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REVOLUTIONARY  
DEFEATISM

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WORKERS DEMOCRACY  
AND THE  
SOVIET UNION

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CENTRISM IN ACTION

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## WORKERS DEMOCRACY AND THE SOVIET UNION

(Continued from last issue)

Now let us compare state ownership of key industries under capitalism with state ownership and the nationalization of industries under Soviets. We make a distinction between Soviets and the Soviet Union, just as one would make a distinction between democracy and the DEMOCRATIC PARTY, or Socialism and the Socialist Party, or Communism and the Communist Party under Stalinism. But we have more than a theoretical premise for our argument. We have at least one concrete, living stage of Soviet development, sometime after the successful October revolution in Russia and before Stalinism took over, in the period when Lenin and Trotsky still dominated, after they came out of war communism and before Stalinism. The lines of demarcation are dim. The period is short, but the whole policy and teaching of Lenin in this early period, supported by Trotsky, clearly refutes Stalinism and the course the Stalinists pursued. This is the period we will first deal with in a theoretical sense. Then we will deal with the Stalinist period in relation to the same problem, the problem of state ownership of the means of production.

The Lenin period deals with the first years of Soviet Power when industry was not yet reorganized, when only the blue prints for the structure were outlined by the Bolsheviks. But even at this low stage of complete industrial demoralization, which was inherited from Czarism and imperialist intervention, we have more than ample proof for our position.

The social revolution, which is known as the proletarian revolution today, calls for the organization of society against capitalist anarchy of production and a move ahead to social cooperation in the economic sphere for all mankind against the competitive structure of capitalism. It calls for the elimination of imperialist (exploiters) wars and the planning of production to eliminate the periodic crises and depressions. It calls for a society to eliminate classes, to work toward the building of a classless society of a genuine brotherhood of mankind.

Did the October revolution accomplish all of this? No. Lenin clearly explained that we are in transition, we will carry over many bad features of capitalism, we do not make history out of the whole cloth, we make history out of what exists, and Russia was at a level far below England, Germany and the United States. The Bolsheviks had to start far behind present day capitalism (1917) and build up and surpass it if they were to survive.

But even though many things could not be accomplished at once, many things had to be aimed at and safeguards had to be established to insure the road ahead against slipping back into capitalism. The fact remains that the broad outlines of the road ahead were PRESENTED

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and were laid out. One of these mile stones was the state ownership and nationalization of all key industries and banks, import and export trade. When Stalinism usurped power it removed most of the safeguards and used the new social power of the nationalization of key industries and banks, imports and exports, for bureaucratic needs rather than the working class needs, just as the labor agents in the workers' ranks of the trade unions use the trade unions for bureaucratic ends rather than working class ends. Of course, the former, state control, is a mountain; while the latter, union control, is a mole hill. But the comparison is correct.

How did the state ownership under Soviets affect the special manner in which the union is accomplished between laborers and the means of production. While nationalization and state ownership under capitalism left intact the basic relation and union of laborers and the means of production, the bolshevik revolution fundamentally altered this relationship, changed the content completely. With the nationalization of key industries, the banks and the import and export trade, the bolsheviks EXPROPRIATED the capitalist expropriators of the working class and the capitalist class (as well as the landlords of the Feudal carryover) were expelled from society (in good or bad form) as the dominating, ruling class in society. Their position of power, of state control, of the lives of the people and their "right" by bourgeois law to exploit was annihilated.

Together with the nationalization of LAND, industries, banks, imports and exports, also went the right of the former exploiters to exploit the workers and peasants. However, BECAUSE the bolshevik revolution tore to the ground the capitalist STATE and built a new KIND of a state, a soviet state of workers and peasants, it was no longer a capitalist STATE that controlled economy and society.

With this new kind of a state came a new relation in society. And with the type of state ownership and the elimination of the capitalist and landlord classes came a new UNION OF laborers and means of production. Commodity production was replaced by production for use. Now Stalinism has replaced this, not with production for markets (capitalist) but with production for the bureaucrats, not workers' needs. Surplus value in its basic forms (not as a whole) has been eliminated, and with it the source of power of the capitalists and their henchman. Wage labor in the capitalist form was eliminated, that is the relation of capitalist private appropriation to labor. In its place was instituted state ownership (WITHOUT CAPITALISTS) and a new form of labor relation, this time a relation of wage workers to a workers' state instead of the individual capitalist appropriators. We repeat, private capitalist appropriation was eliminated as the basic factor of society, even though it existed in a minority role in transition toward socialism.

Under a progressive Soviet moving toward socialism this state ownership gives the workers democracy, not bureaucracy and dictatorship. The dictatorship is NOT to be used against the workers--only against the former exploiting minority. Under a progressive Soviet the increased production, step by step is properly shared with the workers to better their standard of living. Under Stalinism it is used for the bureaucrats, not the workers. Under a progressive Soviet the elimination

of production for markets means a greater share for the workers in production for USE. But Stalinism uses the surplus for bureaucratic and negative ends instead of for proper working class distribution. With the proper sharing of production with the workers (and the billions in lend-lease they got from US) they would have had to sacrifice far less manpower in the war against Fascism than they did under the corrupt Stalinist policy of mass murder.

In conclusion, under capitalism, state ownership does not touch the basic relations of the union of laborers and means of production. But under Soviets state ownership eliminated the exploiters from the control and domination of society, eliminates their appropriation of the SURPLUS PRODUCTS of production, does away with commodity production and wage labor as known under capitalist relations. It alters the fundamental relations of this union Marx speaks of, which determines the kind of production of a given society.

We not only have to present our positive case of transition economy under healthy Soviets against capitalism; we must also present our case against the degeneration and negative transition economy and warped state under Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship which has eliminated workers democracy and acts as a mercenary force in the Soviet Union.

And in addition to this we must reveal the relation of STATE OWNERSHIP under healthy Soviets to SOCIAL OWNERSHIP OF THE FUTURE, under communism. Stalinism has completely warped and muddled this problem. From our above standpoint there is a big distinction between State ownership, not only between Capitalism and progressive (as well as negative Stalinist) soviets, but above all between State ownership under progressive Soviets and Social ownership of tomorrow.

In the transition period, when a state for the exploited is essential against the former exploiters, the State becomes the "trustee" of social ownership. The working class needs proper checks and balances and democratic safeguards against ITS OWN STATE to insure a progressive transition toward a stateless society and genuine social ownership of the means of production. Real social ownership of the means of production, all that is essential to life, is only possible after the state has withered away. In this whole transition period there will inevitably be a struggle, not the same class struggle as under capitalism, but a struggle of the working class against the state to insure a progressive and rapid transition to a stateless society and communism. Only by the greatest number of DEMOCRATIC safeguards of the workers against the STATE of the workers is such a transition possible. In the early and middle stages of the transition economy from capitalism to socialism with communism still ahead, there will be no skipping of this stage, the stage where every essential democratic safe-guard for the workers against the WORKERS STATE is needed.

In this transition period, right after capitalism is overthrown, the workers will have to learn to fight on two fronts. Whereas today they always have to fight on two fronts, against capitalism and its agents in our ranks, mainly in the trade unions etc., tomorrow they will have to learn new and higher tactics and strategy of a two front nature--against the attempt of the former exploiters to return and

against the danger of bureaucratic development within the workers' state. The Soviet Union is a living example of these dangers. With the development of bureaucracy, the weakening structure of the workers' state creates a hiding place and a point of advantage for the former exploiters, and above all permits their theory and ideology to have free play. In the name of the revolutionary leaders, the bureaucrats and undercover agents of the former exploiters will advocate theories and ideologies of the capitalist exploiters. This is what is taking place in the Soviet Union under Stalinism.

#### THE STATE AND LAWS UNDER TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM

Those who claim to be Marxists, but those who do not really understand the theoretical system of Marxism have the false impression that once the workers overthrow capitalism and establish a workers' council government (Soviets) that man overnight will reform, that man an essential good creature will do what is right. But history does not work this way. The filthy, base, degrading human traits cultivated by three systems of exploitation for many, many hundreds of years is not washed out and cleansed overnight, not only in the exploiters but also in the exploited who live under the ideology of the EXPLOITERS. These well meaning comrades have a utopian concept of what will take place after the worker stake power. But there is also the opposite danger. The lack of a leadership that understands the theoretical system of Marxism. A leadership that cannot explain events and present a plan of action for the road ahead, also leads to the other extreme from the utopian, "simon pure sectarians. They are the ones who remain with the Socialists and the Stalinists, etc. They say we cannot expect everything at once and the "impure" conditions of today are not our fault, but are merely capitalist carryovers which we will overcome as rapidly as possible. These people see nothing wrong in the 180 degree turns of such theoretical imbeciles as Stalin in Russia and Browder-Foster in America. These people are either opportunists or theoretically bankrupt. The only real remedy is a clear understanding of the theoretical system of Marxism, and above all its foundation in theory, dialectical materialism.

Again we must go back to Marx and deal with some of the theoretical abstractions he laid down and elaborate upon them. To some this may seem like comfort to the Stalinists, for we are quoting Marx now against the ultra-lefts and the reformists to the right of Stalinism. But before we are through we will show that the quotations of Marx in no way uphold Stalinism. On the contrary, they are bitter condemnations of Stalinism, too.

First, let us say to those who really want to restudy this question to read Chapter 5, of Book II of Lenin on "Toward the Seizure of Power." It deals with Lenin's position, with elaborate quotations from Marx, on the question of the withering away of the State. (State and Revolution). There are quotations in this section from Marx that most so-called Marxians don't want to quote because they themselves don't understand them, and they think that maybe Marx made an overstatement. With their undialectical way of thinking they cannot make head or tail of these sentences, as for example the "theoretical illiterates", Burnham, Hook and Eastman.

Let us proceed with our basic problem. For example, Lenin says,

"The whole theory of Marx is an application of the theory of development--in its most consistent, complete, well considered and fruitful form--to modern capitalism. It was natural for Marx to raise the question of applying this theory both to the coming collapse of capitalism and to the future development of future Communism." (page 216 above quoted book)

and again, "Marx splendidly grasped this essence of capitalist democracy, when, in analysing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed were allowed, once every few years, to decide which particular representative of the oppressing class should be in parliament to represent and repress them." (page 219) This applies to all forms of the Labor Party, too.

And again, speaking of liberty and democracy Lenin says, "Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that 'as long as the proletariat still needs the state, it needs it not in the interest of freedom, but for the purpose of crushing its antagonists; and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom then the state as such ceases to exist.'" (Page 219)

Let us now proceed now to the state, its laws and the ideological and material carry-overs. Lenin says, "The first phase of communism, therefore, still cannot produce justice and equality; differences and unjust differences in wealth will still exist, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize private property, the means of production, the factories, the machines, land and so forth." (Page 223). In other words, bourgeois rights and injustices will still exist in the first stage under transition economy. What is essential is not a bureaucracy that upholds these material carryovers, as Stalinism does, but a democracy which enables the workers to fight and eliminate as rapidly as possible these material carryovers.

As long as products are divided "according to work performed" these "bourgeois rights" still exist under a workers government, under a Stalinist government, a Trotsky government, a Bordiguist government and, yes, a revolution Marxian government. But the difference is this. The revolutionary Marxian government will insure workers democracy. That is why the workers must know how to "fight their own" government on one hand, and fight the attempted return of the exploiters in the governmental channels and other means, on the other. It is a political fight on two fronts.

Lenin continues, "And so in the first phase of Communist society (generally called Socialism) "bourgeois rights" are not abolished in their entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, i.e., only in respect to the means of production." (Page 224) Only insofar as the economic development takes place. Backward Russia had a double handicap. But that is no excuse to sanction Stalinism. All the more reason one must fight against the material conditions which weigh like mountains upon the minds of mankind, and oppress them materially in Russia. Stalinism, as revisionism, succumbs to these material conditions. Revolutionary Marxism has a social goal to reach that can only be reached by sacrifice and revolu-

tionary integrity.

"In the first phase or stage Communism cannot as yet be economically ripe or entirely free of all traditions and all taint of capitalism." (Page 227)

"Hence the interesting phenomenon of Communism retaining, in its first phase the narrow horizon of bourgeois rights." "Bourgeois rights, with respect to distribution of articles of consumption, inevitably presupposes, of course, the existence of the bourgeois state, for rights are nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rights."

"Consequently, for a certain time not only bourgeois rights, but even the bourgeois state remains under Communism, without the bourgeoisie."

This may look like a paradox, or simply a dialectical puzzle for which Marxism is often blamed by people who would not make the least effort to study the extraordinarily profound content.

"But as a matter of fact, the old surviving in the new confronts us in life at every step, in nature as well as society. Marx did not smuggle in a scrap of "bourgeois" rights into Communism of his own accord; he indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in society issuing from the womb of capitalism." (page 227-228)

Such people as Eastman, Hook and Burnham will never understand this correct concept; but let us hope that many comrades now amongst the centrists, the ultra-lefts, and reformists will learn the true meaning of this most important observation by Marx and Lenin many years ago before we had the warped Soviet Union as a criterion.

We, as Marxists, must point out that these carryovers will exist. We are opposed to Stalinism because Stalinism retreats before them; does not put up the proper working class safeguards to fight these bourgeois carryovers. The fundamental, the basis, of the Soviet State and its working class fight against bourgeois carryovers in the first phase of socialism is a return to WORKING CLASS DEMOCRACY IN THE SOVIET UNION. This means a whole series of reforms which we have enumerated and advocated time and again. Above all, today, the negative process has gone so far that this means in addition to what is said above, especially a POLITICAL REVOLUTION in the Soviet Union to oust Stalinism so the proper democratic and progressive measures can be taken to insure steps toward communism and effective resistance against capitalist theory, ideology and war plans of invasion of the Soviet Union. This Stalinism is incapable of.

In more concrete form what do we mean when we say the workers must know how to fight their own government? Since there will be bourgeois rights, laws, ideologies and material carryovers of inequality (even though you have nationalization without the capitalists) the final court of appeals to determine what is good or bad for the working class MUST BE THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF. It must not be left to the state or its functionaries of the state any more than it is left to the elected leaders of a union to have the final word.

As Lenin said, our democracy is superior to the bourgeois democracy. But not under Stalinism where workers democracy is a shame and a mockery of Lenin.

The workers' fight to protect their interests in the transition period is a fight within the bounds and framework of legal democratic measures to insure their will toward a genuine cooperative society of all mankind. Measures to insure workers' democracy are such that we not only keep those gains we have wrested from capitalism but go beyond this, as Lenin pointed out. All of the democratic rights in trade unions and other workers' organizations must be insured so the workers can control their elected officials FROM THE BOTTOM at all times. Above all the same applies to the political party of the workers, The Communist Party. Democratic centralism as practiced by Lenin, not bureaucratic centralism as practiced by Stalinism must prevail. The right of factions and free political discussions must prevail. The right of any number of candidates running for any and every post in the local Soviets with elections controlled from the bottom must prevail. A return to genuine Lenin Soviets and not the fake Stalin Soviets must be obtained. Bureaucrats tell you that they know what is best for the "uneducated" workers. But we tell you that the workers and their democracy will make less mistakes than the bureaucrats!

Some will say, "What, open the door to capitalist and counter revolutionists? This is a bureaucratic faker's argument not a Marxist argument. Enemies of the people and the state can always be excluded from the ballots as they are even under capitalist democracy. But such enemies are taken care of in open court with the right of jury trial and lawyers for the defense. The internal security of the workers does not demand secret arrests, secret trials and secret murder by the GPU. Only the false policies of a leadership like Stalinism demands such. A revolutionary Marxist leadership has nothing to fear from open and above board discussion, opinions, opposition and elections from the very lowest workers' organization to the highest state structure.

There can be no progress in the transition period toward communism if the working class is denied its full democratic rights.

Last and most important, there must be a return to the position of Marx and Lenin on the question of the ARMED WORKING CLASS. Yes, a Red Army is needed for defense against possible attacks from without as long as imperialism still exists. But the foundation of internal security and the safeguard of the workers' rights and their democracy must be the ARMED WORKERS themselves, through their soviets of factories, mines, mills and farms. This will insure workers' democracy. This is the best antidote against petty-bourgeois and capitalist inroads. This is death to bureaucracy such as Stalinism.

#### CLASSES IN THE SOVIETS.

Everyone knows that each country is at a different level of economic development, some with more antiquated carryovers than others, even though capitalism, that is finance capitalism is dominant on a world scale. This means that in the transition period a STATE is needed to protect the workers' interest against the very bourgeois material,

legal and ideological forces still in existence. But the working class with democracy and their own armed might, through their local Soviets, can protect themselves a thousand times better than the bureaucrats.

The ultra-left, centrist and reformist, as well as the bourgeois argument that Stalinism is a class is not based upon scientific analysis of what constitutes a class. Such is based upon their emotional hate and rationalization of an entrenched mercenary force of bureaucrats who have usurped power from the working class. On the basis of their analysis of what constitutes a class, not the Marxian concept, then a new class is already forming in the Russian Satellites, and in the United States the trade union bureaucrats as well as certain sections of the middle class such as professionals, technicians, etc., are also distinct classes. From their standpoint there is as much difference between John L. Lewis and the coal miners as there is between a Stalinist and a worker in the Soviet Union. Of course on our analysis this will not hold water.

Speaking of the working class Marx says, "In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labor to other persons, while the communist revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labor, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognized as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc., within present society..." (Page 68, The German Ideology)

#### DEMOCRACY AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

A new turn is essential in our PROPAGANDA on the question of democracy and dictatorship. Lenin in elaborating and emphasizing the question of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat did so in a correct fight theoretically against the Socialist Second International leaders who revised and did not understand the content of our state. Also, Lenin carried through a revolution in a backward country where the people were not educated even to certain bourgeois democratic standards. In addition to this we have passed through a whole epoch of change and defeats with the rise and fall of Hitler and Mussolini and the Fascist dictatorship ideology and above all, the rise of Stalinism and its anti-democratic policy and its complete warping of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Against these false concepts, Fascism, Stalinism and the greater decentralization of industry and the state under bourgeois democracy, we the revolutionary Marxists, must EMPHASIZE DEMOCRACY under the Soviets. We must sing this tune over and over again in every possible variation against the above enemies of the working class. Since any scientific study of any and every state will reveal that its content is dictatorship for this or that class this is today an unnecessary emphasis. It is a fundamental principled part of our program, but the democratic FORM of the WORKER'S COUNCIL GOVERNMENT (SOVIETS) MUST BE STRESSED.

## REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM AND STALINIST STRATEGY

The tit for tat "cold war" of the imperialists, led by the United States against the Soviet Union and its bloc has reached a new stage of name calling and actions against each other. The news mongers and diplomats see the change in the Kremlin announcement of the Molotov-Vishinsky shift but more important phase of the change or increase in tempo of the Soviet foreign policy was announced with the Thorez-Togliatti-Foster, et al. statement that in case of aggression they would welcome the Red Army of the Soviet Union.

Some say that Molotov was removed because he failed to stop the imperialists in Greece and the near East, failed to disrupt the Marshall Plan, failed to get concessions in Germany, the Ruhr, and win the battle of Berlin, failed to stop the North Atlantic Pact, etc. But although Russia did not win these phases of the cold war Molotov was not kicked downstairs, but rather upstairs. Furthermore, no matter how clumsy the Stalinists are, Molotov cannot be blamed for these failures any more than Stalin can be "blamed" for the failure to have Tito executed and his stoogestake over. The very roots of Stalinist policy, the anti-working class nature of their whole structure in Russia and internationally fails to give them any point of advantage to mobilize the millions of oppressed against the exploiters, and, therefore, they must work on the narrow ledge of their own bureaucratic strength and their national defense brigades in each country, the Stalinist Parties.

Many are now arguing that Stalinism has returned to Lenin's position of revolutionary defeatism with the statements of the communist flunkies throughout the world. But this is far from the truth, even though it does indicate a desperate step of the Stalinists to check the tightening grip of Imperialism around the Soviet Union.

The Revolutionary Workers League, in its draft resolution on the international situation, dated August 13, 1947, and published in the INTERNATIONAL NEWS of September, 1947, had this to say on the subject: Speaking of the coming war, not an imperialist war, but a war of imperialism led by United States against the Soviet Union, we said, "When the Anglo-American bloc, under the reactionaries, together with the fascists invade the Soviet Union, the Stalinists will be forced to use defeatism against them to defend their own bureaucratic hides, not to say anything about the workers."

"It will not be a return to Marxism and to revolutionary defeatism; no more than the third period of Stalinism in the early thirties brought with it an opposition to the Labor Party and the Peoples Front and the United Front. Just like the third period of the thirties of Stalinism brought forth a fake opposition to the subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie, so too, will the invasion of the Soviet Union bring forth a fake form of revolutionary defeatism against imperialism."

"As long as Stalinism rests upon the revisionism of the theoretical principles of Marxism any 'return' to Marxian principles are tactical and not principle considerations of Stalinism."

Two years ago we pointed out the trend of events and laid down a line of action which included possible Stalinists shifts of its zig-zag course. The fact that the national leaders of the Stalinist parties make this statement in advance, in unison, means that in spite of the bold front of the Kremlin in reality they are frightened and fear the increased war preparations of Anglo-American imperialism and the circle the imperialists are drawing around the Soviet Union. The fact that Truman-Marshall-Acheson refused to meet with Stalin will go down as the biggest, stupidest reason ever given by one power confronting another power on the eve of a war, when one of the powers asks for a meeting to explore possible peace moves.

The Truman and newspaper arguments that Stalin is not sincere is a childish argument. Who ever heard of capitalist, or any exploiter's policies revolving on the basis of a moral or ethical promise? We know these statements hide behind lofty phrases, but the facts of history prove that the moral consideration, the sincerity of the participants in a conference, meeting, bloc, united front, or what have you, in diplomatic meetings has nothing to do with the real results. It is just so much eye-wash.

For the sake of argument, what if Stalin was not sincere? Then if Truman and American imperialism have nothing to hide they could bring Stalin out in the open and expose his plans to the world. If you are right and the other side is wrong, then you have nothing to fear of meetings (or a united front in the case of the working case.) Truman argues that they are stalling for time. That is a bad joke. A meeting of leaders, a conference, stops not one ounce of previous commitments or preparations toward certain objectives, be they goals of peace or war. Each nation continues its actions and steps, while the meetings are taking place and only after agreement is reached will steps be taken to slow down and alter or halt the material preparations toward a given goal.

So, returning to our first argument -- an honest, sincere person who has nothing to hide has nothing to lose from a conference or meeting with leaders of opposing forces no matter how dishonest and/or insincere the other leaders are.

The imperialists are pressing the Stalinists too hard and too fast. They should know better. They should remember even when they push their BOURGEOISE REFORMERS in the workers ranks, such as Green, Lewis and Murray too hard they fight back to protect their special privileges.

Have the imperialists forgotten the wonderful service the Stalinists have rendered them since the death of Lenin and the exile and murder of Trotsky and countless other revolutionists?

Let us just remind the exploiters of a few deed in behalf of capitalism carried out by Stalinism. Is the imperialist memory so short

that they do not remember just a few short years ago when Hitler and his fascist hordes were almost at the threshold of world conquest that Stalinism in each country carried through Kautsky's policy of SOCIAL PATRIOTISM, the support of one's own imperialist power, against the Lenin position of revolutionary defeatism. The Stalinists throughout the world were the most loyal to the American imperialists' aims to defeat the other nations and to dominate the world with the dollar and its productive forces.

Have the imperialists forgotten the role of the Red Army in defeating the bulwark of the Axis powers -German imperialism?

Have the imperialists forgotten that when the second world war ended that the masses were ripe for social revolutions all over Europe as well as Asia and with a party of revolutionary Marxism could have taken power in Europe and Asia, etc., if it were not for the faithful service of Stalinism in beheading and stifling these revolutions. The phase of social revolution that deals with the destruction of the capitalist state and its replacement with a state of workers, soldiers and peasants Soviets could have been accomplished in Eastern Europe in a few weeks. But under Stalinism you still have the basic features of Capitalism still intact in these countries. The tempo would have been a little slower, but the same results were possible in the rest of Europe and in Asia, but thanks to Stalinism, the socialists, et. al, they helped capitalism behead these revolutions.

The Stalinist crimes against the workers, and service to imperialism from 1924 to the declaration of war in 1939 are so voluminous it takes all of the revolutionary Marxists printed material just to present a bare outline of these facts.

Yes, the imperialists are an ungrateful lot of stinkers. Take for example, labor leaders, gents of the capitalists who are condemned for strikes by them. This is not true, though. Economic and social conditions of capitalism cause the strikes. The workers push them through in spite of their labor leaders. First the leaders do everything possible to delay, to negotiate, to sell-out, to stop the strikes; but when conditions reach a breaking point the workers swell beyond their legal state arbitration bounds. The leaders go with the strike to slow it down, to sell out at the right moment and to lead the workers back into safe channels.

This is the role of the bourgeois reformers in trade unions, and this is also the role of social reformers (Stalinists, socialists, centrists) in the political arena and especially in revolutions. Capitalism and its conditions of exploitation are responsible for the revolutions. Stalinism and socialism have in countless examples proven their role as presented above in relation to trade unions, only in this case in revolutions. But when the workers go beyond their local channels, Stalinism, etc., go along to behead these revolutions, as they are now doing in China, as they did yesterday in Eastern Europe, in France, in Italy and in Germany and dozens of other countries.

The Capitalists should not be alarmed at the Stalinist statements about welcoming the Red Army. It is a natural defense mechanism of

bureaucrats hard pressed by imperialism and it is not revolutionary defeatism of Lenin.

Lenin's policy of defeatism flows from the dynamics of the internal contradictions of capitalism in its economic and state structure. The formula for this understanding of internal relations of finance-capitalism is, "Our main enemy is at home, our own imperialist." Our own capitalist class is our main enemy, not some other imperialist power, not some other capitalist who happens to be of a different race, nationality or creed, and not the Soviet Union, and not some "backward" people who need the blessing of our rtm, bible and cheating business methods.

This position is the position of the RWL, at its foundation convention, when war broke out in 1939 and when the United States entered in 1941; and it remains our position as long as imperialism exists to be applied in the period of war.

This is not the position of Stalinism. Their position does not flow from the understanding of the three volumes of Capital, nor from the works of Lenin which "translated" the economics of Marx to the political and military sphere of imperialist war and civil war. The Stalinists' position flows from the position that the Communist Parties are border patrols of defense of the Soviet Union and are used pro or con for that foreign policy and nothing else. And the policy of the Soviet Union under Stalinism is not the extension of the October Revolution--but the building of socialism in one country.

This policy is now catching up with them, this policy of building socialism in one country, which in its early period was a policy of beheading revolutions to prove to capitalism that they should be left alone is now turning to its opposite. Since the second world war defeated all imperialist powers and left one, the U.S. on top of the decaying heap, they now only face one real rival to rule the world--The Soviet Union. Therefore, American imperialism must inevitably march toward conquest and destruction of the Soviet Union to dominate the world with the dollar, or give up its place in the sun and go down into defeat from internal convulsions of the accumulation of capital. For imperialism--they have chosen the first road and while talking peace they are preparing war against the workers of the world and the Soviet Union.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The question of war depends on several factors which are outside the scope of this article. Future issues of the IN will contain positive analysis of the problems and relationship of war, revolution and depression in this period.)

Stalinism with its border patrols cannot even properly defend the Soviet Union, let alone the interest of the workers and peasants.

But one thing must be made clear. Revolutionary Marxism, while pointing out the false defeatism policy of the Stalinists stands for the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism. We must fight on two fronts. Revolutionary Marxists will apply Lenin's position of revolutionary defeatism against the imperialists while working for a

POLITICAL revolution against Stalinism.

This calls for the policy of "marching separately and striking together" with Stalinism against imperialism. Lenin's policy against Kerensky called for marching separately and striking together with Kerensky--but at the same time Lenin worked for the overthrow of the Kerensky regime. So too we work for the overthrow of the Stalinist regime. With Kerensky it was Czarist Russia, capitalism; with Stalinism it is transition economy in decay. A political revolution, an overthrow that is parallel in dynamics but different in content.

Our main lever to DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION is the EXTENSION OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION: just the opposite of what Stalinism has done and will do.

March 9-1949



# CENTRISM IN ACTION

Max Shachtman, chairman of the Workers Party, testified before the Loyalty hearing held in New York under the chairmanship of Oliver C. Short of the Department of Commerce regarding a department employee who was a sympathizer of this Trotsky group. Shachtman's testimony is reported in full in the March 21, 1949 issue of the LABOR ACTION. It is a good example of how not to conduct yourself before any government agency. And it is a position of centrism at its worse and rejects all the revolutionary Marxian concepts on the subject. Although the testimony represents only one person of the party, it is the chairman of the party who speaks for the party line. If this testimony came from some other member, it may be dismissed as blunders of a centrist member of a centrist party; but this is THE leader's testimony and he speaks for the whole group.

Here are some of the questions and answers as reported at the hearing where Max Shachtman presented his position. All answers are those of Max Shachtman.

Q. May I ask you whether the members of the Workers Party served in the armed forces in the United States during the war?"

"A. Of course. We are not pacifists. We have no conscientious objectors among our members."

Q. And you consider yourself loyal American citizens who would participate in a war?"

"A. Certainly. Any number of our members served in the armed forces, in our battle fronts as well, and with distinction....."

These replies of Shachtman represent SOCIAL PATRIOTISM. Centrism in ACTION is transformed into REFORMISM: as we have said time and time again. The above answers are not the position of revolutionary Marxism. In the first place Max leaves the impression there are only religious and not political conscientious objectors. It is not a principle question to enter the armed service or to boycott it. It is a principle question for us to OPPOSE the imperialist war and only tactical as to how we place our forces to accomplish this. We have learned from experience that more effective opposition to imperialism and its war can be obtained within the armed forces than by boycott. But there are tactical times when political conscientious objecting can be used effectively.

Shachtman evades the principle question entirely. He replies that his organization enters the armed forces for LOYAL purposes in defense of American imperialism--social patriotism. Max answers categorically --"Certainly."

A revolutionary Marxist can state the problem like this. Our membership enters the armed services.

In the armed

forces we will defend the interest of the working class, nationally and internationally. We are opposed to imperialism and its aggressive wars carried on in the disguise of defense and humanitarianism. Any number of different sentences could be used but the essence of the above concepts must be given.

The subject of force and violence was taken up in detail, attacking the problem from many angles, such as loyalty to the constitution, unconstitutional means, treason, sedition, etc. In all of these questions, which total a dozen, Shachtman replied "no" except in one case. Shachtman was not bound to yes or no replies. He graciously gave them a yes and no and then elaborated. But in no case is his elaboration a position of revolutionary Marxism. It is capitulation to American imperialism.

Shachtman did, however, at least say this much. "Violence, however, is justified from the socialist point of view when the regime against which socialism directs itself makes it impossible for the socialist movement or the labor movement, or the people at large, to enjoy and to exercise their democratic rights."

This quotation from Shachtman's testimony is correct but it is not the whole question. It is only a small part of the question. And when at the same time he replies about eleven times with anti-Marxian answers and only comes up once with a correct answer, it is not a score that would put him even near Marxism. Any liberal capitalist will also reply as Shachtman did if and when a dictatorship, like Fascism, etc., has been established. In fact all liberals in one form or the other have theoretically and many practically stated their position on this subject under Czarism, Fascism, etc. So this positive reply by and of itself even though correct, cannot be passed off as a Marxian position on the question.

Again we must say that we don't care what combination of words one uses but if one presents the position of Revolutionary Marxism on the question of force and violence and the dozens of ways the lawyers presented this question regarding "unconstitutional", "treason", "sedition" etc., the fact remains that the following content must be given.

The change or transformation from the present capitalist mode of production and the exploitation of man by man to the socialist mode of production for use of mankind cannot be completed or accomplished by normal so-called peaceful reformist means. When the disintegrating process of capitalism reaches a certain stage and when the working class is prepared and its revolutionary Marxian party ready, when capitalist breakdown causes a revolutionary situation, then a revolutionary change will take place and establish a Worker's Democracy to replace the present capitalist state. In this revolutionary period when the working class take over state power there will be a forceful and often violent change depending upon the strength of the contending forces, etc. The armed struggle between the class may come before, during or after actual state power is in the hands of the working class and its revolutionary Marxian Party. This latter question is a strategical one. But it is the principle position, which separates revolutionary Marxism from all other forms of centrism and reformism which clearly states,

as Lenin and Marx did, that the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism will demand the tearing to the ground of the state machinery of the exploiters and the rebuilding of a new economic and political structure to insure production for use, democracy for the workers and progress toward communism.

It is correct to state that revolutionary Marxism does not advocate conspiratorial minority seizure of power by revolutionists. This would defeat our own ends. The working class, the majority must and will emancipate itself from exploitation. Revolutionary Marxism educates and trains its cadres so that majority will be ready to take over power when capitalist decay creates a revolutionary situation.

Likewise it is correct for revolutionary Marxism to point out that we are opposed to individual sabotage and terror. When the working class through its unions or political party decides to carry through sabotage against some company, or some government in war, it will proclaim this policy openly as an organization and explain the situation in detail to its members, the working class and all who care to read it.

Maybe Shachtman has the same moral position that the Stalinists have? The Stalinists reason that it is all right to lie to the capitalists. But they end up by lying to the working class. They become moral and political fakers. When you give testimony to such courts and hearings, with proceedings made public, it makes no difference who receives the information (the exploiters), the fact remains you are SPEAKING TO, FOR, AND OF the WORKING CLASS. You must speak truths so the working class knows what your program, your tactics and your strategy is. If it is true that you cannot evolve from one social system to another, and that there must be a revolutionary change as explained by Marx and Lenin--then you must tell the working class this.

When a dozen related questions are asked on this question and Shachtman gives a reformist answer and only on one a correct answer, this does not add up to revolutionary Marxism.

#### WHERE ARE YOUR PRINCIPLES?

Mr. Migdal asks, "Mr. Shachtman, does your Party require any special discipline of its members?"

"A. We require the payment of dues... We require a certain minimum of activity from every member.... We require of every member that he shall so conduct himself in his political life as not to throw any discredit upon or do harm to the labor movement in general, or his party, the Workers Party, in particular. Inside the organization I doubt if you will find any political party or group in this country which not only admits but encourages as wide a range of differences of opinion as the Workers Party."

Shachtman only lists dues, activity and difference of opinion. One of the several points in the principle organizational structure that separates a revolutionary Marxian party from all other parties is its devotion and discipline to the PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM. This Shachtman rejects because they are not a Marxian Party. Yes, within the party

differences of opinion and discussions are allowed; but once majority decisions are obtained through democratic procedure each and every member must present this position to this class. This is the opposite of Stalinism and also the Workers Party. Whereas Stalinism is bureaucratic centralism, Shachtman presents plain bourgeois opportunism. Shachtman is wrong when he says he doubts if there is any other political party or group in the country that tolerates as many different positions. The Socialist Party, the different Labor Parties, the Democratic Party, and the Republican Party and the Progressive Party--all the reformists and bourgeois parties hold to this Shachtman position--that is, the forward "liberal" element of each party.

#### WHAT IS TROTSKYISM

They ask about Trotsky and Trotskyism and the replies Shachtman gives should make Trotsky turn over in his grave. They call themselves Trotskyites. We oppose this and fight principle deviations of Trotsky--but we will give Trotsky a better bill of lading than these right centrists.

Read Shachtman's answers in the March 21, 1949 issue of their paper. His long reply leaves one impression--that Trotsky fought Stalinism because of bureaucracy and for democracy. This makes Shachtman and his crowd good democrats. But the Left Opposition fight against Stalinism was NOT primarily a fight against bureaucracy. This was one of the major issues; but not the main issue. When any revolutionary party starts revising Marxism you must fight for democracy and against bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is what the revisionists resort to as their only defense against Marxian principles they are forsaking.

To be honest to the working class and to Trotsky Shachtman would have had to point out that the fight revolved mainly around the questions and problems which flowed from the principle fight of the theory of socialism vs the "permanent revolution" or the extension of the October revolution to the rest of the world, including the United States. Shachtman also said in his testimony that it was a fight of internationalism vs nationalism. But even the Republican and Democratic party have such a fight. These words are abstractions and must be filled with the political content of revolution vs reform as of the one above example, to make sense. Many more such examples can be given. But how could Shachtman do this when he too was presenting reformist answers instead of revolutionary answers.

Instead of giving the revolutionary content of the fight of the Left Opposition against Stalinism, in the USSR and on a world scale in defeated revolutions, Shachtman presented the mechanism of a party factional fight and leaves the negative impression of innocent democratic victims of foul bureaucratic Stalinists. This is a by-product of a lost fight, a fight that tried to save the party and bring the party back to the road of revolutionary Marxism. After losing this fight the revolutionary Marxists, started over again and reorganized to fly the banner of revolutionary Marxism. Not Shachtman. He and his crowd slipped back to bourgeois democracy--not democratic centralism.

The capitalists have nothing to fear from the Workers Party. It

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