism considers nothing at all, not even dialectical materialism, as immutable. But, it was written, in proper context.

For example. Trotsky's great essay, "Their Morals and Ours," included this statement: "The liberating morality of the proletariat . . . deduces a rule of conduct from the laws of the development of society, thus primarily from the class struggle, the law of all laws." (Vern's emphasis.) This followed an exposition by Trotsky in which he showed that the timeless and omnipotent precepts of present day morality were, in fact, only instruments of bourgeois rule, without any immutable character whatsoever.

Professor John Dewey made an objection: the assumption of a fixed law of social development was not relevant. . . avoiding one kind of absolutism, Trotsky had plunged into another kind of absolutism.

It must be admitted that there is a certain reason in Dewey's objection. After demonstrating that the precepts of bourgeois morals were definitely mutable, that is, subordinate to the needs of the bourgeoisie, Trotsky then sets up his own immutable category: the class struggle as the law of all laws.

How answer John Dewey? Very simply. Trotsky knew, better than Dewey probably, that societies had existed in the world without class struggle, and Trotsky knew, better than Dewey certainly, that the new societies of the future would be classless. The class struggle is thus not an immutable law except in proper context. But Trotsky was not "a rationalizing observer"; he was the conscious expression

of the unconscious motion of our epoch, and for our time the class struggle is indeed an immutable law. It was not always so, it will not always be so; but in our epoch, for those seeking to be "a participant in events" the class struggle is an immutable law.

Is it indeed so hard to understand this? A pound of sugar is not equal to itself, says dialectic, and correctly. But for most of the connections in which a pound of sugar is presented to us it is indeed equal to itself. It is the context that decides. A pound of sugar is not equal to a pound of sugar. Nevertheless when we borrow sugar from a neighbor and come to repay it, we must in fact consider that a pound of sugar is equal to a pound of sugar. Otherwise we may lose a friendly neighbor. And a pound of sugar needs must have some identifying characteristics, for this operation regarded as immutable, otherwise we may borrow corn starch and pay back soap powder.

In spite of the fact that all things change, we nevertheless, regard our family, friends and fellow-workers, as being, in some respects immutable, with their own identifying characteristics known to us; and that is how we tell our friends from the apes.

The necessity of regarding certain categories in certain connections as fixed categories by no means overthrows dialectical materialism: it is the only basis upon which dialectical logic can fruitfully be employed. For to consider something in its evolution, in its motion, to watch the quantitative steps which arise to the qualitative change, obviously requires, as a first and prime consideration that we know what it is which is evolving. For indeed if we do not know what the Thing in the Box is then we have no way of knowing whether it will appear to St. Peter as a ticket of admission to Heaven or Hell. Figuratively speaking, of course.

Both capitalist society and society transitional between capitalism and socialism must be considered in their evolution; they are neither one static. But to intelligently regard the evolution of a given society requires first of all that we know the nature of that society. For it should be as plain as noon-day that the laws of evolution governing two different kinds of societies are themselves different. To understand and participate in this evolution requires first of all the definition of what it is which is evolving.

In regard to the USSR Shachtman said that he wanted only to consider the degeneration, with Trotsky interposing "of what -- a workers' state?" No one, least of all Trotsky, closed his eyes to the degeneration; but this degeneration (evolution) could be understood only if what it was which was degenerating was first of all firmly grasped.

This necessary classification is primarily achieved with the much maligned formal logic.

It is tempting to set one's self up as a "dialectical materialist" and consider that one has obtained thereby from Hegel or Marx a license to be unreasonable. Nothing could be a more vicious caricature! Dialectical materialism does not overthrow formal logic: it incorporates it. An attempt to consider everything dialectically,

that is, in motion and changing, is to allow the most hollow and worthless diffusion of thought. To be effective, human thought must have a certain form, an objective and a conclusion: must be, to this extent, formalistic. A great role in human thought is thus played by formal logic.

The "dialecticians" who have cast aside formal logic once and for all are, because of that, unable to employ the dialectic. The relationship between formal logic and dialectic, says Trotsky, is similar to the relationship between lower and higher mathematics. A thorough understanding of, say, Thermodynamics, requires the employment of the differential calculus, which itself contains not a little simple arithmetic. A person who was determined to employ nothing but the higher mathematics could not, in the first place, solve any problem at all regarding heat transfer. And in the second place, when he came to add up his grocery bill, he would arrive at a position roughly analagous to the Majority's position on the Buffer States.

The basic doctrine of the movement, consisting of definitions, criteria, fundamental laws, is, in proper context again, a fixed reference point for revolutionists. The task of Marxist thought is to find these abstractions in their concrete manifestations, to apply to the specific category the specific criteria, and to obtain, in this way, a recognition of the fundamental driving forces.

If criteria are not applied, if a formalistic category is not obtained, critical thought must needs become hopelessly confused. Under such circumstance one can be a rationalizing observer but in no case a participant in the events themselves.

### For Me -- Or For My Children?

The foregoing considerations, apparently leading far afield, are a necessary pre-requisite for the present discussion and lead us now into the heart of the matter.

For it cannot be both ways: either Marxist doctrine sets up the criteria which distinguishes a workers' state from a bourgeois state; or Marxist doctrine is deficient in this respect,

It must be emphasized: there are no two ways about this, there is no middle ground. Marxist doctrine sets up quick and easily applied criteria by means of which we can easily distinguish a worker from a capitalist, a productive force from a plaything, a society from an army, and a state power from a debating club. In considering all these things, has Marxist doctrine neglected to include the criteria which enable us to distinguish a workers' state from all else?

Whatever answer they give to this question, it is an indubitable fact that the Majority has been unable to produce any coherent criteria, and is unable, because of that, to, in fact, distinguish between a workers' state and a bourgeois state. This is easily demonstrated if we only recapitulate, from the viewpoint of the criteria employed, the discussion up to now.

The first resolution of the IEC, presented for discussion in June 1949, declared all the Buffer States, including Yugoslavia, to be bourgeois states. This conclusion was derived in the following manner: the IEC drew up a list, as it were, of the differences between the USSR and the Buffer States. The differences cited were the "insufficient conditions for planning," the non-nationalized condition of the soil, the dependence of these countries upon the world market making for an equalization of the rate of profit with imperialism, a mode of production said to be primarily capitalist, the fact that the origin of these states was not in revolution, and the existence of what was said to be, again including Yugoslavia, a bourgeois state apparatus.

Having drawn up this list the resolution concluded that these differences made the Buffer States qualitatively different from the USSR. (Nor was anything said about "guideposts" on this or that Road.) Since the USSR was a workers' state, since "Marxist sociology excludes the existence of states and economies that are neither capitalist or Soviet (workers' or degenerated workers')"; then these states qualitatively different from the USSR, a workers' state, must therefore be bourgeois states. Q.E.D. (pages 17,18,19)

(It is interesting to remember that when Comrade Frank drew up a similar list, not of the differences but of the similarities, and concluded from the similarities that the Buffer States were of the same qualitative character as the USSR, he was taken rather definitely to task by our NC, and Comrade Wright referred to this method as "having unmistakable academic whiskers on it," Wright's unshaven chin thus branding Frank's.)

Comrades Hansen and Frank countered the IEC's thesis by demonstrating that the qualitative differences cited by the IEC were, in some cases, not differences, nor in any case, qualitative. Since these points did not necessarily mean that the Buffer States were qualitatively different from the USSR, then the Buffer States might be workers' states and, in the opinion of Hansen and Frank, were indeed workers' states.

In the meantime Yugoslavia had sledge-hammered its way into our consciousness by looking, talking and acting so much like a workers' state that the comrades concluded, in the main, that it must indeed be a workers' state. The analysis of Comrade Pablo was naturally no small part of the sledge hammer. But since the criteria listed by the IEC and supported by the NC, applied as well to Yugoslavia as it did to the Buffer States; and since Frank and Hansen had shot this criteria full of holes, the schema of the IEC had to be abandoned.

The opponents of the theory that all the Buffer States are workers' states then developed their arguments in two directions. In the formulations of Comrades Stein and Wright they shook off the fetters of this material and unsatisfactory world entirely and soared off into the ethereal considerations of subjective factors, mass consciousness, the program of the ruling parties, methods of economic leadership, etc. We took up these criteria in a previous article, as yet uncommented on.

Those who rejected the spirit world of Wright and Stein were forced to play one or another variation on the theme of collectivized

property, collectivized property established by the revolution, etc. And along with this, the question of what the workers' state was as a material thing was sluffed off in favor of some very positive and incorrect statements about how the workers' state comes into the world.

These troubled waters looked like a good place for some fishing. The long document of Johnson-Forest attempted to push some of the ideas and formulations of the Majority to their logical conclusions. In "State Capitalism and World Revolution" Johnson-Forest produced, among quite a few other things, the following criteria which, it appears to us, they use as criteria for the workers' state.

"Marx established that as long as the proletariat did not rule production, production knew and could know, no other method of progress but the increase of constant capital, machinery, mechanization at the expense of variable, living labor. The only revolution which could save society was the proletarian revolution in the process of production. . . ." (Page 5 - Vern's emphasis.) ". . . the new productive system of socialism is primarily distinguished by an entirely new organization of labor in the process of production itself. . . Marx's theory is based upon the fact that as long as production is carried on within the conditions of production themselves by special agents in opposition to the direct producers, accumulated labor is in opposition to living labor and the class struggle paralyzes productivity and production. . ." (page 18) "If the Marxian categories apply to Russia, then it is a simple matter to say that Russia is a form of state-capitalism. . ." (page 6) "Orthodox Trotskyism repeats: state property therefore no laws of capitalism. . . The Fourth International must oppose to this that the basis of socialism is the emancipation of the proletariat from enslavement to capital, i.e., soviet power, the state power in the hands of the proletariat in its own proletarian organizations. This and this alone constitutes socialism, a new society, and a new state, or a transition to a new society." (page 16)

There are some correct formulations here, just as there are some correct formulations in all the writings of the Majority. But it is necessary to focus the attention upon that feature of society which carries the possibility of qualitative transformation. With the diffusion of thought indicated in the above sentences Johnson-Forest must, in spite of their subjective motivations, make common cause with Pablo.

Nor has it, in the main, been different. Qualitative significance is assigned, by the IEC, in its first resolution, to the mode of production, dependence upon the world market, equalization of the rate of profit with imperialism, etc. Qualitative significance has been assigned by various comrades to collectivized property and collectivized property established by the revolution. Qualitative significance is assigned by Johnson-Forest, in their turn, to the mode of production, wage labor, etc.

We are well aware that there are differences among all these comrades. But the thing that distinguishes each of their positions as to the class nature of the state is simply this: that the criteria cited by them for the class character of the state are drawn, in



every case, not from the actually existing state, but from society.

Let the comrades reflect well on this. All these criteria either ignore the materially existing state or refer to it, only in the abstract: Soviet power, state apparatus. The criteria for the state, no matter by whom cited, turns out to be in actuality a feature, not of the state but of society.

If we should, in fact, adopt any or all of these criteria as determining the class nature of the state, then we would have to conclude that a workers' state is impossible. Where, for example, could an economy be emancipated from the world market? Nowhere! But once existing in the world market it must thereby be subjected to the oscillations of the market and the equalization of the rate of profit. If it is not evident that insufficient conditions for planning exist in the US, then it is certainly evident for England, France, Yugoslavia or Italy. Nor can wage labor be transformed into some other form of labor, some new mode of production, anywhere on earth. These things are not improbable or unlikely: they are impossible.

Exactly the same conclusion follows from all the variations on collectivized property. If collectivized property determines the class nature of the state, then the collectivized property must first exist before the workers' state can be based upon it. How can such collectivized property come into existence? By revolution! Of course, but that is too abstract. To be able to collectivize property the revolution must first of all be successful. A revolution is successful obviously when it creates....a workers' state. But in that case the workers' state must exist first: its existence cannot, then, be determined by collectivized property.

We can twist and turn in this circle until the state itself has withered away: with this criterion of collectivized property, with the criteria cited by the IEC and Johnson-Forest, we are unable to explain how a workers' state can possibly come into the world. With any or all of these criteria we should logically though sadly conclude that no workers' state is anywhere possible, and that the USSR is indeed State capitalist.

Things, fortunately, are not so bad as that. Transformation is indeed impossible in the forms of property, the mode of production, the form of labor, and so on, under present conditions. But these conditions can be changed. What are these unfavorable conditions? First and foremost, the bourgeois state: special bodies of armed men with prisons, etc., which act as the instrument of the bourgeoisie. Because the bourgeoisie has this repressive apparatus at its disposal, it is able to insist on private property in the means of production; it is able to insist on and enforce wage labor for profit; production for a market; the bourgeoisie is able, moreover, to prevent and destroy productive forces and prevent any real planning of humanity's production. All this the bourgeoisie accomplishes because it has special bodies of armed men at its disposal.

In order to create a "new mode of production" it is necessary that sufficient conditions for planning be created. This demands the collectivization of the productive forces and their quantitative enlargement. But this demands that the bourgeoisie be deprived of

control of the productive forces. This, in its turn, demands the abolition of the special bodies of armed men who defend the bourgeoisie. This, we repeat, is the bourgeois state. It must be abolished.

The bourgeois state must be abolished and a workers' state created in its place. This workers' state will be characterized by no feature of society, but simply as bodies of armed men in the service of the working class, or the armed people. This is the criteria for the workers' state.

Here, in this superstructure of society, is where the revolution of our time takes place. As a matter of fact this transformation is sometimes referred to as THE revolution: Trotsky closes his history of the Russian revolution when he has described and analyzed how the special bodies of armed men in the service of the Tsar and the bourgeoisie were replaced by the Red Guards, factory committees and Soviets.

Having destroyed the political power of the bourgeoisie, the workers' state wrests, by degrees possibly, all property from the capitalist class; creates a new educational system, emancipates women from their ancient subjection, etc. The workers' state does these things. It does them, moreover, on a world scale, and some of them can be done only on a world scale, and after decades of preparation. THE revolution of our time is the revolution, primarily, in the superstructure. If we are unable to focus our attention on that, our children will be unable to focus their attention upon socialist society.

#### Norms From "A Blue Note Book"

This, then, is the doctrinal criterion for the workers' state: bodies of armed men based upon organizations of the working class. Indeed when we wrote as much, in our previous article, we did so almost in passing with the feeling that it was something already securely established in the consciousness of the movement.

Johnson-Forest must be told, gently but firmly, that we have no objection to the label "state capitalist" for the USSR. But it is necessary to point out clearly just what is meant by such a designation. Lenin himself referred to the USSR as "state capitalist" in the period leading up to the NEP. But he also applied the same label to Germany in 1917. Could we conclude from this that Lenin did not regard the USSR as a workers' state? Or that he regarded 1917 Germany as also being a workers' state? Nothing of the kind.

An intelligent application of the label "state capitalist" could only have reference to the fact that in this backward country, there is a still existing necessity for accumulation, with the resultant "exploitation" of the economy by the state. This same intrusion of the state into the economy occurred in Germany in 1917. But do we infer from the fact that both states interfere in the economy, that these states as state powers must necessarily have the same class character? Nothing of the kind.

The German state in 1917, not to mention a later period, interfered in the economy in behalf of the private owners of that economy.

It interfered in their behalf because it was a body of armed men acting as an instrument of these same private owners.

The state power in the USSR interfered in the Russian economy as the instrument of the Russian working class, as a body of armed men based upon organizations of the working class, Soviets, Red Guards, etc. But the interference of the state into the economy was not designed to strengthen the private owners who remained, but to strengthen the state power of the workers, to develop the economy, and make possible the transfer to society of productive forces adequate for the tasks at hand.

"State capitalism" is a clumsy term, capable of many incorrect interpretations, but Johnson-Forest may use it, providing that they understand that the term applies to the economy and not to the state power, that the capitalist features in the economy still do not make the economy identical with private property capitalism but transitional from it to socialism. On our part we will doubtlessly continue to prefer the designation of the Russian economy as transitional.

And the same general answer must be returned to Pablo and his supporters. A completely collectivized economy can be achieved only through the creation of a workers' state. It is accordingly a redundancy to say collectivized property established by the revolution. No capitalist state can achieve complete collectivization, a fact, indeed, which Pablo asserts. Since a bourgeois state cannot achieve collectivization, and since, as the writings of Trotsky testify, a workers' state is characterized by the property relations which it guards and extends, then how is it possible to go from the bourgeois state to the workers' state.

Very simply. A contradiction must be created between the class nature of the state and the nature of society and the economy; whether the Majority and Johnson-Forest admit the material existence of contradiction or not we do not know, but the workers' state is the very embodiment of such contradiction.

When Burnham and Carter in 1937 were impelled to deny the class nature of the USSR, in the traditional sense, Trotsky answered them with words which may illuminate our present problem. "But does not history really know of cases of class conflict between the economy and the state? It does!.....In the first months of Soviet rule the proletariat reigned on the basis of bourgeois economy. In the field of agriculture the dictatorship operated for a number of years on the basis of petty-bourgeois economy (to a considerable degree it still does)....But what does such a type of temporary conflict between economy and the state mean? It means a revolution or a counter-revolution. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct economy in the interests of the victory."

Then Trotsky concludes with a sentence which is crucial to our present discussion: "But such a condition of transition appearing during the necessary time in every social revolution has nothing in common with the theory of a classless state which in the absence of a real boss is being exploited by a clerk, i.e. by the bureaucracy." (Internal Bulletin, No. 3, Dec. 1937.)

Since in this condition of transition the state remains a class factor, and since the state is in conflict with the economy, what is the criterion for the nature of the state then? It can only be the criterion which we wrote above, a criterion, moreover, which is already embodied in the fundamental doctrine of the movement, provided one knows what to look for.

Lenin's "blue note book," Marxism on the State, contains, along with many notable passages, the following: "The doctrine of the class struggle as applied by Marx to the question of the state and the socialist revolution leads inevitably to the recognition of the political rule of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., a power shared with none and relying directly upon the armed forces of the masses...The proletariat needs state power...in the work of organizing socialist economy." (Collected Works, XXI, page 169 - Vern's emphasis.)

Written before the revolution, with only the actual experience of the short-lived Paris Commune, Lenin was able in these lines to express the real essence of the workers' state, as a material power: not as an economic, but as a political factor "organizing socialist economy."

Trotsky wrote "The Revolution Betrayed" some twenty years later. A workers' state had arrived in Russia substantially validating Lenin's programmatic description. Upon the basis of this more extended experience Trotsky wrote: "The regime of the proletarian dictatorship from its very beginning thus ceases to be a 'state' in the old sense of the word -- a special apparatus, that is, for holding in subjection the majority of the people. The material power together with the weapons, goes over directly and immediately into the hands of workers organizations such as the Soviets." (Revolution Betrayed, page 51 - Vern's emphasis.) Trotsky does not, of course, overthrow Lenin's definition of the workers' state, but, on the basis of a wider historical experience, he makes the definition more precise.

And that definition can save us a great deal of unnecessary confusion, because when we see such a state anywhere in the world, there we will find a workers' state. Water is H-2-O anywhere in the world whether it splashes from the ocean, falls from the sky, is dug from the earth or squeezed from a fish. So also with the workers' state. When we see a state where the material power and the weapons have gone over into organizations of the working class such as the Soviets there we will find a workers' state. When we see a state, in Yugoslavia or Hungary, where the material power and the weapons have gone over into the hands of workers' organizations already bureaucratized, there we will find a degenerated or deformed workers' state. You can attack this schema only by attacking the basic doctrine of Marxism, consciously or unconsciously.

### Madness in the Method

In his report on Yugoslavia, Comrade Murry Weiss made a brief excursion up the Danube into the Buffer States. Traveling light, he took with him the usual baggage of the Majority: "...the Stalinist Bureaucracy moved into Eastern Europe as part of a deal with Allied Imperialism. The Stalinists were to crush the revolution in Eastern and Western Europe and in return they would get territory. The capitalist class in this territory remained in power..."

Well, of course, this solves the question: if the capitalist class remained in power, then the Buffer States remained capitalist states. All that remains is to indicate what features of the materially existing states expressed and indicated their bourgeois character. Lenin's "blue note book" describes the state as "bodies of armed men with prisons, etc., acting as the instrument of a ruling class."

And here again it can't be both ways: either this definition of the state, taken from the basic doctrine of the movement, applies to the bourgeois state, or else the basic doctrine of the movement has become outmoded.

These bourgeois states, these bodies of armed men acting as the instrument of the capitalist class, proceeded to demonstrate their bourgeois character by expropriating the property of their masters, by liquidating the bourgeoisie as a class, and by curbing, in the most definite fashion, the development of the bourgeoisie politically and socially.

Weiss doesn't go into it, but from the experience in the buffer zone, the Majority should expunge quite a bit of State and Revolution from the basic doctrine of the movement. The Majority can continue to define the state as a body of armed men, but it must expunge the qualification made by Lenin, not just any body of armed men, but a public force acting as the instrument of the ruling class. It can't be both ways, no matter how "dialectical" you may think you are.

Either Lenin was wrong, or else the Majority is wrong now. The proof obviously that the bourgeoisie "remained in power" is the fact that they suffered liquidation and annihilation. The world bourgeoisie should experience such an exercise of power! Truly the Majority doctrine is good for nothing except glueing up the minds of its followers!

Weiss' report contains a very interesting statement, almost a new thought it appears. "...for us 'degenerated workers' state' is an inclusive definition and included in that definition is a victorious proletarian revolution which suffered degeneration. This does not correspond to the real course of events in the buffer zone." (Pages 19,20)

What does not correspond to the "real course of events" in the buffer zone or anywhere, is a theory of immutable stages through which history must necessarily pass like automobiles under a viaduct. Murry knows this as well as anyone. From our present safe historical vantage point we have many times pilloried the Russian Mensheviks for this very theory: the Menshevik idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat was likewise "an inclusive definition," including the prior existence of the bourgeois state, bourgeois democracy, the bourgeoisie in power in Russia, with all which this implied for the Russian Revolution.

The error of the Mensheviks has been repeated over and over. If they were somewhat excusable in their error, then there was absolutely no excuse for the Austro-Marxists who dismissed, for a number of years, the idea that the USSR might be a workers' state with the

statement that Russia lacked sufficient productive forces, workers, and culture to be so designated, never having passed through capitalism. Not to predict the development ahead of time is, of course, bad but to refuse to recognize it afterward because it disturbs an incorrect schema is something considerably worse.

Refusing the Menshevik stages for Russia, Weiss has thus made some stages of his own. He has a criterion, not for a degenerated workers' state, to be sure, but for how such a state must come into the world. Nor does this criterion itself, in its turn, derive from the basic doctrine of our movement.

Is it necessary to argue that the class nature of a state can be changed by conquest? If the conquering state is a degenerated workers' state, it must inevitably stamp its victim with the same or a similar characteristic. A degeneration of one age, present at birth in a subsequent generation, is generally called a deformity.

More in accord with the basic doctrine of our movement, which defines a degenerated workers' state as a real historical fact, having the material features of bureaucratization as the expression of its degeneration, is the concept that the USSR jumped the Buffer States over the stages which the USSR itself passed through, just as imperialism had previously jumped Russia itself over several stages.

That is in harmony with the basic doctrine of our movement holding the state to be a class instrument. It is more in accord with the material reality of the Buffer States themselves which obviously, six years after conquest by the USSR, are not "destroyed as states." They exist today with as much independence as they ever had, which, to be sure, is not great; but they are many times as individual as is the Ukraine, the Baltic States or Karelia. The theory that the conquest of these states by the USSR changed their class character and that they have been, for some six years now, workers' states is the only theory that answers all the requirements of the situation.

### Stalinophobia in the Fourth International

With the incorrect method represented by the caricature of dialectical materialism which we earlier described, and from the continuing refusal to employ the basic doctrine of Marxism in the buffer zone examination, the Majority comrades have understandably fallen into one of the familiar and ever-present traps which beset this dead-end road: Stalinophobia.

The important weakness of the SWP resolution on Yugoslavia was that it failed to raise the question of how we could have been so wrong in regard to the Yugoslav revolution. There is ten times as much to be learned from one error as there is from ten successes. The IEC, to its credit, investigates this matter. The reasons that it gives for the error toward Yugoslavia are quite revealing.

On page 20, International Information Bulletin, Jan. 1951, we find three reasons for the error. Though the first is evidently not to be taken too seriously: the absence of precise information about Yugoslav events and institutions. This cannot be taken too seriously because the error did not consist in remaining silent, but in declar-

ing Yugoslavia a bourgeois state. If we lacked sufficient information to designate Yugoslavia as a workers' state, what enabled us to call it bourgeois? (Is a new criterion making up someplace: that a bourgeois state is a state about which we lack precise information?)

The other two reasons, however, hit the nail squarely on the head: the absence of all public differentiation between the YCP and Stalinism before June, 1948; and the fact that the Fourth International identified the policy of the YCP with "the primarily counter-revolutionary role of the Soviet Bureaucracy in the buffer zone."

These two reasons hit the nail squarely on the head provided, of course, that they are correctly understood. What the IEC is actually saying here is that it thought the YCP was a Stalinist party and therefore counter-revolutionary, and therefore unable to create a workers' state. This is obviously the position of the Majority, and it contains two major errors.

In the first place the counter-revolution of the Soviet Bureaucracy is not differentiated from the counter-revolution of imperialism. We are certain that a workers' state could not emerge from imperialist counter-revolution. But if we have refused to lump the expansionism of the Soviet Bureaucracy together with the expansionism of finance-capital under the general heading of imperialism, then we ought also not to be so eager to lump the two counter-revolutionary forces together in regard to a workers' state. Because, while there are indubitable similarities, there is likewise an important and a basic difference. The counter-revolution of imperialism in Greece or Korea constitutes in itself bourgeois power and a bourgeois state based upon the private property of imperialism. The counter-revolution of the Soviet Bureaucracy cannot in itself constitute bourgeois power because, refracted through this Bureaucracy, is the collectivized property of the USSR hostile to the bourgeoisie.

Imperialism seeks the destruction of workers' power; the Soviet Bureaucracy seeks instead the bureaucratization of this power. Imperialism, through its agencies in Yugoslavia, sought the destruction of the Partisan movement; the Soviet Bureaucracy sought its bureaucratization in order to strengthen its bargaining position with imperialism. The Red Army could have smashed the Partisan movement from within and without. Instead it installed this revolutionary government in Belgrade. It is with some justification now that Stalin feels that Tito betrayed him: having installed Tito under the impression that he had a willing puppet, Stalin feels betrayed in that Tito represented the Yugoslav workers and peasants instead.

The Stalin counter-revolution is impossible of completion unless there exists along side of it bourgeois power. In France the French CP expressed the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism by aiding the bourgeoisie in the re-creation of bourgeois power. But in the buffer zone, including Yugoslavia, the best that the bourgeoisie could muster, after the expulsion of the Nazis and the victory of the Red Army, was woefully inadequate to constitute a power of any kind. The Soviet Bureaucracy, quite capable of propping up a bourgeois state, is not able to itself become a bourgeois state. Its counter-revolution in this circumstance is limited to the destruction or the bureaucratization of the workers movement.

But the power that then emerges from such counter-revolution is not bourgeois power or a bourgeois state: it is the power of the Soviet Bureaucracy. In the final analysis this Bureaucracy has a working class character; and, also in the final analysis, the state based upon this Bureaucracy, can be nothing less than a workers' state.

In the second place, the schema of the IEC as to why it erred in regard to Yugoslavia contains the counter-position of two concepts: counter-revolution (by the Soviet Bureaucracy) and the workers' state. The IEC in effect declares that since we regarded the Yugoslav events as part of the Bureaucracy's counter-revolution in the buffer zone, then we naturally could not conceive that a workers' state had been created there. A workers' state, something inherently revolutionary, is incompatible with the Soviet Bureaucracy and could not originate in its counter-revolution. Indeed one of the platitudes of the Majority is simply that: the only way a workers' state can come into the world is by means of proletarian revolution.

We have already discussed the nature of Soviet counter-revolution. We must now discuss the idealization of the workers' state. With this term particularly it is fatal to substitute the programmatic norm for the mean, even the repugnant reality. Trotsky taught us, or tried to teach us, that the workers' state is a real historical factor which may not subordinate itself to our norms; and in the USSR, at least, has not, in fact, done so.

A workers' state which fulfilled our norms would naturally not conquer and subjugate other states; its intervention in other states, inevitable in any case, would be designed to aid the proletariat and thus transform the given state by means of revolution by the masses. But the USSR has not subordinated itself to our norms. It has instead invaded other states, smashed the organizations of both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and by conquest and counter-revolution turned these states into its satellites.

That is not, of course, our norm for the way the transformation of the state should occur: we were and remain against new seizures of territory by the Kremlin. But history, as well as the USSR, can refuse for a time to abide by our desires, hopes or expectations. We do not for that reason close our eyes to the history of our time. With the Marxist method we can determine what tasks have been solved or half-solved in the unconscious evolution of material things, and which tasks are now posed for solution; and we can then continue the struggle for our norms along the revolutionary road.

The workers' state is a real, historical fact, independent of us and our intentions. Under certain circumstance the workers' state can be a revolutionary factor of the greatest importance; in other circumstances it can be a conservative, a reactionary or even a counter-revolutionary element.

In the final analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power. This analogy is helpful and exact. The Seafarers International Union was created by the struggle of the workers in 1934 and earlier. Day by day since then our comrades have watched the degeneration of this union until today it is essentially an "anti-labor" union, supporting every or almost all the policies of



the shipowners or their government, maintaining a squad of goons and sluggers to terrorize the rank and file, accepting "sweetheart contracts" with the waterfront employers behind the backs of the membership; functioning, all this is to say, on a union level the same way the USSR functions on a state level.

The SIU thus falls considerably short of our norms of what a union could and should be. But because the unions have a long history we regard them, not only from the standpoint of our program, but as actually existing material organizations. In spite of our repulsion at the program, activity and leadership of this union, it has never occurred to any of us to define it as anything other than a labor union.

This cannibal union has done a little strike-breaking in recent years. When the crews of Union Oil Co. tankers walked off their ships in support of the West coast oil strike, the SIU moved in, signed a contract with Union Oil, and assigned its goons and sluggers the duty of removing pickets, etc. Nor was this an isolated case not worthy of analysis: when the Canadian Seamen's Union was forced into a strike, the SIU invaded this field also, and in collusion with the employers and their police, took over these ships from the CSU.

What exists today on the Canadian ships, on the tankers of Union Oil, a capitalist organization or a labor union? Nothing here is in accord with our norms of how a union should act in relation to other unions or the employers, or how labor unions should come into the world. Nothing here is in accord with our norms. But the organization that today exists on those ships is nothing more nor less than a labor union. We have watched all kinds of unions for many years and define them not subjectively but objectively.

John L. Lewis and Myron Taylor announced a few years back that a contract had been signed between them which herded all the employees of US Steel into the SWOC. We would ourselves have preferred an organizing campaign among the ranks, and negotiations conducted by a wide rank and file committee. But what resulted from this act of Lewis and Taylor, a labor union or a capitalist organization?

The USSR had ten times the justification for moving into Eastern Europe that Lundeberg had for moving in on the Tanker men and the Canadian Seamen. The Red Army, remember, was expelling the Nazis from the Soviet Union. But it also smashed the rebellion of the workers as certainly as Lundeberg destroyed the CSU. But the strike-breaking of Lundeberg is different from the strike-breaking of Pearl Bergoff; the counter-revolution of the Bureaucracy is different from the counter-revolution of imperialism. Lundeberg created a bureaucratized union; Stalin created bureaucratized (deformed) workers' states. It could not be otherwise.

We want the workers' state to come into the world by means of a workers' revolution, raising the consciousness of the masses and summoning the world working class to the final conflict. But history can, for a time at least, avoid that norm. A workers' state can come into the world other than through proletarian revolution just as a union can come into the world other than through a strike, culminating an organizing campaign among the workers.

These are not the transformations that Trotskyism seeks. They are not transformations that amount to a great deal on the scale of history. Only the mobilization of the working class by the revolutionary Marxist party is adequate for the tasks of our time. But that Marxist party must recognize reality and not flee, like the ostrich, from it. To deny reality because it refuses to abide by our norms means to abandon materialism and embrace idealism. And history punishes the idealist in politics most of all.

Confronted with such a union as the SIU the IWW long ago concluded that the programmatic norm was more important than the material reality. They accordingly denied the AFL the honor of being a working class organization. The AFL, in its staid and stupid fashion, never understood its expulsion from the working class, and has evolved, for some seventy-five years in accord with the laws pertaining to labor unions.

In their time the Third Period Stalinists from different norms arrived at the same conclusion: that the AFL was not a workers' organization. On our part we never shared these errors. The long existence of the trade unions has taught us to approach them as actual, material organizations, regardless of our norms for their origin, policy or structure.

But we have not yet learned to approach the workers' state in the same way. We have to be sure, waged more than one struggle in the past with comrades or factions who substituted norm for reality in regard to the USSR. But toward the workers' state in general, toward its origin, policies and structure we have not yet learned objectivity. And it is here indeed that we have fallen into error.

Error, moreover, of a well known kind. We are familiar in the trade unions with the ideology which holds that inasmuch as the United Electrical Workers and International Longshore Unions were created and controlled by Stalinists, they cannot therefore be regarded as trade unions and defended accordingly. The "pure and simple" trade unionists regard the Stalinists as revolutionists and, because of that, incompatible with unionism. Many radicalized workers, on the other hand, regard the Stalinists as finks and traitors who could not possibly create or lead a labor union. Both draw the same conclusion: the UE and the ILWU are therefore not labor unions. To hell with them!

Ourselves regarding the unions objectively, we have defined this ideology as Stalinophobia.

Regarding the workers' state subjectively we elaborated toward the workers' states created and led by the Stalinists the same ideology which many workers expressed toward the UE: they can't possibly be workers' states. Firmly rejecting the idea that Stalinism in power equals a workers' state, the IEC by its own present testimony holds instead the idea that Stalinism in power equals a bourgeois state: only when Yugoslavia broke with Stalinism were we able to objectively ascertain its class character.

But this is just as surely Stalinophobia on the plane of state power, as is the ideology of many CIO members on a union level. No

matter how you slice it, its still a pernicious trap which nothing other than the Marxist method and Marxism's class criteria can protect us from.

### Once Again, the Egg, Columbus, and Conjunctural Defeatism

From our definition of the USSR as a workers' state our conception of the class nature of the bureaucracy inevitably develops. Because it is indubitable, from any kind of logical logic, that if the USSR is a workers' state then the Bureaucracy twined like the tentacles of an octopus around this state must be a working class bureaucracy.

It is not a matter of whether or not the Stalinists are nice people, class conscious workers, etc. But if a worker who becomes a cop ceases by virtue of that to be a worker and becomes a bourgeois cop, then Stalin's machine politicians become cops, planners and administrators in a workers' state apparatus must by that token constitute a working class bureaucracy. The bureaucracy of the class is part of the class itself, one of the many strata into which the very heterogeneous working class is divided.

In our movement the class nature of the USSR has been so frequently fought over, the intervention of Comrade Trotsky in this matter was so prolific and definitive, that equivocations and reservations in regard to the nature of the USSR generally originate either in the question of the nature of the Soviet Bureaucracy or in regard to the defense of the USSR.

In the document that was, for some months at least, the "Bible" of the Majority, Ernest Germain's document in International Information Bulletin, Jan. 1950, the document which Wright referred to, indeed, as "brilliant," there appeared the following: "We say that we defend in the USSR against imperialism whatever survives...of October; but that does not at all imply that we would find ourselves in any situation whatever, at any moment whatever at the side of the USSR in a conflict arraying it against a non-workers' state...If a Russian attack upon Yugoslavia could be isolated from the conflict between world imperialism and the Soviet Bureaucracy, then we would assure Yugoslavia in advance of our unconditional support, without having the slightest need to declare it a workers' state." (Vern's emphasis - pages 37 and 38.) It is impossible to quote these passages in full; the comrades should, however, study them carefully.

Now Germain wrote this at a time when he considered Yugoslavia to be a capitalist state, though indeed the ambiguity of the term "non-workers' state" tends somewhat to camouflage this. Germain's central idea is quite clear: inasmuch as we only defend in the USSR what remains of October, and only against imperialist attack at that, then if the remains of October are not involved, and if imperialist nations are not involved -- then Germain will not defend the USSR in a war with a capitalist state. "...every conflict in which the Soviet Bureaucracy tries to trample on the right of self-determination, either of a semi-colonial or colonial country, or of a capitalist country where the bourgeoisie finds itself crushed in war or by the movement of the masses, will find us irreconcilably opposed to the Kremlin."

What a hopeless tangle of confusion! In the first place there is no such thing as a "non-workers' state." States are class instruments. They take their characters from one of the two basic classes in society, are therefore either workers' states or bourgeois states.

In the second place: there is no capitalist state isolated from imperialism, nor can there be in our times. You can forget this equivocation! As Trotsky wrote: "So far as the small and second rate states are concerned, they are already today pawns in the hands of the great powers. The sole freedom they still retain, and this only to a limited extent, is the freedom of choosing between masters." (Defense of Marxism, page 171.) Or is this also an "elliptical" formulation?

In the third place the conception of a "capitalist country" where the bourgeoisie "finds itself" (!! ) crushed by war or by the movement of the masses reveals that diffusion of thought which proceeds from the subjective method and the rejection of Marxist doctrine. In this "capitalist" country, if the capitalist class has been crushed in war, then it must obviously have been replaced by the force that crushed it, another capitalist state or the Soviet Bureaucracy. Isn't this so? The new capitalist class, replacing the old, would function therefore, as an imperialist force. In this case, Germain assures us, he will defend the USSR.

In the fourth place, to consider another aspect of that same eclectic diffusion of thought indicated above, what kind of a state power could exist in a state where the capitalist class had been crushed "by the movement of the masses"? The bourgeoisie, we assume, is crushed when it is overthrown. If the bourgeoisie is overthrown by a movement of the masses, then a workers' state emerges. Or is Germain perhaps tinkering with the idea that there is some other kind of a state other than "proletarian" and "bourgeois"? In any case, where two workers' states conflict we do not, and never have, intended the automatic defense of the USSR.

And, in the fifth place, the "remains of October" are always involved when the USSR goes to war with a capitalist power. To think otherwise means to cast out the Marxist conceptions in regard to the class character of the state, the nature of capitalism, etc. For if we can imagine a capitalist state isolated from imperialism being involved in war with the USSR, then Germain must also consider that perhaps his "irreconcilable opposition" to the Kremlin is efficacious, that his "unconditional support" to the capitalist state results in the "Kremlin" being driven back.

What develops then? The capitalist state, we recall, is the instrument of the capitalist class. The capitalist class exists on the basis of exploitation. As the "Kremlin" is driven back, then the markets and productive forces of the USSR are rendered defenseless. At this point Germain, together with Shachtman, can only place a thermometer under the tongue of this capitalist state and, strictly by the readings of this thermometer, prepare to turn himself from a defensist of the capitalist state into a defeatist. It is such a transformation as not even Houdini could bring off!

Now it should be obvious from all of this that what Germain has done is to throw overboard the class criteria. In none of these

considerations does Germain appear as one who considers the state power to be a class instrument. The living classes and the class criteria is shunted aside in favor of such classless criteria as self-determination, etc. This procedure has always foreshadowed a new definition of the USSR as some kind of a classless state, "bureaucratic state," etc.

In support of this position Germain cites the fact that during World War I Lenin and Zinoviev stated several times that if the struggle of Belgium and Serbia could have been isolated from the world imperialist war, they would have been for the defense of Serbia and Belgium. On the basis of self-determination Lenin and Zinoviev would have supported Belgium and Serbia.

But Germain cites this as supporting his position in regard to a war between a capitalist state and the USSR, thus proving beyond any reasonable doubt that Germain does not employ the class criteria because, while Belgium, Serbia and the nations assailing them all had the same class nature, a war between the USSR and a capitalist state would draw the class line which Germain so unconcernedly steps over. Anyone who regards the USSR as a workers' state should have no difficulty in recognizing this.

When Shachtman stepped across that same class line in 1940 he justified himself, not with Belgium and Serbia, but with Germany and France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Since Marx and Engels changed their position in this war, supporting first Germany then France, it proves that the class nature of the state conducting the war is of no importance in determining our attitude toward it.

From Comrade Trotsky Shachtman got the answer which Germain must now try to understand: "Shachtman refers to the fact that Marx and Engels immediately turned against Prussia upon the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. But this turn only illustrates our standpoint all the more lucidly. It is impermissible to forget that what was in question was a war between two bourgeois states...The national state during that period was a progressive historical factor. To that extent Marx and Engels stood on the side of the Germans...The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine violated the principle of the national state in regard to France as well as Germany...Marx and Engels naturally turned sharply against Prussia. They did not thereby at all incur the risk of rendering service to an inferior system of economy as against a superior one since in both camps, we repeat, bourgeois relations prevailed. If France had been a workers' state in 1870, then Marx and Engels would have been for France from the very beginning, inasmuch as they -- one feels abashed again that this must be mentioned -- guided themselves in all their activity by the class criterion."  
(Defense of Marxism, page 125.)

One feels triply abashed that comrades who went through this struggle with the petty-bourgeois opposition, without blinkers over their eyes or cotton in their ears, we presume, have today accepted the point of view not of Trotsky but of Shachtman.

Nor are we referring to Germain here. Our European comrades were not as intimately involved in the 1939-40 struggle as we were, being concerned, during the German occupation, with matters not nearly

so educational. Many of them have not yet settled their accounts with petty-bourgeois socialism and the Americans, those at least who have settled this account, must aid the European comrades in this necessary and unavoidable work.

But what is one to think of the performance of Comrade Breitman who writes, in Internal Bulletin of Feb. 1950, as follows: "Let's get it straight once and for all: the NC resolution is based on the fact that we are for the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, and not in any and all struggles the Kremlin may have with capitalist states. In 1939 we defended the Soviet Union in the war with Finland...not solely because Finland was a capitalist state but because it was a capitalist state serving as an agency and a bastion of world imperialism...Today those of us who regard Yugoslavia as a capitalist state...take a contrary position in part because Yugoslavia is not an agency of world imperialism." (page 36)

The correction of the party's line has, of course, made things easier all around as a correct line generally does. And it is inevitable that from an incorrect position in regard to the class nature of Yugoslavia an incorrect line toward a possible Yugoslav-Soviet War should inevitably flow. This was a rather piquant political episode: from an incorrect analysis of the Yugoslav state, Comrade B. Lens came logically, by and large, to defeatism toward it in a war with the USSR. From the same incorrect starting point Breitman, with a denial of the class criterion, arrives at the correct position: support of the Yugoslav state. It is fortunate that such episodes happen so rarely; otherwise we could not so successfully advance the idea that method and the class criterion are of such crucial importance.

But they are. All the answers that we returned to Germain are equally valid directed at Breitman. And there is an additional point.

It has become something of a fashion to stress as many limitations as possible in regard to defense of the USSR. Only against imperialist and not necessarily capitalist attack is such a limitation. Another is contained in the formula included by Germain: we defend the remains of the October Revolution, and only that, mind you, only that! In the National Committee it appears that they have concluded that the collectivized property is all that remains of October, and that's all that we defend, mind you, only the collectivized property!

It is necessary to establish, as a sixth point, that the Soviet Bureaucracy, the "Kremlin," in so far as it is identified with the Soviet State Power, and that's pretty far, is one of the remains of the October Revolution, objectively considered. We've got to fight this matter out sooner or later and it might as well be now!

From the subjective point of view, from the standpoint of its program, its intentions, its methods, etc., the Soviet Bureaucracy long ago broke with the October Revolution, if, indeed, it could ever be said to have embraced October at all.

But in addition to this subjective point of view, the point of view from which the Trotskyists long ago concluded that it was

necessary to organize the proletariat apart from the Bureaucracy and against the Bureaucracy, programmatically speaking, into a Fourth International making war upon the degenerated Comintern -- in addition to this subjective, programmatic consideration, there is the necessity of considering the Bureaucracy as a real, material thing.

From this point of view the Bureaucracy is, to most intents and purposes, the Soviet State Power. The October Revolution created a state power in order to collectivize the productive forces and defend them against imperialism. The October Revolution created this state power as the state apparatus of the working class in power. That this class character has not changed is indicated by the fact that the USSR continues to be a workers' state, that the Bureaucracy defends, in its own sorry fashion to be sure, the collectivized property established by the revolution.

The present state apparatus of the USSR is, therefore, the state apparatus of a workers' state. The Bureaucracy which staffs this apparatus must have, objectively considered, a working class character. Between the present apparatus and the Soviet state in 1917 there is a long chain of accumulating quantitative changes. But the qualitative change has not yet been produced. "...in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form, the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend -- with our own methods." (Trotsky, Defense of Marxism, page 127.)

Having a few years back honored Martin Abern in death, it might be well to honor Shachtman while he is still, objectively considered, alive. It was Shachtman, we remember, who produced at least one correct thought: it is not the collectivized property that goes to war. It does not indeed!

If defense of "the remains of October" is not merely a way of actually refusing defense to the USSR while maintaining an abstract support of Trotsky's slogan, then it must be realized that defense, to actually be anything more than "abstract or wholly worthless defense" can "...only be the defense against imperialist attack of the state power, etc.," which today or tomorrow actually organizes and carries out that defense.

The NC, as well as Germain and Breitman, should have the close attention of the comrades should they care to speak on this matter.

#### A Not So Fresh Question Mark!

The fore-going considerations, necessarily drawn out to some length, supply the context in which we should examine the new resolution of the IEC. Naturally not everything in this new resolution is incorrect. But a spoonful of tar, it has been said, can spoil a barrell of honey. And it is just this considerable spoonful of tar which is contained in the resolution and which must be brought to the attention of the NC, the IEC, the party.

The resolution includes the following: "The defense of the USSR, of the 'Peoples Democracies' of Europe, of Yugoslavia and of China does not mean the defense of the Soviet Bureaucracy or of the policy

of the Stalinist leaderships of the CPs. It no longer means the defense of 'Workers' States' (except for Yugoslavia) in the sense of the norms defined by Marx and Lenin." (International Information Bulletin, Jan. 1951, page 8.)

Our discussion of the buffer zone, Yugoslavia and "related questions" has thus arisen in steps of accumulating quantitative changes, each representing an ever more serious deviation from the class line of Marxism, to the present point where the matter of whether the "dialectical leap" is present or not depends upon the definition of one word.

That word, obviously, is "norms."

We heard recently that the differences in the NC were being "narrowed down" to questions of "terminology." If that is accomplished along with programmatic agreement, then it is of course a good thing. But if terminological changes are introduced to conceal, in the ambiguity of new terminology, programmatic differences, then it is a poor method which can only postpone today's scratch in favor of tomorrow's gangrene.

The IEC can use the word "norms" to indicate either one of two meanings: either the programmatic objectives of our movement toward objective reality expressing the desires, wishes and expectations of Trotskyists; or it can be used to describe those features of material reality which determine the nature and quality of a given material thing. We have generally used the term norms to indicate programmatic norms established by us; the adjective programmatic is frequently prefixed, generally in the writings of Trotsky. To indicate those features of material reality which determine the nature of a given phenomenon we have most generally employed the word "criterion."

Now it is most important to know at the present time in which sense the IEC employs this small word norms. If norms here refers to programmatic norms, not real or existing but outlining the objectives of revolutionists, then there are, of course, some ambiguities to clear up, but nothing to get greatly alarmed about.

On the other hand, if norms here refers to the criteria by which we distinguish between different aspects of material reality, then we must gird ourselves for a considerable struggle. For it is obvious that if the USSR is not a workers' state by the criterion of Marx and Lenin then it is not a workers' state at all. If this is what is meant by "norms" then the ambiguity of the resolution only seeks to conceal the point at which the quantitative innovations of the Majority have passed over into the qualitative change of revisionism.

As part of a discussion in which the Majority has repeatedly revealed its inability to function within the Marxist conceptions, a discussion, moreover, in which the "conjunctural defeatism" of Germain and Breitman passed unnoticed, and repeatedly ignoring the class criterion, it is to be feared that what we have here is, in actuality, a not so fresh question mark over the class character of the USSR.

IF norms is used in its traditional sense, then it is an indubitable fact that the USSR does not fulfill our programmatic norms for



a workers' state. This has been the situation for some twenty-five or more years now, and Trotsky never closed his eyes to it: the USSR as a workers' state fails to fulfill our norms as to what a workers' state could and should be, and what it would be under a regime of Soviet Democracy. Is the IEC only restating this?

But why, then, are Lenin and Marx referred to? Marx never had any programmatic norms at all for the USSR inasmuch as it did not exist during his lifetime. And the USSR failed to live up to Lenin's programmatic norms also, and for that reason he struggled tirelessly against its bureaucratic deformations. Lenin, however, has been dead for some eighteen years, and the USSR has changed considerably during that period, necessitating different programmatic norms. These were outlined in the main by Trotsky. If the IEC is merely referring to the programmatic norms of our movement then it would be more sensible to invoke not Marx and Lenin but Trotsky.

If norms are used to indicate programmatic intentions, then what signifies the phrase "no longer"? This could only mean that at one time the USSR did fulfill the norms in this regard. But it never did: Lenin and Trotsky struggled constantly, from the very beginning, against the bureaucratic deformations in the USSR.

If norms is used in its usual sense, then it is inexplicable why it is raised in connection with the defense of the USSR. Surely the comrades understand that our defense of the USSR has never signified that we regarded the USSR as a perfect workers' state, completely in accord with our program. Far from it! Our defense of the USSR does not develop from the programmatic norms but from the class criterion.

If norms is used programmatically, then why are the Buffer States and China lumped together with the USSR? We have defended the USSR because we defined it as a real historical fact as a workers' state. We have denied defense to capitalist states. The last pronouncement of the IEC declared the Buffer States and China to be bourgeois states. Upon what basis do we defend bourgeois states, and why are they lumped together with a workers' state?

If the Buffer States and China are bourgeois states, they naturally could not fulfill our norms for a workers' state. To fulfill our programmatic norms for a workers' state the given state must first of all be a workers' state as determined by the Marxist criteria. If the IEC has changed its position on the Buffer States and China, then why not say so?

And finally, if the word norms is used in its traditional sense, then why is Yugoslavia excluded? The Yugoslav workers' state also fails to fulfill our programmatic norms for a workers' state, our programmatic objectives for what the workers' state should do about the United Nations, the coming war, Korea, etc. Yugoslavia is quite a bit nearer, of course, to our programmatic considerations than is the USSR but in this sphere distance is not the only standard. We do not defend Yugoslavia because of programmatic agreement with the YCP, but because of an objective analysis that reveals that by the class criterion of Marxism Yugoslavia is a workers' state.

No! All these considerations make it appear extremely doubtful if the IEC is using this small word "norms" to refer only to the programmatic objectives of Trotskyism.

And, as we said above, if norms is not taken in that sense, and it appears that it cannot be, then it can only refer actually to criteria, and if the USSR, the Buffer States and China are not workers' states by the criteria of Marx and Lenin then they are not workers' states at all. This is what comes of tinkering with the basic doctrine of the movement!

The older comrades in the movement should have no trouble in recognizing the present position of the IEC. It is the old Burnham-Carter Amendment of 1937! This amendment had two main points: while holding to defense of the collectivized property, Burnham and Carter nevertheless denied the dual character of the Soviet Bureaucracy which includes its working class aspect, and declared that the USSR was not a workers' state in the traditional sense of the term as defined by Marxism.

Almost word for word the present position of the IEC! The IEC holds to the defense of the collectivized property but specifically denies any defense to the Bureaucracy thereby implying that there is no working class aspect to this Bureaucracy; and the IEC declares that the USSR is not a workers' state by the norms defined by Marx and Lenin.

This astonishing parallel should make it much easier for the comrades to realize what it is, exactly, which is involved in the present discussion. As we said in the beginning: it is the Marxist method, it is the doctrine of the movement, it is the fundamental laws. What waits at the very end of this Road is graphically illustrated by the present reconciliation of Burnham and Carter with imperialism.

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We have not exhausted this matter nor did we intend to. It is obviously necessary that a thorough-going discussion of these questions be undertaken in the friendliest possible spirit. But the question mark must be erased in one way or another.

Writing this article was, in many respects, a most unpleasant task. As the conclusions piled up page after page (and the material is by no means used up) the picture of Trotsky's party On The Road To Ideological Assimilation Into Petty-Bourgeois Socialism was not a pretty one. But facts, unfortunately, are stubborn things; and rose-colored glasses are not included in the Inventory of Bolshevism.

We have many comrades who went through the previous struggles which built the party. It was for them primarily that we wrote this, in many ways, unpleasant article. But we wrote it with the firm conviction that the comrades would, with their accustomed devotion, find the means to arrest the present development and safeguard the heritage of Trotskyism.

February 26, 1951

Postscript:

Since the above was written we have had the two documents from Pablo and Wright-Warde which confirm what is written above. One would think either that the state power is non-existent in the USSR, or that it is classless, or that the class character of the state power in the USSR is of no importance to revolutionists!

On one hand Comrade Pablo apparently thinks that the nature of the coming war can be ascertained without clearly stating the class character of the states which will conduct the war. He presents us with the concept, the correct concept, of "Revolution-War," but this concept is meaningless unless we realize that the war is going to be fought by capitalist states on one side and workers' states on the other. Nevertheless, Pablo writes in support of the IEC thesis which declares that the Soviet orbit is not composed of "workers' states by the norms of Marx and Lenin." What then are these states? And by what norms? Revolution-war is incomprehensible unless these questions are answered first.

On the other hand Wright-Warde, against Johnson-Forest, limit themselves, in regard to the USSR, to demonstrating that the economy and the society of the USSR are not capitalist. Since Johnson-Forest have just as accurately indicated that the economy and society are also not socialist, then we should be left again with our traditional definition of Russian society and economy as transitional between capitalism and socialism. But the important question in regard to the USSR is not the economy nor the society but the class character of the state power in the USSR. Johnson-Forest deny that this state power has a working class character. All their other errors flow from this. But Wright-Warde limit themselves to the economy, and are prevented by this, from answering Johnson-Forest in any effective fashion.

If the discussion cannot get down to the root matter which is involved, namely the state, then it will not achieve very much in enlightening the movement and arming it for the period ahead.

April 30, 1951