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THE PROBLEM OF EASTERN EUROPE

By Joseph Hansen

It has been felt by some comrades that the differences over the characterization of the class structure of such countries in Eastern Europe as Yugoslavia may turn out to be purely terminological and that we who want to call them "workers' states," at bottom assess the developments in the same way as those who insist on calling them "capitalist countries on the road toward structural assimilation with the USSR."

This may be the case. The differences may concern only what is the most appropriate label to place on the highly complex and rapidly changing reality we see in Eastern Europe.

However, it would be a great mistake to assume that the differences are merely terminological. We are dealing here with the touchstone of the proletarian revolution and the heart of Marxist politics -- the class character of the state. When we deal with this question, the utmost scientific scrupulousness is required of us.

In the history of our movement, we have seen currents alien to Marxism arise again and again over differences involving this question. While such differences do not always indicate the development of an anti-Marxist trend, experience demands that we check our conclusions with the greatest strictness and seek to discover why the differences have arisen.

The discussion thus should be educational. We are under no pressure to bring it to a hasty conclusion. We have time to think things through to the end.

The developments in Eastern Europe are of the utmost importance to the future of our movement. They test our capacity to apply Marxist theory to the most contradictory and dynamic phenomena. They offer the most encouraging political perspectives for the growth of our movement, for the possibility of constructing a lever and a fulcrum for toppling the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy that constitutes the main obstacle in the world labor movement to socialist revolution. Belgrade's break with Moscow is only the first major indication of the profound opposition to the Kremlin welling up throughout this whole area.

We can now see how the fruits of Soviet victories over world imperialism tend not only to temporarily strengthen the Stalinist bureaucracy but also to undermine its position. We can understand more fully why Trotsky was so concerned about our following developments in the ranks of Stalinism in full expectation of deep splits and the appearance of currents that can move in our direction.

A correct analysis of the class character of the Eastern European countries should help us win this new opposition movement to the banner of Trotskyism and thereby hasten the debacle of Stalinism.

The Theses of the Second World Congress

First of all, let us consider some of the propositions in the theses adopted by the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in April of last year.

"It is not excluded," one of the theses states, "that a certain relation of forces may necessitate a real structural assimilation of one or another country in the 'buffer zone.' But it is necessary to indicate clearly that the policy of the step-by-step limitation of the privately-owned sectors of industry has not been oriented in this direction up to now. And the specific forms of exploitation introduced by the Soviet bureaucracy constitute entirely new and powerful obstacles to structural assimilation." (Fourth International, June 1948. pp.118-119.)

From this April 1948 thesis we can draw the conclusion that while this or that country might be assimilated into the USSR, the trend was definitely not in that direction. The limitation of privately-owned sectors was not "oriented" that way and the Stalinist bureaucracy was introducing "new and powerful obstacles" to it.

The thesis declares, however: "This situation can only be transitional. It must end either in the bureaucracy's withdrawal from its position, under the pressure of imperialism, or in the real destruction of capitalism, which can take place only as a result of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, and the elimination of the special forms of exploitation, introduced by the bureaucracy in their countries."

This seems quite clear. Either the Kremlin must withdraw from the countries of Eastern Europe or it must undertake a "real destruction of capitalism." This real destruction of capitalism "can take place only as a result of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses."

I for one took the "real destruction of capitalism" to mean an overturn in property relations, the ending of private property relations, the ending of private property in the means of production and the institution of state-owned property. This would lay the foundation of a workers' state in these countries and, with the establishment of common property forms, would open up the road to assimilation within the frame-work of the degenerated workers' state.

The means for achieving this overturn in property relations was categorically specified as the "revolutionary mobilization of the masses" and from the way it is put in the theses it would seem clear that this revolutionary mobilization had not yet occurred as of April 1948. In fact the Stalinist bureaucracy had done everything to stamp out such spontaneous mobilizations as had broken out.

The theses, however, did place a question mark over the necessity of a revolutionary mobilization, declaring that "a destruction of this sort did take place in the Baltic countries, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Karelia..." It is not made clear precisely what happened in these countries. We are told only that "This was possible owing

to the relationship of forces inside the labor movement and the degree of control exercised by the Stalinists over the mass movement. The bourgeoisie here was, moreover, extremely enfeebled and found itself caught between the pressure of world imperialism, on the one hand, and of the bureaucracy on the other."

One could wonder if the theses do not concede in principle that a revolutionary mobilization of the masses is not required, given the conditions that the Stalinists control the mass movement, the bourgeoisie is enfeebled and world imperialism cannot come to its aid.

In any case, the theses emphasized that for the other Eastern European countries the destruction of capitalism "is impossible without a revolutionary mobilization of the masses."

The slogans elaborated for use in these countries were aimed at mobilizing the masses against the Stalinists and against the capitalist state. Among the demands were "Expropriation of the big and middle bourgeoisie," "Expropriation of foreign capital," "Real planning through the centralization of the industries and bank in trusts and in a state Bank," "Elaboration of a plan for harmonious economic development between city and country, in the interest of the masses, with the active participation of workers' and poor peasants' committees."

The theses declared that "The fact that capitalism still exists in these countries side by side with exploitation by the Stalinist bureaucracy must fundamentally determine our strategy. The capitalist nature of these countries imposes the necessity of the strictest revolutionary defeatism in war time."

It was emphasized that against the Stalinists and against the native bourgeois elements we are for the independent strategy that finds its essential support in the world forces of the socialist revolution. "The fundamental aim of our strategy thus remains the establishment of Independent Socialist Republics of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc., within the framework of the Socialist United States of Europe."

Since the Socialist United States of Europe cannot be created at one stroke, it would seem that our immediate tactic in carrying out this strategy would be to fight for the establishment of Independent Socialist Republics which would try to extend their revolution as rapidly as possible.

It is interesting to note in passing that although the theses point out that the Stalinist bureaucracy has not nationalized the land and that "agriculture, which is preponderant in the economy of most of these countries, retains its capitalist structure," no slogan was listed calling for the nationalization of the land. This seems strange in view of the great stress which has since been laid upon this factor in determining the character of the economy as a whole.

Was it simply an oversight? Or did the comrades who drew up the theses feel at the time that this was not as crucial an issue as the others on which they did work out slogans?

It should also be observed that in calling for "real planning" the resolution could well be interpreted to mean planning within the capacities of an independent socialist republic.

The Resolution of the Seventh Plenum

Now let us turn to the resolution adopted for discussion one year later by the Seventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International.

"Important changes have taken place in Eastern Europe during the year 1948," we are told. "The nationalization of industry, of the banking system, of communications and transport, have been practically completed in Bulgaria, in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia; it is on the road to completion in Poland and in Hungary, and it has had a big start in Rumania. Wholesale trade is equally on the road to statification in most of these countries. Only retail trade and agriculture remain as yet largely in the hands of private proprietors."

Specifying what has happened in the various countries, the resolution declares that in Yugoslavia "the liquidation of the bulk of the possessing classes as well as the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus took place by means of mass action, that is, the guerrilla warfare which in this country took on the character of a genuine civil war."

We cannot help agreeing that "important changes have taken place in Eastern Europe." One of the comrades who holds that the countries where such events have occurred still come under such a finished social category as "capitalism" has said that this resolution is "only an extension" of the document adopted by the World Congress last year. It may be an extension in the sense that it still designates countries where such changes have occurred as "capitalist" but most certainly the reality in Eastern Europe is no simple extension of what we had before. It seems obvious to me that a qualitative change in property relations has occurred which should be reflected in the resolution.

A number of most important questions are at once raised by these events. Is the breaking of the grip of the bourgeoisie in these countries progressive? Are the nationalizations in Eastern Europe a necessary step on the road to socialism? Does the capacity of Stalinism to engineer such major changes indicate our analysis of the Kremlin bureaucracy to be wrong? These questions have to be answered no matter what label you put on these countries as a result of the overturn in property relations.

But even more is in store. Outside of Yugoslavia where it is admitted a "genuine" civil war occurred, where was the revolutionary mobilization of the masses without which, according to the theses of only 12 months before, the destruction of capitalism is "impossible"?

The resolution states that the "resistance of the dying propertied classes in these countries" is up to now being "liquidated step by step by the Stalinists through 'cold' means, without any mobilization of the masses being required." The quotation marks around

the "cold" are intended to indicate, I take it, that the process did not occur in deep freeze and may at times have been somewhat warm.

The explanation for these extraordinary happenings is the same as that offered the year before in the case of the Baltic countries, East Poland and Karelia. The imperialists did not intervene. They "practically abandoned their extremely weakened bourgeoisie to the crushing political and military superiority of the Stalinist bureaucracy."

Doesn't this raise in principle the question of whether or not the bourgeoisie can be expropriated, broken as a class, property relations overturned and economy nationalized without a revolutionary mobilization of the masses? It seems to me that this question is raised and that hastily placing such a finished social category as "capitalism" on the resulting economy doesn't help matters. You still have to answer these questions. Moreover, by calling it "capitalist" you raise additional complications.

Can such changes occur in other capitalist states? Does capitalism still have room for such progressive developments? Doesn't the alleged capacity of capitalism to make room for changes like these indicate that our analysis of the capitalist system contains a fundamental flaw?

This is not all that is called in question. If these satellite countries which are such evident replicas of the degenerated workers' state are "capitalist" isn't the USSR "capitalist" or "state capitalist" as some comrades consider it? Where do you draw the line and precisely why? If it's only the revolutionary origin of the Soviet Union with what's left of the resulting reservoir of mass social and political consciousness that makes it a workers' state and not the fundamental property relations, how much longer can that criterion be held to apply?

By attempting to stretch such a finished social category as "capitalism" to cover the qualitative change in property relations that has occurred in the countries listed in the resolution, it appears to me nothing is clarified. We only force ourselves to break away from the orthodox Marxist criteria in determining the character of a state. We force ourselves to introduce innovations in our theory that to me do not seem at all necessary or justified.

Yugoslavia and "Real Planning"

For instance, take the case of Yugoslavia. Here we have had a revolutionary mobilization of the masses; we have had a "genuine" civil war; the grip of the bourgeoisie has been broken, they are "disappearing"; the decisive sectors of the economy have been nationalized. Planning has been instituted. According to the November issue of Fourth International measures are being taken "to accelerate the preparations for the collectivization of agriculture." The regime is moving to the left.

Yet according to the new criterion laid down in the resolution of the Seventh Plenum, Yugoslavia cannot be characterized as a

"workers' state." "Why not?" we ask in astonishment. "Isn't there evidence enough that a qualitative change has occurred in property relations?"

Here's the answer given by the resolution: "The sum of these factors does not eliminate any of the structural obstacles to real planning and for this reason leaves Yugoslav economy as yet qualitatively different from the Russian economy."

The structural obstacles to "real planning" flow from the small area of Yugoslavia, its small population, its limited resources and its backwardness. These obstacles cannot be overcome until Yugoslavia can abolish its frontiers either by "incorporation" in the Soviet Union or in a "Balkan-Danube Federation formally independent from the USSR" -- provided that the Balkan-Danube Federation "forms a genuine unified framework for economic planning."

If this occurs, then the incorporation "could be defined as the decisive point, in the process of structural assimilation of these countries with the USSR, at which the social nature of these countries becomes qualitatively transformed."

This constitutes the decisive criterion laid down by the resolution for determining whether or not Yugoslavia -- and of course the other countries -- can be considered workers' states. Since this criterion has not been met we are therefore forced to conclude ipso facto that the buffer countries are "capitalist countries on the road toward structural assimilation with the USSR."

The resolution continues with the observation that "This definition, necessarily awkward and too concise to embrace the different aspects of the buffer zone, thus signifies essentially that in the course of the process of the structural assimilation of these countries the dialectical leap has not yet been produced. It stresses both the historic origins of the present situation, as well as the social physiognomy which is as yet undecided. But it does not at all imply that the bourgeoisie is in power as the dominant class in these countries."

Note that last sentence: "But it does not at all imply that the bourgeoisie is in power as the dominant class in these countries." I take it that the comrades who drew up this resolution knew what they were doing. They are reporting their considered, joint conclusion as to the fact in the countries under analysis. But if the bourgeoisie is not in power as the dominant class "in these countries" what class then is in power?

By introducing the new criterion of "real planning," the resolution opens the door to the theory that we can have countries where the bourgeoisie has been smashed as the ruling class, a different class is in power, but which are still not workers' states.

The resolution continues: "This definition implies that the situation in the buffer countries likewise differs from the situation in a 'normal' and 'classic' capitalist society. It serves exclusively to denote the place of these countries in relation both

to capitalism and the USSR, since Marxist sociology excludes the existence of economies and states that are neither capitalist nor Soviet (workers' or degenerated workers')."

I shall presently try to show that although Marxist sociology does exclude states and economies that are "neither" capitalist nor Soviet, it makes provision for states and economies that are both capitalist and Soviet. Right now I want to emphasize that we are dealing with an innovation so far as criteria is concerned, an innovation for which no justification is offered, the innovation of "real planning" as the decisive test in determining whether we have a workers' state.

If we were to accept this innovation then we automatically exclude all small, backward, poverty-stricken countries from being designated as workers' states so long as they remain isolated, no matter what overturns might be made in property relations. We could not, for example, call Bolivia a workers' state if the workers and peasants smashed the grip of the feudalistic landlords and the mining oligarchy and set up their own government, for the simple reason that they could not possibly introduce "real planning." Bolivia by itself could never institute the "real planning" called for in the resolution. That would require the combined efforts of a number of South American countries at the very least.

Comrade Germain explains this point more fully in his article in the September Fourth International. He says that the Left Opposition drafted the first plan in the USSR against the violent resistance of the bureaucracy and of the Stalinist faction. "But it does not follow from this that any national framework whatever lends itself to planning on the mere condition that the proletariat had conquered power. It is obvious that a minimum material base is indispensable even to the preparatory work of socialist planning. To make a start in the building of socialism in Rumania, in Luxembourg or in Paraguay is an even more patent absurdity than to pretend that this construction is being completed in the USSR."

This point is essentially correct. For socialist planning you do need a minimum material base. But it seems to me that Comrade Germain should have added for the benefit of revolutionary-minded workers in Rumania, Luxembourg and Paraguay that they can still make a good start toward the goal of socialist planning by conquering power and setting up their own government. That would give them a workers' state, and while this is a long way from socialism, still it is a most essential and decisive step in making a start.

Comrade Germain could not do this, however, without running up against the criterion laid down in the resolution that the qualitative point of change between a capitalist state and a workers' state is the institution of "real planning" which is possible only on a minimum material basis which neither Rumania, Luxembourg nor Paraguay has available.

What About the USSR?

This, however, raises a difficult question. Does even the Soviet Union have the minimum material basis for "real planning"? I don't think it does; and the resolution itself is forced to admit that Soviet planning "is itself the bureaucratic deformation of real socialist planning." The resolution does not amplify this point, but lets it go at that.

It seems to me we are forced to conclude that to take the criterion of "real planning" as the decisive test of a workers' state, to make it nothing less than the qualitative point of change in distinguishing such a state from a capitalist state is not valid.

Why should it not be applied to the Soviet Union? If planning in the Soviet Union does not meet our subjective standard or what we consider to be the norm of "real planning" wouldn't we be obligated to bring into question our characterization of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state? And don't all of us have the right and the duty to ask why this criterion has been introduced at the present time and given such decisive weight? Shouldn't it be explained and justified?

It appears to me to be a dangerous criterion that can be particularly damaging politically to our movement in all the small countries. Isn't it better to retain the orthodox criteria? I feel that we should continue to explain as we have innumerable times that real socialist planning is possible only with the combined efforts of a number of countries, including at least one or two of the industrially advanced ones; but meanwhile we have the pressing task of establishing the workers' states required as the minimum material basis for that planning.

The Crux of the Discussion

The crux of the whole discussion thus is, in my opinion, what criteria do we use in distinguishing a workers' state from a capitalist state? This is the nub of the dispute. If we can agree on that then we should have little difficulty in ironing out the differences.

If you can convince me that we should make "real planning" our decisive criterion, the point of qualitative change, the nodal point where all the quantitative changes pass over, then I would have no choice but to continue characterizing Yugoslavia as "capitalist" and if Yugoslavia is still "capitalist" it goes without saying that all the rest of the Eastern European countries remain "capitalist."

If we agree on a different criterion, however, as the decisive one, say the crushing of the bourgeoisie as a class and the nationalization of economy then we would have to consider at least Yugoslavia as a "workers' state" and determine the character of each of the others in accordance with the actual facts.

I think it has been fairly well established that the criterion of "real planning," advanced in the Plenum resolution as decisive in determining whether we have a workers' state before us, does not hold up under examination.

Now we are faced with the problem of accounting for the origin of this criterion. I see one of two possibilities.

Those comrades who insist that all of Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, must be characterized as "capitalist" were hard put to find criteria that would apply to all these countries without any exceptions. This criterion looked good because obviously you don't have real planning and can't have any resemblance to it in these countries without assimilation into the USSR or the establishment of a Balkan-Danube Federation. Consequently, the introduction of this novel criterion enabled the comrades to solve the whole problem of the Eastern European countries at one sweeping stroke.

That's one possibility. The other is this:

The comrades did not distinguish sharply enough between our general category of "workers' state" and our general category of "socialism." A careful reading of the official documents and of the writings in support of those documents, or constructed in accordance with their basic line on this question, will reveal, I believe, a kind of mingling of the two concepts, so that we get no clear distinction between them. Comrade Germain's discussion of the impossibility of making a start in building socialism in Rumania, Luxembourg or Paraguay is an instance.

If this conjecture at the source of the new criterion is correct, we also have a possible explanation for the extreme reluctance of many comrades to pin the label "workers' state" on any of these countries. The label is too closely associated in their minds with categories properly belonging under the general heading of "socialism." They do not make a clear distinction between a workers' state and a land of socialism. The penalty for that, however, is the inability to make a clear distinction between a workers' state and capitalism.

However, whatever the source of the new criterion about "real planning" may be, it appears obvious to me that the comrades who have sponsored it will be forced to drop it as the discussion brings greater clarity into the questions facing us.

The Category of the "Workers' State"

One of the easiest errors to slip into when considering this question is to make a kind of fetish of the category "workers' state." All of us tend to think of it as something glorious that arose to put an end to the blood and filth of capitalism. To this day an aura surrounds the words "workers' state" because of all associations with Lenin and Trotsky and the great emancipating struggle they led. We therefore find difficulty connecting it with anything base, and even when we insist on its degeneration in the USSR a brightness still clings to it. We want it to be something noble and great and inspiring.

This is one of the sources of the incapacity of many people to make a distinction between the workers' state and the regime resting on it. The state which has won their adherence is seen in the image of Stalin.

Others who have learned to hate Stalin, turn away from the workers' state with as little true understanding. The attraction has simply turned into its opposite.

To make a scientific appraisal, however, we must learn to cut through the superficial appearance. The state should be regarded as expressing a relation between classes. It is a relation of coercion that takes the form mainly of a civil bureaucracy and armed forces. Through this apparatus one class coerces or oppresses another.

The expression of this relation is not limited to a fixed form. "The forms of bourgeois states are exceedingly variegated," Lenin said. He at once added, of course, that "their essence is the same: in one way or another, all these states are in the last analysis inevitably a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." Similarly, Lenin continues, "The transition from capitalism to communism will certainly bring a great variety and abundance of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be only one: the dictatorship of the proletariat." (State and Revolution, p.31.)

The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, as we all know, is based on private property in the means of production. To maintain this social relation it oppresses the working class.

The dictatorship of the proletariat begins with the elevation of the working class into a ruling class in place of the capitalists. The task of the new power is to end the social relation peculiar to the capitalist class. But this does not occur over night. Even a model workers' state is still nothing but a hang-over of capitalist society. On top of this, a workers' state is forced to maintain for a time, even in the best of circumstances, bourgeois modes of distributing the national income.

We have a contradictory reality -- a state that is based on destruction of bourgeois property forms and the nationalization of economy but which still retains vestiges of capitalism.

When this state eventually begins to wither away as the productive forces expand and all danger of a capitalist restoration vanishes, then we can first begin to speak of socialism, the lower stage of communism. If we call a workers' state "socialist" it is more because of its aims and tendencies than what it is when it first emerges from the womb of capitalism.

A workers' state is a transitional state, transitional between capitalism and socialism.

A healthy workers' state carries this transition through as rapidly as possible by extending the revolution along the international spiral. But history has forced us to include in our general category a workers' state that is not healthy, one that is retreating toward capitalism. This degenerated workers' state, spilling over the frontiers fixed at the close of World War I, has upset capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe and given rise to formations that are pretty much replicas of the USSR. Their fate is intimately bound up with that of the Soviet Union. If the USSR must

be included in our general category of a workers' state, I do not think it is incorrect to include Yugoslavia and the other Eastern European countries where the capitalists have been displaced as the ruling class.

Social Content and Political Form

In November, 1937, Trotsky wrote a most illuminating article on the character of the USSR. The title is "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State? Political Form and Social Content." This article was Trotsky's response to Burnham and Carter when they first brought out their doubts about the Soviet Union being a workers' state.

Written in a pedagogical manner, it picks up the theoretical threads of the pamphlet written four years earlier, The Soviet Union and the Fourth International. Trotsky explains the difference between the economic and social content of a workers' state and the variegated political forms that it can assume.

Here is one of Trotsky's illuminating instances: "The domination of the Social Democracy in the State and in the Soviets (Germany 1918-1919) had nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat inasmuch as it left bourgeois property inviolable. But the regime which guards the expropriated and nationalized property from imperialists is, independent of political forms, the dictatorship of the proletariat." You will note that Trotsky does not include "real planning" in his criteria. He says "the regime which guards the expropriated and nationalized property from imperialists."

By way of symmetry he shows why a fascist regime must be considered capitalist. "So long as fascism with its barbaric methods defends private property in the means of production, the state remains bourgeois under the fascist rule." I know that none of our comrades will disagree with this. I cite it only to show that Trotsky's decisive criterion for determining a capitalist state was the fact that its regime "defends private property in the means of production."

"Only the intrusion of a revolutionary or a counter-revolutionary force in property relations can change the class nature of the state," Trotsky emphasizes. Then he continues: "But does not history really know of cases of class conflict between the economy and the state? It does! When the Third Estate seized power, society for a period of years still remained feudal. In the first months of Soviet rule the proletariat reigned on the basis of bourgeois economy. In the field of agriculture the dictatorship of the proletariat operated for a number of years on the basis of petty-bourgeois economy (to a considerable degree it does so even now). Should a bourgeois counter-revolution succeed in Russia, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon nationalized economy. 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. 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."

This paragraph deserves the closest study and thought, in my opinion, for the light it can shed on the events in Eastern Europe. For one thing, it seems to me to place the question of the class relations in agriculture in their properly subordinate place in determining the character of the state.

More important, it indicates the contradiction that can exist for a time between the economy and state during a transition period. Finally, it reaffirms the Marxist law that a fundamental change in property relations cannot occur without the intrusion of a revolutionary or counter-revolutionary force. The events in Eastern Europe constitute a test of these propositions. The problem is to work out how they either confirm or invalidate Trotsky's theses.

This cannot be done without a thorough understanding of what Trotsky says about the relation between our revolutionary norms and the reality that we must appraise according to scientific criteria,

Criteria and Norms

"It is the substitution of a subjective, 'normative' method for that of an objective, dialectical," Trotsky continues, "which renders it difficult for many comrades to form a correct sociological appraisal of the USSR. Not without reason do Burnham and Carter say that the Soviet Union cannot be considered a workers' state 'in the traditional sense given to this term by Marxism.' This simply means that the USSR does not correspond to the norms of a workers' state as set forth in our program."

To illustrate his meaning, Trotsky uses the familiar analogy between a workers' state and a trade union. Our norm, embodied in the program we fight for, calls for a trade union to be an organization of class struggle. But reality gives a different kind of trade union, in fact a great variety of them. Some of them are definitely reactionary but that doesn't mean they aren't trade unions.

Trotsky then tells us by what criteria we can distinguish both trade unions and workers' states: "The class character of the state is determined by its relation to the forms of property in the means of production. The character of such a workers' organization as that of a trade union is determined by its relation to the distribution of national income." Because William Green & Co. defend private property in the means of production they are bourgeois. So long as the AFL bureaucracy is forced to defend the workers' share of the national income, however, they continue to head genuine trade unions. "This objective symptom is sufficient in all important cases to permit us to draw a line of demarcation between the most reactionary trade union and an organization of scabs."

"The function of Stalin, like the function of Green, has a dual character. Stalin serves the bureaucracy and thus the world bourgeoisie; but he cannot defend the bureaucracy other than by defending that social foundation which the bureaucracy exploits in its own interests. To that extent does Stalin defend nationalized property from imperialist attacks and from the too impatient and avaricious layers of this very bureaucracy. However, he carries through this

defense with methods that prepare the general destruction of Soviet society."

Then comes a most interesting observation: "Historical development has accustomed us to the most varied kind of trade unions: militant, reformist, revolutionary, reactionary, liberal, and Catholic. It is otherwise with a workers' government. Such a phenomenon we see for the first time. That accounts for our inclination to approach the USSR exclusively from the point of view of the norms of the revolutionary program. Meanwhile the workers' state is an objective historical fact which is being subjected to the influence of different historical forces and can as we see come into full contradiction with 'traditional' norms."

As if anticipating the objection that our norms must be based on reality and consequently are not Utopian ideals, Trotsky observes, "It is of course necessary not to forget that we expect programmatic norms to be realized only if they are the generalized expression of the progressive tendencies of the historical process itself."

How this works out in practice, Trotsky illustrates as follows: "The programmatic definition of a union would sound approximately like this: an organization of workers of a profession or of an industry with the objective of (1) struggling against capital for the amelioration of the conditions of the workers, (2) participating in the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, (3) participating in the organization of economy on a socialist basis. If we compared this 'normative' definition with the actual reality, we should find ourselves constrained to say: there is not a single fact, that is to say, of the generalized expression of the development to the particular manifestation of this same development -- such a formal, ultimistic, non-dialectic counterpoise between program and reality is absolutely lifeless and does not open any road for the intervention of the revolutionary party. In the meantime the actual opportunistic unions under the pressure of capitalist disintegration can and under the conditions of our correct policies within the unions, must approach our programmatic norms and play a progressive historical role. This, of course, presupposes a complete change in leadership."

If we extend this line of thought to the complicated problem of Eastern Europe will it help us reach a solution? I think it will. Certainly it must be admitted in theory that besides the USSR other particular instances of workers' states may deviate from the norm. Trotsky did not live to see the appearance of such new cases, but he showed us how to approach them. Once again, let's see how he utilized the example of the Soviet Union:

"The pressure of imperialism on the Soviet Union has as its aim the alteration of the very nature of Soviet society. The struggle -- today peaceful, tomorrow military -- concerns the forms of property. In the capacity of a gear wheel in this struggle, the bureaucracy leans now on the proletariat against imperialism, now on imperialism against the proletariat, in order to increase its own authority. (How well have we seen this illustrated in Eastern Europe! --J.H.) At the same time it mercilessly exploits its role as distributor of

the meagre wants of life in order to safeguard its own well-being and power. By this token the rule of the proletariat assumes an abridged, curbed, distorted character. One can with full justification say that the proletariat, ruling in one backward and isolated country, still remains an oppressed class. The source of oppression is world imperialism; the mechanism of transmission of the oppression -- the bureaucracy. If in these words: 'a ruling and at the same time an oppressed class' there is a contradiction, then it flows not from the mistakes of thought but from the contradiction in the very situation of the USSR. It is precisely because of this that we reject the theory of socialism in one country.

"The recognition of the USSR as a workers' state -- not a type but the mutilation of a type -- does not at all signify a theoretical and political amnesty for the Soviet bureaucracy. On the contrary, its reactionary character is fully revealed only in the light of the contradiction between its anti-proletarian politics and the needs of the workers' state. Only by posing the question in this manner does our exposure of the crimes of the Stalinist clique gain full motive force."

In the light of these instructive remarks of Trotsky are we not justified in asking whether or not in our approach to the class character of the Eastern Europe countries we have not been guilty of trying to force these states to fit our norm of a workers' state rather than making an objective appraisal of the overturn in property relations? Isn't that why we hesitate to call them by their right name, "workers' states"?

Up to now I have not added any adjective to this category although it is obvious that one is required. I am quite prepared to take any that seems most appropriate, "deformed," "degenerated," "mutilated" -- any word that will indicate most clearly that we mean a monstrous and not a normal instance of the type. In the case of the Soviet Union, Trotsky was willing to go even further on the adjective so long as the noun -- the basic category -- was preserved.

Here is what he says on page 25 of In Defense of Marxism: "Some voices cry out: 'If we continue to recognize the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state.' This argument attempts to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality. But haven't we observed from day to day since 1923 how the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role on the international arena? Have we forgotten the experience of the Chinese Revolution, of the 1926 general strike in England and finally the very fresh experience of the Spanish Revolution? There are two completely counter-revolutionary workers' internationals. These critics have apparently forgotten this 'category.' The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the United States and other countries support completely the counter-revolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie. This does not prevent us from labelling them trade unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state? In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has

conquered power. The difference in attitude in these two cases is explainable by the simple fact that the trade unions have a long history and we have become accustomed to consider them as realities and not simply as 'categories' in our program. But, as regards the workers' state there is being evinced an inability to learn to approach it as a real historical fact which has not subordinated itself to our program."

Let us visualize the USSR as a reactionary trade union where the bureaucracy practices racketeering, concludes sell-out agreements with the bosses, strong-arms the membership and rubs out opposition voices wherever they are heard. Is it stretching the analogy too much to visualize the bureaucracy of this union, after overcoming one terrible threat of being crushed and facing another even more dangerous threat, now trying to strengthen the union's position in their own peculiar fashion by organizing what they consider vital territory?

Is it stretching the analogy to consider these bureaucrats so fearful of the introduction of a little democracy and fresh forces -- even though they're hungry for the dues -- that they are extremely hesitant and fearful about admitting these new locals to full membership and will even use the help of the bosses if necessary to make sure of their bureaucratic grip?

Suppose that some of the membership in these new Eastern European locals rebel against the bureaucrats even though they were trained in the same school of bad unionism and are forced to split. Should it be so difficult for us to determine whether they are genuine unions or not?

Why can't we approach these new formations in Eastern Europe with the same assurance we would if they had been born in a conflict between a union-smashing employers' association and the bureaucracy-ridden Teamsters' Union headed by Tobin instead of a conflict between German imperialism and the USSR headed by Stalin? It seems to me we can if we stick to the old criteria and don't drag in innovations that force us to call them scab outfits and company unions simply because they're small, weak and lack the resources of the giant parent body that gave them the impulse to organize and is now winding them in bureaucratic chains. At the next stage they can provide the spark for a new mighty surge forward, especially if we can find a means of bringing our program to their attention.

Emphasizing the Differences

Before turning to what appears to me to be the correct solution of the problem of Eastern Europe, I want to take up some of the arguments that have been advanced against calling these countries "workers' states."

First, the argument that we should emphasize the differences between Yugoslavia, say, and the USSR rather than the similarities. How this can get us anywhere in determining what kind of state we have before us seems obscure. We can agree to emphasize the differences and still not move ahead an inch.

Emphasizing the differences between a vicious bull dog and a litter of Pekingese pups doesn't help us to determine whether the newly-born animals are misshapen dogs or simply degenerated wolves on the road to structural assimilation with the hungry bull dog. We must still decide on our criteria of what constitutes a dog.

You can list all the similarities and differences between Yugoslavia and the USSR, emphasize one or the other, and still you are faced with the questions: Are these quantitative or qualitative differences? How do you tell the USSR from a capitalist state? How do you tell the class character of Yugoslavia? Does the same criteria apply in both cases? What is the qualitative point of change in determining a reversal in the class character of a state?

Strangely enough, the comrades who insist on our emphasizing the differences between the USSR and Yugoslavia also insist on our emphasizing the similarities between Yugoslavia and China. They ask, if Yugoslavia is a workers' state, what about China? The truth, however, is concrete. To determine the character of the states in Eastern Europe, each one has to be appraised in its own right. We have to know what has happened to the bourgeoisie, what has happened to property relations. This likewise holds for China where the greatest upheaval since 1917 is occurring. The problem of China fully deserves individual treatment and we need not try to merge it at this stage with the problem of Yugoslavia and so dissolve the concrete in the abstract.

Dependence on the World Market

It is contended that countries like Yugoslavia are far more dependent on the world market than the USSR and consequently cannot be considered workers' states. But this does not determine the class character of these countries. It simply shows that they are weaker and far more easily affected by external pressures than the Soviet Union. This fact offers a positive point of approach in advancing our program.

Pertinent to this contention, we should remember that as the USSR advanced, it became more dependent on the world market. This increased the danger to the USSR but did not change its class character.

Trotsky pointed to the growing dependence of the USSR on the world market as another argument against the pernicious theory of socialism in one country. (See Third International After Lenin, "The Dependence of the USSR on World Economy." p.43.) Trotsky could not convince the majority because the self-sufficiency of the USSR loomed too large at the time.

In the case of countries with a greater degree of dependence on the world market, this task should be easier. We point to the dependence to show how vital it is to win political allies abroad and to advance the program of revolutionary socialism.

This false criterion seems to be derived from our norm calling for an end to dependence on the world market through extending the

socialist revolution. It is not, however, one of the classic Trotskyist criteria of a workers' state,

"Instability"

Another "criterion" advanced is the relative instability of these countries compared to the Soviet Union.

Of course they are more unstable. If they are not absorbed by the USSR or do not succeed in winning their independence, their life span will be incomparably shorter than that of the USSR unless they conduct truly revolutionary politics on the international arena. That opens up possibilities for the growth of Trotskyism in these lands if we are able to penetrate them with our ideas. But the relative instability of these regimes certainly is not a valid criterion in determining their class character. At best it cannot be anything but an indication that something fundamental such as civil war, revolution or counter-revolution, an acute class struggle, is occurring, or that the country is weak relative to the big world powers.

Such considerations seem to have been thrown into the hopper with no thought of their relevance or specific weight but simply on the hunch that they can't do any harm and might do some good. Sheer quantity might produce a qualitative change in the minds of those who have been thinking about calling a country like Yugoslavia a workers' state.

The National Boundaries

As the Trotskyist movement has insisted thousands of times, the old national boundaries today are as reactionary as private property in the means of production. Our socialist norm calls for their abolition so that humanity can move forward. But does that mean that Yugoslavia, confined within its narrow national boundaries cannot be characterized for that reason as a workers' state?

This is really a corollary of the argument about "real planning" and stands or falls with it. Our norm for building the socialist society calls for "real planning" and you can't have real planning until you do away with the reactionary national boundaries. That's why we call for the abolition of national boundaries as an essential part of the struggle for socialism. But we are faced with the problem of appraising real formations in which we must find a foothold for our norms.

Let's take an example. We call for an independent Soviet Ukraine. Suppose a real movement gets under way and the Ukraine achieves independence under a Soviet regime. The Kremlin of course could never survive the political consequences of such an event. However, in theory it might hang on for a time. Would we then refuse to call the Ukraine a workers' state because planning would be hampered by the narrow, stifling national boundaries?

Objections of a More Fundamental Character

These objections are not very solid. However, those reluctant to pin the label "workers' state" on any of the Eastern European

countries have much weightier arguments in their arsenal. These can be placed under three general headings: (1) class relations in production, (2) pillage and distribution of the national income, (3) political consequences to the Trotskyist movement. This is of course only a rough approximation. I make it only in order to underline the fact that arguments coming under these different headings thereby carry different weight.

Of decisive importance are those dealing with the class relations in production. Marxists determine the class nature of a state from the relations in production, not from the forms of distribution (even though the two in the historic sense are reciprocally related) or from the immediate political consequences to revolutionary socialism.

First of all it is necessary to underline once again the facts established by the Plenum resolution: that the "propertied classes in these countries" are "dying"; that the conclusion of the resolution as to the class character of the buffer zone "does not at all imply that the bourgeoisie is in power as the dominant class in these countries."

The liquidation of the bourgeoisie as the dominant class in these countries is the cornerstone of the position that they must be considered workers' states. If the bourgeoisie still constituted the ruling class, then nationalization by itself would not make these countries workers' states. However, the facts indicate that we must characterize that possibility as an abstraction which does not correspond with the true situation.

If the resolution is wrong in this respect, if the comrades familiar with the facts have not given us an accurate picture, and the bourgeoisie actually still remains the dominant class, then it would be necessary to say that the states are capitalist. But the presentation of the facts about Eastern Europe appears to me to be the strongest side of the resolution.

Besides the displacement of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class, we have the virtually complete conversion of industry, of the banking system, of communications and transport into state-owned property. These are heavy facts and must be given their due weight in any Marxist analysis, for they concern the decisive sphere of class relations in production.

Because it comes in this general sphere, the argument that none of these countries, including Yugoslavia, can be considered "workers' states" because they are predominantly agricultural and agriculture has not been nationalized, is in my opinion the strongest argument for calling them "capitalist." It demands careful consideration.

The Question of Agriculture

That these countries are predominantly agricultural is most certainly true. However, as we know, agriculture develops much more slowly toward advanced capitalist forms than does industry. Even in the United States, agriculture is far more backward than industry and consequently plays a much less decisive role in the social and

political life of the country. If the bourgeoisie are overthrown in a country that is predominantly agricultural, and industry becomes state property, the government replaces the capitalist class as the hub around which the agricultural spokes revolve. Thus the nationalization of the land, important and essential as it is, does not have the same weight as the breaking of bourgeois rule and the nationalization of industry.

In Eastern Europe, to gauge the relative strength of agriculture as compared with industry, we must also know what proportion of agriculture was represented by big capitalist farmers, what proportion by medium capitalist farmers and what proportion by peasants producing primarily for immediate family use, and how powerful the feudal vestiges were when the Red Army moved across these lands. Then we must know the result of the peasant attacks on landed property. What proportion of agriculture today still remains in the hands of feudalistic landlords? Of big capitalist farmers? Of small farmers? Of peasants so poverty-stricken they do not produce primarily on a commodity basis? What is the real relationship of class forces today?

If, for example, the grip of the landlords has been broken, the land redistributed, and the big farms either divided or taken over by the state; if the government is pushing a program of collectivization, then the failure up to now to nationalize the land is less important than the other criteria in this sphere. Under such conditions, command of industry is decisive and to cite merely the proportion of agriculture a country has in general -- without differentiating its class composition -- can be quite misleading in determining the class character of the state.

In the case of Poland and Finland, Trotsky forecast that in the civil war accompanying the advance of the Red Army at the opening of World War II measures would be taken against the big landholders. He turned out to be right.

Similar action was taken against the big landholders after the war in Eastern Europe. The caution and delay exercised by the Stalinists in this field in going further could be ascribed to an effort to win the small peasants or at least neutralize them -- to give them guarantees for the time being. Such guarantees can always be taken away, since legal documents are only scraps of paper to the Stalinists. In agriculture as in so many other fields, it is necessary to go by specific actions and not by the official pronouncements of Stalinist "program," important as they are from a different point of view.

An additional observation should be made at this point. In our desire to solve the problem of the character of the Eastern Europe countries we should not overlook our own political problems here at home. One of the problems we have yet to work out in detail is how to win the active sympathy of the farmers,

The main line is given in our Transition Program, but it is only a beginning: "The program for the nationalization of the land and collectivization of agriculture should be so drawn that from its very basis it should exclude the possibility of expropriation of small

farmers and their compulsory collectivization. The farmer will remain owner of his plot of land as long as he himself believes it possible or necessary. In order to rehabilitate the program of socialism in the eyes of the farmer, it is necessary to expose mercilessly the Stalinist methods of collectivization which are dictated not by the interests of the farmers or workers but by the interests of the bureaucracy."

This gives us a good hint of how far back we must lean in this question for political reasons. Note in passing how the bourgeois democratic task, "nationalization of the land," is combined with the socialist task, "collectivization of agriculture."

The Transition Program continues: "The expropriation of the expropriators likewise does not signify forcible confiscation of the property of artisans and shopkeepers. On the contrary, workers' control of banks and trusts -- even more, the nationalization of these concerns, can create for the urban petty bourgeoisie incomparably more favorable conditions of credit, purchase, and sale than is possible under the unchecked domination of the monopolies. Dependence upon private capital will be replaced by dependence upon the State, which will be the more attentive to the needs of its small co-workers and agents the stronger the toilers themselves will keep control of the State in their hands.

"The practical participation of the exploited farmers in the control of different fields of economy will allow them to decide for themselves whether or not it would be profitable for them to go over to collective working of the land -- at what date and on what scale. Industrial workers should consider themselves duty bound to show farmers every cooperation in traveling this road: through the trade unions, factory committees, and, most important, through a workers' and farmers' government."

One of the biggest crimes of Stalinism has been to forcibly expropriate small farmers and businessmen against their will and so bring discredit on socialism among the whole petty bourgeoisie. In working out the tasks of our own revolution, we have the chore of emphasizing against Stalinism that by nationalization we do not mean forcible expropriation of any of the small farmers or businessmen. We have to "rehabilitate the program of socialism in the eyes of the farmer."

This attitude toward the petty bourgeoisie is not motivated primarily by political considerations, although it is obvious what weight they have. The tactic is based on much deeper grounds.

As Lenin explained, "Theoretically, nationalization is the 'ideally' pure development of capitalism in agriculture." (See Selected Works of V. I. Lenin, Vol. III, pp. 139-278 and Vol. XII, pp. 304-335.) Lenin pointed out that nationalization of the land could speed the development of capitalist relations in agriculture. The bourgeoisie, however, never nationalized the land in any of their revolutions against feudalism. They did not do so because (1) they did not carry out their historic tasks to their logical conclusion; (2) on the appearance of the working class as an independent force in

society they compromised with feudalistic reaction, permitting certain of its forms of exploitation to remain as vestiges. This extra burden on society was entailed by capitalist fear of the proletariat.

Because the bourgeoisie are no longer capable of carrying out this democratic task where it is required, the workers' state has fallen heir to the job. But the workers' state undertakes nationalization of the land not to speed the development of capitalist relations in agriculture but to move forward to socialization of agriculture, which is its goal.

With the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the conversion of industry into state-owned property, a force of completely different order than the capitalist class becomes master of society. At first sight it might seem all the more necessary for the workers' state -- because it is more advanced -- to display utter ruthlessness with all these vestiges of the long outmoded past. But we have a qualitatively different relationship from that which existed between capitalism and the feudal remnants that survived under its rule. It is sufficient at first to expropriate the big landlords intimately inter-linked with the big capitalists. This leaves the small farmers, shopkeepers and artisans -- the classes, which, "no matter how numerically strong they may be, essentially are representative survivals of pre-capitalist forms of production." (Transition Program.)

As the workers' state, particularly in a highly industrialized country like the United States, unfolds its dynamic power, the danger of a re-birth of capitalism from the petty bourgeoisie reaches the vanishing point. Even though the workers' state offers them better opportunities for a good living than capitalism while still permitting them to continue their habitual mode of life, the socialist opportunities opening up on every hand are so much more attractive that most of them of their own free volition will give up the dead past and join in the great work of pioneering the new society. Those incapable of making the change need not be molested. The younger generation, freed from the stifling, fear-ridden atmosphere of capitalism, will grow up with new horizons and completely different concepts of what constitutes the best way to live.

These considerations compel us to say that nationalization of the land, with all that it entails, must be viewed in a somewhat different light than nationalization of industries expropriated from the bourgeoisie in determining the class character of the state.

Does Pillage Determine the Character of a State?

Let us now turn to the important but less weighty arguments concerning pillage and the distribution of national income.

"In view of the pillage inflicted on the Eastern European countries," it is asked, "are we not obliged to call them 'capitalist'?"

If a gangster holds up a worker, takes his pay envelope, his week-end sack of groceries, his shirt, pants, shoes and street-car fare and gives him a kick down the street, are we obliged to call the worker a gangster too?

We determine what class the worker belongs to by his relation in the factory to the capitalist class and not by the assorted loan sharks, trade union bureaucrats, strong-arm artists and other parasites who victimize him.

As Trotsky said of the Kremlin vermin: "To put it plainly, insofar as the bureaucracy robs the people (and this is done in various ways by every bureaucracy), we have to deal not with class exploitation, in the scientific sense of the word, but with social parasitism, although on a very large scale." (The Soviet Union and the Fourth International, p. 20.)

Our opponents rejoin: "But what about the recognition of foreign debts and the compensation in some instances to foreign capitalists whose holdings were nationalized?"

We will not ask how much the foreign capitalists have realized or expect to realize from the Stalinist recognition of these imperialist financial demands. Actual payment will in all probability depend on the international relationship of forces and how essential it is to the Stalinists and the Tito regime to meet the price demanded by the imperialist bandits for essential goods. Like other international "debts" owed by European countries, they have been "recognized." Yet if they are never paid it will not violate the European tradition.

Even if they are forced to pay this foreign tribute, however, it does not make these countries capitalist.

"You forget the exploitation imposed on the Eastern European countries by the Kremlin through mixed companies and other means. Doesn't this exploitation oblige us to call them 'capitalist'?"

Yes, it does -- if you consider the USSR to be capitalist and the "buffer zone" to be a colonial area where this capitalist USSR is practicing imperialist exploitation. However, if you still consider the USSR to be a degenerated workers' state, it does not seem quite accurate to me to call this form of pillage "capitalist exploitation." The "exploitation" conducted by the USSR in Eastern Europe is symmetrical to imperialist exploitation just as the police regime in the USSR is symmetrical to a fascist regime. But the two are not identical. Just as pillage does not necessarily make the victim "capitalist," so it does not necessarily make those who practice it "capitalist."

Comes the inevitable outcry: "You want us to settle for these revolting formations as 'workers' states'! You call into question the whole idea of emancipating humanity from the filth and decay of capitalism through the workers' state. The whole point of a workers' state is that the workers create a new type structure in which the most essential item is the participation of the workers themselves in the government. Where does this exist in Eastern Europe?"

Our sympathy is wholly with the comrades who feel this way about it. We too would have felt much happier if history had seen fit right now to give us another example of a model workers' state, such as the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky, instead of these

deformed offspring of the degenerated workers' state. What can we say except that Stalinism continues to befoul the name of communism and everything associated with it? What can we do but continue the onerous task of trying to clean out this Augean stable? To succeed in this, and especially to help the workers and poor farmers in Eastern Europe develop a powerful opposition movement to Stalinism, demands first of all clarity in theory and a precise scientific accounting of what has happened in these lands. If you can't smell violets don't blame us. We have only a theoretical fork to work with and not a revolutionary river like Hercules.

As for the argument itself, let us recall Trotsky's answer to the same argument applied to the USSR: "Where and in what books can one find a faultless prescription for a proletarian dictatorship? The dictatorship of a class does not mean by a long shot that its entire mass always participates in the management of the state. This we have seen, first of all, in the case of the propertied classes. The nobility ruled through the monarchy before which the noble stood on his knees. The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie took on comparatively developed democratic forms only under the conditions of capitalist upswing when the ruling class had nothing to fear." Trotsky then cites the example of Germany where the bourgeoisie still ruled although "politically it is placed under complete subjection to Hitler and his bands." Despite Hitler's political dictatorship, "the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie remains inviolate in Germany, because all the conditions of its social hegemony have been preserved and strengthened. By expropriating the bourgeoisie politically Hitler saved it, even if temporarily, from economic expropriation."

Examples like this, used by Trotsky, should be studied. They contain the key to understanding the Stalinist role not only in the USSR but in those areas where it extends its rule and overturns property relations.

"Anticipating our subsequent arguments," Trotsky continues, "our opponents will hasten to refute: although the bourgeoisie, as an exploiting minority can also preserve its hegemony by means of a Fascist dictatorship, the proletariat building a socialist society must manage its government itself, directly drawing ever wider masses of the people into the task of government. In its general form, this argument is undebatable, but in the given case it merely means that the present Soviet dictatorship is a sick dictatorship." (The Soviet Union and the Fourth International, p. 6-7.)

Trotsky on Poland and Finland

Although it cannot be decisive in a scientific analysis, one of the arguments raised against our position that demands most thoughtful evaluation is the contention that it implies revision of the Marxist theory of the state. It is held that we leave the door open to the possibility that the class character of the state can be changed by manipulation from the top, by "cold" means. This in turn implies, it is contended, a concession to Stalinism and even to Social Democratic revisionism -- to Stalinism because it would then have a historic future; to Social Democratic revisionism because its theory of achieving socialism through manipulation of capitalist

government posts would then turn out to be correct. In that case, what perspective remains open to the Fourth International?

If we are to talk of revision, I think that the comrades who support the Plenum resolution should first make sure there are no flaws in their position. A shift has been made on this question as can be seen from the differences between the theses of the World Congress which say that the destruction of capitalism is "impossible" without the revolutionary mobilization of the masses and the Plenum resolution which explains how the bourgeoisie were ousted as the ruling class in the Eastern European countries by "cold" means.

My own impression is that the resolution concedes too much. It brings into question the Marxist theory of the state unless abstract references to the domestic and world relationship of forces can satisfy you as an adequate explanation of the apparent violation of the laws of the class struggle.

To find our way out of this trap it may be helpful to turn again to Trotsky's writings on Poland and Finland and refresh our memories on how he approached the same general problem. First of all on the importance of the Kremlin's actions in these territories for our appraisal of the USSR:

"Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 18.)

This is a most important consideration for us today. If the rights of private property have been left inviolate in the occupied territories, as some comrades think, and the Moscow government really has the perspective of limiting itself to "control" after the fascist pattern or in the "capitalist" way, it becomes our duty to begin thinking of a new appraisal of the character of the USSR.

In 1939, however, Trotsky foresaw the more probable variant. Instead of limiting itself to "control" of "private property in the occupied areas," said Trotsky, "It is more likely...that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land-owners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories."

Isn't this an accurate forecast of the events in Eastern Europe in the post-war period? Trotsky continues:

"Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree:

'Serfdom is abolished.' This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants, nor by democratic principles, but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property, so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR."

This fruitful analogy could well be developed it appears to me for publication in Fourth International. A study of the similarities between the consequences of the advance of Napoleon's armies and those of Stalin's armies would be of absorbing interest for the light it would cast on what is happening today in Eastern Europe.

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

Trotsky followed with the minutest attention the impulse the approach of the Red Army gave to the masses of Poland. He characterized what happened as "civil war." It is obvious why he did. Overturns in property relations cannot occur without the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Consequently he was keenly interested in how the facts forecast by Marxist law would turn out and how far they would deviate, under the influence of Stalinism, from our programmatic norms for a revolutionary mobilization of the masses.

Again in Finland, Trotsky watched for similar manifestations. There even such symptoms as brother fighting brother were taken by him as manifestations of "civil war."

In an article for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, written in January 1940, Trotsky explained: "In order to include Finland in the framework of the USSR -- and such is now the obvious aim of the Kremlin -- it is necessary to sovietize her, i.e., carry through an expropriation of the higher layer of landowners and capitalists. To accomplish such a revolution in the relations of property is impossible without a civil war. The Kremlin will do everything in order to attract to its side the Finnish industrial workers and the lower stratum of the farmers. Once the Moscow oligarchy finds itself compelled to play with the fire of war and revolution, it will try at least to warm its hands. It will undoubtedly achieve certain successes in this way." (Fourth International, August 1942, p. 254.)

Observe that Trotsky does not refer to "real planning." He calls the expropriation of the higher layer of landowners and capitalists a "revolution in the relations of property." Observe too that Trotsky did not expect civil war in its classic form. "Warm

its hands," he said of Moscow's playing with the fire of war and revolution.

Speaking more specifically of the civil war in his "Open Letter to Burnham," Trotsky said: "Naturally, this is a civil war of a special type. It does not arise spontaneously from the depths of the popular masses. It is not conducted under the leadership of the Finnish revolutionary party based on mass support. It is introduced on bayonets from without. It is controlled by the Moscow bureaucracy." (In Defense of Marxism, p.89.) In other words, this civil war departs widely from our "norms" but nevertheless the fact that a civil war is occurring must be recognized.

Trotsky visualized two stages in the Soviet advance. The first one was the stage of the "deformed," "distorted" or, to use Trotsky's phrase, "special type" civil war. The second stage, he warned, would be the swift political strangulation of the movement by the Moscow bureaucracy when it established its totalitarian rule in the new areas. In a letter, Trotsky wrote: "It is not necessary to repeat that the civil war in Finland as was the case in Poland would have a limited, semi-stifled nature and that it can, in the next stage, go over into a civil war between the Finnish masses and the Moscow bureaucracy. We know this at least as clearly as the opposition and we openly warn the masses. But we analyze the process as it is and we don't identify the first stage with the second one." (In Defense of Marxism, p.71.) We can add also that Trotsky didn't demand that the civil war meet his norms, which as everyone knows were of the highest, before he would consent to characterize it as civil war, even if of a "special type."

If you study Trotsky's writings of this period closely, you cannot help being struck at how well his analysis of the Polish and Finnish events anticipated what happened when the Soviet forces moved westward against the German imperialist armies. This follows from the fact that Trotsky's analysis was not simply an analysis after the event, it was a prognosis of what would happen upon the expansion of the degenerated workers' state under Stalinist domination.

There was the first stage, far more distinct than in 1939-40, of civil war. What had been attempted in 1939-40 under the contemptuous gaze of Hitler and then interrupted by the most frightful war in history, was now resumed on the heels of the retreating German armies and in face of the colossal defeat of the Nazi regime. This stage was more distinct because the uprisings were more spontaneous, welling from much deeper roots and a wider base. After all, the masses were responding to the advance of a victorious Red Army, a Red Army victorious over the Nazi military machine, and not one that had been mauled by the small Finnish forces. That was a tremendous new fact. The Kremlin didn't need to issue appeals to the masses as in the pre-war situation. It was faced with a different problem. How to keep the masses in hand? In many instances, the peasants finished off the big landlords. The workers in many factories formed committees to take over.

Stage two came fast, the political crackdown. The unbridled character of this crackdown was a measure of the depth of the revo-

lutionary impulse touched off by the advance of the Red Army. That impulse frightened the Kremlin. This was fire that could spread with lightning speed. That was why they utilized sections of the bourgeoisie, particularly their political representatives and functionaries, to bring the political whip down on the face of the masses. The political danger arising from the revolutionary impulse impressed the Kremlin far more than the political, economic and military danger from the enfeebled bourgeoisie bowing and scraping before the bayonets of the eastern conqueror.

Protected by the guns of the Red Army, the Stalinists took key positions in the civil bureaucracy and the armed forces, paying special attention to the armed forces, which in conditions of civil war, no matter now attenuated, play a more decisive role than the civil bureaucracy which is normally in control. We can see how this works out almost any week in the Latin American countries when those in control of the armed forces topple the civil regime. Having got the political bridle on the masses, the Stalinists then turned against the remnants of the bourgeoisie and their political agents which they had previously used against the proletariat and began the process of shattering their remaining positions.

One cannot help recalling how the relatively strong bourgeoisie in Western Europe used the Stalinists at the end of the war to stave off revolution, gain time, strengthen their political positions with the help of American military and economic might and then tossed the Stalinist officials like squeezed lemons into the garbage pail. In Eastern Europe, with the help of Russian arms and the GPU, the Stalinists were sufficiently strong to reverse this general tactic on the political field, using bourgeois agents to help entrench their own bureaucratic regime and then discarding or absorbing them. This stage was more or less combined with the acceleration and extension of nationalization.

The Stalinists even mobilized the workers against the bourgeoisie where they felt sufficiently sure of keeping the action under control. Paul G. Stevens, reporting in the March 1, 1948, Militant on the Stalinist use of "Action Committees" in Czechoslovakia, says: "The Stalinists, in accordance with the new Cominform line, are apparently trying to use mass action in order to align Czechoslovakia with Moscow as completely as the rest of Eastern Europe.

"While the Stalinist leaders are basing themselves on mass action, they are proceeding with a caution that reveals their fear of its revolutionary impulse."

To be sure, Comrade Stevens apparently does not believe that this constitutes genuine civil war since he continues: "Should a civil war actually erupt, the likelihood is that the situation will grow out of hand, no matter what the bureaucratic plans." And this estimate is quite correct if by "civil war" you mean an action that corresponds with our norms. Looked at objectively, however, wherein did this action differ from the actions seen in Poland and Finland when the Kremlin moved, or tried to move, forward?

Because of the extreme enfeeblement of the native bourgeoisie, the inability of either German or Allied imperialism to come to their

rescue, and the profound desire of the masses to rid themselves at any cost of the strangling yoke of capitalism, it did not take much more civil war to dispose of this "lumpen-bourgeoisie," as Comrade Stevens once aptly termed them, than you can get out of a good Flit gun. Still it must be characterized as "civil war."

Now, if we do not draw air-tight, metaphysical dividing lines between the various stages of this process in Eastern Europe, but for theoretical purposes consider it as a whole; that is, regard this entire period since the Red Army entered these fringe-lands of the USSR in combat with the German armies as one "moment," an episode in world history, what is it but a social revolution started by the masses under the influence of the Soviet Union and deformed by the political counter-revolution conducted by the Kremlin?

Thus everything is accounted for according to the laws of the class struggle as developed by the founders of Marxism. All we had to do was apply some of Trotsky's teachings and not let our norms of planning and civil war interfere with our appraisal of reality. It appears to me that what has been happening in Eastern Europe offers the most brilliant confirmation of the correctness of Trotsky's analysis and prognosis in 1939-40 and confirms what he taught about the character of the state. What other state in the world could have given the impulse to the events we see today in Eastern Europe in the peculiar form they have taken except the degenerated workers' state? You can trace not only the obvious stamp of the rapacious bureaucracy but even the mark of the mutilated, desecrated October revolution serving notice that it is still alive and carries burning coals.

Our Political Perspective

Will Stalin now withdraw from these countries? The Kremlin is capable of anything. If it could get a sufficiently favorable deal from Washington it might do what it could to help liquidate the steps taken so far or at least retire while Western imperialism tried to do what it did in Greece. But will Washington give such a deal or does the Kremlin expect such an offer? What guarantees can Washington give that would satisfy the Kremlin sufficiently so that it would dare relinquish its grip on Eastern Europe? Will Washington give up the atom bomb? Its colossal preparations for war? What power politician expects American imperialism to clip its own wings and claws?

The perspective of the Kremlin, if it can be judged correctly from the trend visible in Eastern Europe, is to convert these countries into replicas of the republics in the Soviet Union and to either include them officially in the USSR or to absorb them in effect into the economic framework of the Soviet Union while leaving them formally independent.

No one can mistake Stalin's political perspective. It is to crush all signs of the slightest resistance or potential resistance to this course.

Our political perspective must be based on the widespread opposition to Stalinism among the workers and poor farmers and the possi-

bility of its breaking out into the open as in Yugoslavia. This appears to me the most realistic political course. That means, against a bourgeois restoration we defend whatever progressive measures have been taken; against the Kremlin we fight for a genuinely independent Soviet Poland, Soviet Czechoslovakia, etc., on the road toward a Soviet Balkan-Danubian Federation.

Our course should be based on the perspective of Independent Socialist Republics, and if you want the slogan to develop its full potentialities, that means independent of Moscow-directed planning too. Can there be any doubt that Stalin will mobilize every force possible to smash such Republics, to nip any movements in that direction in the bud and to mobilize all possible resources of the planned economy at his disposal to accomplish this counter-revolutionary aim? We have the Kremlin's actions in the case of Yugoslavia. The price of assimilation, of planning organically linked with Moscow's, is abject dependence.

The greatest effectiveness can be given our propaganda if we can point to the truth -- that Stalin will stop at nothing, even the liquidation of a workers' state, to stay in power. The case of Yugoslavia, explained in these terms, would put an exceedingly sharp edge to our political struggle against Stalinism. As Trotsky said of the USSR, "Only by posing the question in this manner does our exposure of the crimes of the Stalinist clique gain full motive force."

I think this makes clear too that our position offers no comfort to Stalinism. In fact, if we base ourselves on the possibility of new opposition movements arising in Eastern Europe, this position should strengthen our case against Stalinism. We show why the Kremlin moved forward as it did, undermining the defenses of the USSR in its reaction to world imperialism and still worse dealing catastrophic setbacks to the revolutionary socialist movement abroad.

Our analysis of the events in Eastern Europe merely points out the positive side of a development that was a major blow to the socialist movement. While the borderlands experienced an upset in property relations, Stalin's henchmen in France and Italy were knifing workers' uprisings in the back. All Europe, including Germany, might have been socialist today were it not for the crimes of Stalinism at the close of the war. Measured against such blows to the world revolution, the progressive steps in Eastern Europe recede into insignificance.

Can It Be Repeated in Western Europe?

Stalinism cannot repeat in the industrially-advanced countries what it did in the backward Eastern European countries. The Western bourgeoisie are too strong. They can get direct help from the arsenals of the United States. They cannot be overthrown without a revolutionary mobilization of the masses that coincides very closely to the "norms" of the Marxist movement.

The events in Eastern Europe do not at all indicate a prolonged lease on life for Stalinism. The whole development constitutes only a brief interlude in history. As Trotsky often said to us, talking

about the perspective facing Stalinism in relation to our efforts to save him from assassination, "The wolf is most dangerous in his death agony." By this analogy drawn from his hunting experience in Russia, Trotsky meant that precisely when Stalinism faced its debacle, it could give not only the illusion of greatest strength but even deliver some of its most terrible blows.

In the rebellion of Yugoslavia, the Kremlin sees the handwriting on the wall. The war merely postponed the denouement as war does with all such processes only to speed them up later by way of historic compensation. Stalinism will commit new monstrous crimes against the struggle for socialism, but precisely in Eastern Europe where it has given the appearance of greatest strength, the threads of the monolithic pattern can begin unravelling.

Military-bureaucratic action, which operates civil war like a flame thrower against isolated detachments, can work only in those specific areas where the bourgeoisie was enfeebled by the war, cut off from the masses, abandoned by its traditional imperialist protectors, subjected to the constrictor-like squeeze of the occupation troops of the Kremlin, and where the masses themselves had illusions at first about Stalinism and the advanced sectors were under its influence.

These concrete conditions do not hold in the west. "But what if the Red Army sweeps to the Atlantic, what then?"

If the Red Army sweeps even to the Adriatic, the curtain may well rise on World War III. It would most certainly signal the opening of World War III if the Kremlin actually lost all contact with reality and undertook the military adventure of plunging forward to the Atlantic. They will hardly be that stupid. The whole course of Stalinism from the beginning has been to try to avoid war (but by means that actually help facilitate the outbreak of war.) The bureaucracy has not changed in this respect. Its fear of war has not decreased after the experience of the German invasion and its basic political attitude toward meeting the threat has not changed.

Consequently a westward march of the Red Army would occur only within the frame of an attack initiated by American imperialism.

Aside from the purely military aspect of the question, an overriding political consideration prevents the Kremlin from moving forward. What happened in Yugoslavia is only a mild sample of the reaction that could be expected in Western Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain or the other highly industrialized Western European countries where great masses of workers are rooted in the old cultural centers. The Kremlin knows this. You can imagine what nightmares the Stalinist bureaucrats suffer over small but highly-industrialized Czechoslovakia, not to speak of politically-awakened Yugoslavia. Their hesitation in moving forward even in Eastern Europe would be multiplied a thousandfold in the cosmopolitan centers of the West. What would result from fraternization between the Red Army and the workers of France! Better let well enough alone.

I repeat, a concrete analysis of the contradictory events in Eastern Europe cannot offer Stalinism any comfort. It can only help

in destroying the illusions that the overturn in property relations in Eastern Europe is bound to foster no matter what label you put on these countries.

Labelling such a country in Eastern Europe as Yugoslavia a "workers' state" concedes nothing to Stalinism and does not involve a revision of the Marxist theory of the state. On the contrary, it sharpens our attack on Stalinism and is in strict accord with the Marxist theory of the state.

Can the Film Be Reversed?

It is argued that things can be reversed in these countries and the film wound back to a capitalist restoration without a civil war. This contention seems to me to bring in question the Marxist theory of the state. How can you have a counter-revolution and the restoration of bourgeois property rights without a civil war? You might contend that it would be a peculiar type of civil war, but still it would be a civil war.

The events in Greece, bloody as they were, would be eclipsed by the civil wars that would break out in these countries if a restoration were attempted. The contention that the film can be reversed without a civil war simply follows logically from the thesis that these countries are still capitalist in character. The real situation appears to me quite at variance with this thesis.

Connected with this is the problem of defending the relative gains that have been made in these countries. In the theses of the World Congress, adopted in 1948, a defeatist position is called for in all these lands in the event of war. The Plenum resolution of a year later refers to this position and declares that it still holds good. It adds that we could reconsider this defeatist position only in the event that a qualitative change occurs in the character of their economies. The qualitative change can occur only if "real planning" is introduced. "Real planning" can be introduced only if these states are incorporated in the USSR or in a Balkan-Danube Federation -- provided that the Balkan-Danube Federation "forms a genuine unified framework for economic planning."

Consequently it might well turn out that we will become defensists of a Rumania incorporated in the USSR, but defeatists in an independent Yugoslavia. This seems to me an unnecessarily severe penalty for Yugoslavia's inability to meet our norm on "real planning" because of its struggle for independence. Certainly this position stands in the way of the most effective intervention in the Tito-Stalin conflict. Why should we be defensists of the USSR and not of Yugoslavia? It seems to me not only highly advisable politically but also correct in theory.

The Key To the Solution

We are faced with an extremely complicated and very difficult problem that requires all our combined efforts for solution. The political side of the problem is to meet the growth in prestige that will accrue to Stalinism through this undeniable overturn in property

relations. The theoretical side is to demonstrate how the Marxist laws of the class struggle are once again validated through the developments in Eastern Europe and why they therefore apply in full force, so to speak, or very close to our "norms" in a country like the United States.

The key to the solution of this problem can be found, in my opinion, in Trotsky's handling of the Finnish and Polish events at the opening of the war. He demonstrated how the Marxist law that you cannot have an overturn in property relations without revolution was exemplified in these specific instances.

The law did not come even close in its expression to the "norm" sought by the revolutionary socialist movement. A strong perturbation gave it a pinched, scanty, mutilated, deformed expression. That perturbation came from the Soviet Union, the same source that gave the impulse to the overturn in property relations. Both the source of the perturbation and the source of the impulse can be distinguished. The one was the Stalinist bureaucracy, the other the property relations still remaining from the October revolution. But the very perturbation, the muffled, strangled form of the law's expression all the more brilliantly demonstrates the operation of that law.

This solution of the central problem, hinging on the origin of the Eastern European countries, seems to me to be the correct one.

Yugoslavia and the Other Countries

Some of the comrades who originally considered Yugoslavia to still be a capitalist state are becoming increasingly convinced upon further study and thought that this is an untenable position and that a change will have to be made. They insist, however, that if we are forced to make an exception in the case of Yugoslavia, nevertheless the other Eastern European countries must still be considered as capitalist. To reach this conclusion they utilize the method of "emphasizing the differences" between these countries and Yugoslavia.

This method, I think is not too fruitful. It didn't work very well in the case of Yugoslavia. There, in the attempt to emphasize the differences with the Soviet Union, the Plenum resolution had to bring forward a new criterion, "real planning." Even though it was admitted that "real planning" doesn't exist in the USSR, still a qualitative difference was insisted upon between that planning and the planning you have in Yugoslavia. The criterion that is now advanced as decisive in emphasizing the differences between Yugoslavia and the other Eastern European countries is the occurrence of a "real civil war."

It might well be argued that what occurred in Yugoslavia departs considerably from what should properly be considered a "real civil war." I mention this not to emphasize that difference but merely to show the parallel between the arguments about "real planning" and "real civil war." They are completely symmetrical. What has happened is simply a shift in criteria. "Real planning" is dropped, which permits us to consider Yugoslavia a deformed or mutilated workers' state, while the criterion of "real civil war" is advanced, in the

absence of which the other countries are automatically barred from being characterized as deformed or mutilated workers' states. This, of course, is an easy solution of the difficult problem facing us. But is it correct?

Let us examine again the principle positions in the discussion.

1. I will take advantage of the opportunity to list my own position first, although as will be seen, there is also a certain logic to the order. In my opinion, in a country where the rule of the bourgeoisie as a class has been broken AND the principle sectors of the economy nationalized we must place the state in the general category of "workers' state" no matter how widely or monstrously it departs from our norms. This change cannot occur without a civil war although this civil war may also be a mutilation of the type, differing in important respects from our norms. In Eastern Europe each country must be considered separately to see whether it in fact meets these criteria.
2. The position of those who consider Yugoslavia a workers' state but will not admit any of the other Eastern European countries to this category. These comrades agree that destruction of the bourgeoisie and the nationalization of the key sectors of the economy can be taken as decisive criteria provided they are accompanied by a "real civil war." in other words, they either deny that civil war has occurred in the other countries or insist that it does not come up to our specifications. The weakness in their position is to hold that the bourgeoisie can be driven from power and the decisive sectors of the economy nationalized without civil war. They thereby leave the central problem of Eastern Europe still unsolved. The mistake here, it appears to me, is to insist on measuring our norm of civil war against the miserable reality and to refuse to recognize that reality because it is so mangled and distorted.
3. The position of those who deny that any of the Eastern European countries are workers' states. Their decisive criterion is either "real planning" or a vague weighing of "all" the factors and finding that either the decisive one of "real planning" or the over-all bundle does not come up to the standard of Marxist norms. The mistake again is insisting that reality come up to our specifications or suffer the penalty of not being recognized for what it is.
4. The position of those who hold that either in particular or in general not only do the Eastern European countries fail to correspond with our norms but likewise the Soviet Union fails to correspond and that both the USSR and its satellites must for that reason be denied the label "workers' state" and called "capitalist" although admittedly an entirely new type of capitalism.
5. The position of those who hold that the phenomena in the USSR and Eastern Europe depart so far from the norms for both capitalist and workers' states that we must call them a completely new type like "bureaucratic collectivism."

At the bottom of each of these positions and modifications of them is lodged a variation in the handling of our norms in relation

to reality. Thus we reach the problem of methodology. What is the correct method of relating norms and criteria to concrete events? That question has already been answered. It was answered by Trotsky in the long discussion over the character of the USSR and its first ventures into Eastern Europe. That is one more reason why Trotsky's teachings on these questions are so valuable for our discussion today.

I will conclude by emphasizing the importance of approaching this problem as a collective one. It would be a mistake this early in the discussion to take a hard and fast position and refuse to listen with the greatest attention and open-mindedness to every consideration advanced by those seriously trying to help find the correct solution. Our task is to think things through to the end and to try to contribute what we can to the collective effort to solve the difficult problem of Eastern Europe. If we go about it calmly and with the understanding that this is not a faction fight but a loyal, comradely discussion, I am confident we will succeed.

December 1949

YUGOSLAVIA AND SUPER-DEFENSISM

By George Breitman

Judging by his articles in the Internal Bulletin, Comrade B. Lens has a clear position in favor of defense of the Soviet Union against capitalist attack. This is fine and commendable, and no doubt will come in handy the next time we discuss that question. Meanwhile, however, it is not a substitute for a clear and correct position on Yugoslavia's struggle against the Kremlin.

After expressing in his first two articles hostility and various reservations about the progressive character of the Yugoslav struggle, Lens' third and latest article seems to come out in defense of this struggle. But that is not really the case, and I hope no one in the party will confuse his position with that expressed in the NC resolution on Yugoslavia (October Fourth International), which Lens for some reason shies away from discussing.

"Fight with Yugoslav workers against a possible Stalinist invasion? Fight with them against an actual ideological barrage? Absolutely. Support Tito in this fight? Not for an instant!" The name for this is abstract (or wholly worthless) support. The Yugoslav struggle against the Kremlin is led by Tito, much as we regret that it is not led by Trotskyists. The question is posed concretely: should we or shouldn't we support the struggle taking place under that leadership? The best you can say for Lens is that he doesn't answer that question. Our own answer is in the affirmative (and explained in the resolution).

What does Lens mean by the phrase, "support Tito in this fight?" Does it mean support him in any struggle the Titoist leadership engages in against the masses? Obviously not; nobody in our movement proposes to do that; it's just not the question under discussion. Then it must mean support of the struggle against the Kremlin which is led by Tito. And if you don't support that actual struggle, then it's hardly worthwhile for you to come around telling us how much you want to fight side by side with the Yugoslav masses in their crucial struggle against the Kremlin.

Lens agitates himself greatly about the issue of "political support" for Tito. This might be understandable if anybody in our movement was proposing any such thing, but nobody is, nobody has, and I hope nobody will. When we supported the Indonesian government against the Dutch imperialists, we did not give any political support to the Sukarno-Hatta government. When we supported the Soviet Union against the Axis imperialists during the recent war, we did not give any political support to the Stalin government (even though the Soviet Union is a degenerated workers' state). And when we support Yugoslavia against the Kremlin, we likewise do not give any political support to the Titoists.

Lens does not cite a single example in which we do so. He confines himself to innuendoes, abstractions and finger-wagging for the simple reason that he cannot find any evidence anywhere to support his implication or charge that we offer political support to

the Titoists, or to any other of our ideological opponents. He only wastes paper and time by raising this question as any reader of our press or resolution can determine for himself by examining our sharp criticisms (not "gentle chiding") of Titoist centrism.

The trouble with Lens is that he is a super-defensist on the Soviet Union. 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 (even though Stalin was violating Finland's national independence) not solely because Finland was a capitalist state but because it was a capitalist state serving as an agency and bastion of world imperialism, with its policies determined in London and Paris. Today, those of us who regard Yugoslavia as a capitalist state (despite its unique features) take a contrary position in part because Yugoslavia is not an agency of world imperialism -- not yet, no matter what may happen later on. Consequently the present struggle is not between a degenerated workers' state and imperialism (as in the case of Finland). It is possible that later on, in war or in peace, Yugoslavia may be reduced to the status of an agency of imperialism. When and if the situation changes and that happens, we will have to change our position. But not until the situation does change.

Super-defensism on the Soviet Union is just as pernicious a position as defeatism. As Lens' articles show, it leads him to conclusions on Yugoslavia which are close if not similar to those of the Shachtmanites in at least one respect -- namely, hesitation (if not refusal) to defend the Tito-led Yugoslav struggle against the Kremlin, despite his abstract protestations to the contrary. Our movement would be disarmed and doomed by super-defensism just as surely as it would be by the notion that Stalinism can be relied on to overthrow capitalism.

Anybody who thinks this is exaggeration is invited to study the following remarkable statement by Lens: "In New York City street meetings, some speakers repeat over and over again as our position on the cold war 'neither Wall Street nor the Kremlin!' What then, comrades, the 'third camp'?" Let's not go into the fact that the slogan he objects to was the main title of the 1948 manifesto of the Second Congress of the Fourth International, which we never heard him criticize before.

But let's not forget the fact that as far back as 1939 Trotsky wrote: "Our defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: 'For Socialism! For World Revolution! Against Stalin!'" The latter part of this slogan is totally absent from all of Lens' remarks about the need for defending the Soviet Union, apparently for the same reason he wants it to be absent from a slogan urging the workers to reject the politics of both U.S. imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy -- which we have always regarded as a necessary step on their road to Trotskyism. By all means, let us read what Trotsky wrote in In Defense of Marxism and let us learn from it, as Lens advocates. It will teach us, among other things, to avoid the deadly pitfalls of super-defensism, which benefits not the Soviet Union but Stalinism.