

# INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW

(Formerly Fourth International)

## **Vindication Of Trotskyism**

**Workers Uprising in Poznan  
Khrushchev's Revelations  
Developments in the Soviet Union**

●  
The Workers State and the Question  
Of Thermidor and Bonapartism  
by Leon Trotsky

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*Early Years of American Communism* by James P. Cannon  
*"But Why Did They Confess?"* by Joseph Hansen

Summer 1956

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banners of the world movement created by Leon Trotsky.

During the difficult war years, when this movement was beset by every force of reaction extending from Nazism to Stalinism, **Fourth International** played a key role in defending what had been achieved and in preparing for the resurgence of the Trotskyist movement from the underground where all political protest had been driven by the dictatorial war machines.

In the post-war years, **Fourth International** was an invaluable auxiliary in consolidating the new forces that rallied on a world scale to the program of Trotskyism. With the post-war stabilization of the Trotskyist movement, however, the name of the magazine began to lose its timeliness. Many of its most loyal supporters felt that a change should be made, especially to widen its attractiveness to newly awakening layers of workers and student youth in America. However, we must admit we had some difficulty in reaching general agreement on a new name until the present choice was suggested, **International Socialist Review**. This was the name used by a magazine in the left wing of the socialist movement in this country before World War I. The tradition left by this magazine is a good one and has actually constituted a part of the heritage of American Trotskyism since the founding of our movement in 1928.

The **International Socialist Review** appeared in July 1900 and ran until February 1918, first under the editorship of A. M. Simons and then Charles H. Kerr. Its first editorial announced the basic policy to which it adhered throughout its 18-years' existence. Point-

(Continued on page 105)

## To Our Readers

With this issue we change our name from **Fourth International** to **International Socialist Review**. This does not signify a change in editorial policy. We shall continue as before to present the Trotskyist outlook on world events, emphasizing in particular questions involving Marxist theory. The new name, we hope, will help us to reach a broader audience among those beginning to appreciate the significance of the worldwide upsurge of socialism that has occurred since the end of World War II.

Our magazine was founded 22 years ago, in 1934. Its name then was **The New International**. This name corresponded with the main task of the international vanguard of the working class at that time; namely, to build a new international party of revolutionary socialism following the definitive collapse of the Third International as demonstrated by its permitting Hitler to come to power in Germany without a fight. The **New International** performed an historic role in combatting Stalinism and gathering together suf-

ficient forces to launch a new worldwide organization based on the program of revolutionary socialism.

On the eve of World War II a minority section of the new movement succumbed to the war pressure. They put in question the defense of the Soviet Union itself when the counter-revolutionary Stalinist regime made an alliance with imperialist Germany. In the ensuing faction struggle, which centered mainly in the Socialist Workers Party, Leon Trotsky headed the majority defense of the Marxist position. Faced with defeat after a most thoroughgoing democratic discussion, the minority under the leadership of James Burnham and Max Shachtman decided to split. They also decided to take advantage of their technical position as editors of **The New International** and abscond with the magazine, changing its editorial policy to conform with their revisionist views.

Rather than squabble over this case of petty larceny, the majority decided to choose a new name for the magazine. **Fourth International** was selected as corresponding with the task of the time — to uphold the programmatic

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# EDITORIALS

## The Poznan Uprising

The June 28 general-strike uprising of the workers of Poznan, Poland, is part of the same historical pattern of working-class struggle against Stalinist rule that was manifested so dramatically three years earlier in East Germany. In Poland, the action of the "June days" was confined to an industrial city of 365,000; in East Germany the movement embraced some 2,000,000 workers in 36 industrial cities and towns. Yet the difference is only quantitative. In their basic character as independent working-class struggles against the Stalinist bureaucracy, the movements were qualitatively identical. For this reason the recent events in Poznan deepen and further illuminate the basic lessons our movement drew from the East German events of June, 1953.

Above all, the Poznan events provide a new verification of the Trotskyist prognosis that a political revolution of the working class will open the path to a new progressive development in the Soviet orbit. In the Poznan uprising, as in the East German, we can observe the concrete forms and modes that the political revolution will take.

Under the oppressive rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy a mass workers' struggle, beginning as a struggle for economic demands — against speed-up, heavy taxation, inflation, bureaucratic treatment of grievances — tends to become transferred into a political uprising against the regime itself and to assume the character of an insurrectionary movement.

What is the basic cause for this explosiveness in the relations between the industrial working class and the Stalinist regimes? The rule of the bureaucratic caste has become an intolerable fetter on the social, economic and political development of the countries in the Soviet orbit. This expresses itself in the growing conviction of the Soviet working class that life has become unbearable, that a fundamental change must take place, and that if the workers act together for their demands, they can win. In sum, a new revolutionary consciousness is dawning among the workers of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

For the workers to feel, not only that a change is necessary, but that it has become possible, a whole series of new conditions and relations had to appear on the world arena and within the

Soviet orbit itself. This is precisely what happened. The outcome of the Second World War with its colonial revolutionary upsurge, and above all the victory of the Chinese Revolution, put world capitalism in a defensive position which it has been unable to alter. At the same time the productive forces in the USSR and Eastern Europe experienced a swift development, disclosing again the superiority of planned economy over the capitalist method of production — even under conditions of bureaucratic degeneration with its staggering overhead expense.

The most important result of these developments has been the emergence of a new generation of the Soviet and European proletariat, numerically even larger than the industrial working class of the United States. This proletariat shows an unprecedented power in relation to the bureaucracy. It senses that its revolutionary thrusts at the bureaucracy will not provide an opportunity for the return of capitalist slavery, but will, on the contrary, add a new and perhaps decisive impulse to the world anti-capitalist movement.

These are the general factors that produced the East German and Poznan uprisings, the Vorkuta strike of 250,000 labor camp prisoners, and undoubtedly countless struggles that have been repressed without ever having become known to the world.

The Stalinist slander that the workers of East Germany and Poznan were led by the nose into a political uprising by spies and agents provocateurs is not merely a crude frame-up, it is a complete abandonment of even a pretense to a Marxist explanation for the violent clash between the working masses and the armed forces of the Polish regime.

Only from the vantage point of an analysis of the bureaucratic caste as a parasitic formation separated from the workers in the factories by their privileges, and their functions as "rulers," can these phenomena be understood.

The bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and its appointed henchmen in Eastern Europe, climbed to power by politically disenfranchising the proletariat. To do this they had to destroy the organizations of workers' democracy in the Soviet Union. In a veritable civil war, in which hundreds of thousands perished, the rule of the workers through their own revolutionary democratic institu-

tions was replaced by the violent rule of the bureaucracy.

The Trotskyist prognosis that a political revolution lies ahead in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, is founded on an estimation of the relation between the workers and the bureaucracy. It defines the overthrow of the bureaucracy as a revolution because only the direct interference of the masses can dislodge the privileged bureaucratic oligarchy. And it defines the revolution as political, as distinguished from social, because the Soviet workers stand upon the achievements of the social revolution of 1917 with the socialized property forms introduced by it. The political revolution can thus concentrate its attention on removing the bureaucratic constraints on these historically progressive social foundations.

In Poznan, as in the earlier East German uprising, the mass of factory workers launched a general strike and a giant demonstration that swept the whole working class into its orbit of action. Was this the work of spies and provocateurs? Even the Stalinist regime is forced to admit that the workers had legitimate grievances. In their efforts to conciliate the Polish working class and keep the Poznan movement from spreading, the bureaucracy has conceded over and over again that the workers had good cause to strike and demonstrate. The Stalinists simply add to this truth the loudly repeated charge that imperialist spies exploited the workers' movement in order to transform it into an uprising against the state. They haven't, of course, provided a shred of proof to support this charge. What they have done, and will do, is assert that a mass uprising of workers against their regime is *de facto* evidence of the work of spies.

The relation between the Polish workers and the Kremlin-appointed bureaucrats is vividly disclosed by the British Stalinist reporter, Gordon Cruickshank. He interviewed a woman trade unionist in Poznan who said, "We were entitled to demonstrate, but there should not have been shooting." When Cruickshank asked her who she thought started the shooting, she replied, "The government says the hooligans and provocateurs did, but the people say the security men did." For our part we think history will confirm the verdict of the people.

But the important question is not who started the shooting. What is important in civil war, as in any other war, is the fundamental character of the opposing camps. What was the line-up in Poznan? On one side, the whole work-

ing population marching under the slogans of "bread and freedom." On the other side, the bureaucratic caste and its armed forces.

The question of who shot first fades into insignificance in the face of the gigantic fact that in a showdown, the components of Stalinist-ruled Poland dissolved into its constituent parts: on one side stood the toilers, on the other the functionaries, the security police and troops armed with Russian tanks and guns and staffed by Russian officers.

This crucial fact defines the character of the whole situation. The bureaucracy of the Stalinist party and the government was completely isolated from the factory masses. The lower echelons of the bureaucracy and the military, either displayed open friendliness toward the demonstrators or crumbled in the face of their onslaught. We have ample testimony from the bureaucracy itself to confirm this. *Trybuna Ludu*, official Polish Stalinist paper, venomously attacked the "lax and cowardly" party functionaries who "scampered for safety and did not return from hiding until order was restored."

At the same time an "explanation" had to be found by the regime for the admitted defection of sections of the militia, which openly fraternized with the strikers, and according to many reports, turned over arms to the workers. The explanation is provided by an editorial in *Trybuna Ludu*:

"The peoples' power does not and will not shoot against the working class. . . This principle. . . was to a considerable extent responsible for the confusion of such organs as the militia, the prison guards, and even for the confusion of leading Party members. The confused comrades could not in time distinguish a strike demonstration from illegal acts of violence, against which they should have reacted immediately and with all energy."

Needless to say, the references to illegal acts of violence are a fraud. Why should militiamen be confused about such acts? What "confused" them was the outpouring of the masses, raising slogans and demands with which the militiamen sympathized. It is these mass actions — the strike and the demonstration — that are regarded as impermissible by the regime. "The workers had reason for bitterness," admits *Trybuna Ludu*, "but the Poznan events showed that the form of their protest was not proper and it was harmful."

Exactly! The Stalinist paper reveals its true attitude in these words. It was the "form of their [the workers'] protest" that the bureaucrats condemn. The talk about spies and provocateurs is so much eyewash. The workers' general strike, the political demonstration, the refusal to scatter at the first shot, the

winning over of militiamen to their side, this is what the Stalinist rulers regard as treason and vilify with their charge of "led by imperialist spies." It is their way of saying that the workers do not have the historic right to remove the bureaucracy by revolutionary means.

The Polish Stalinist party, according to *Trybuna Ludu*, has become separated from the masses. The party paper threatens reprisals against "those who had responsible tasks in the service of the working people and who, as the Poznan events showed, became separated from the masses and transformed themselves into soulless bureaucrats." This is strong talk. But in the meantime the heavy hand of the regime is not felt by the "soulless bureaucrats." The ferocity of the regime is directed toward massacring strikers and jailing worker-leaders on frame-up charges.

In Poland, as in East Germany, the hatred of the masses for the Stalinist regime is intensified by the role of the regime as an agency of a foreign oppressor. This is a profound revolutionary factor in the situation. The Polish working class has suffered deep wounds from the national chauvinist crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy. The liquidation of the Polish Communist Party during the late Thirties in preparation for the Stalin-Hitler pact; the murder of the entire Central Committee of the Polish CP, while living in Russian exile; the partition of Poland in agreement with the Nazis; the cruel betrayal of the Warsaw workers' uprising in the summer of 1944 by the Kremlin's army; the bureaucratic and military method used by the Kremlin to transform social relations in Poland after the Second World War; the looting of Polish economy during the occupation; the continued appropriation by the Kremlin of a big slice of the product of Polish industry without regard for the needs of the Polish people; the Russification of the Polish army — all these bitter recollections, current humiliations and sufferings are identified in the consciousness of the masses with the oppressive Russian bureaucracy and its Polish appointees.

Will anyone dare to plead the case of the Kremlin on the national question as against the grievances of the Polish people? Can anyone claim that the revolutionary right is not with the workers and peasants of Poland? Khrushchev, in his report on Stalin to the Twentieth Congress, admitted that during Stalin's regime whole nations were lifted off the map and transported like cattle to far-off places. Such large-scale atrocities are inconceivable unless they arise from the systematic practice of national chauvinism by the regime in everyday life. And the atrocity against the Jewish people in the Soviet Union,

still not officially admitted, demonstrates to what length Stalinism carried its policy of national oppression.

Khrushchev and Bulganin have admitted that the Kremlin tried to impose its national policy on the Yugoslavs. They didn't get away with it in Yugoslavia because, in distinction from the rest of Eastern Europe, the proletarian revolution in Yugoslavia had developed considerable, independent force before the Kremlin reached out to strangle its independence. But what the Stalin regime failed to do in Yugoslavia, it did with a vengeance in the rest of the East European zone.

Khrushchev and Bulganin have admitted that the charges hurled against the Yugoslavs — "fascist spies and provocateurs" — were frame-ups. But when the Polish workers raise the banner of national freedom, the same discredited frame-up charge is directed against them.

The Poznan uprising, placed in the context of the line of development signaled by the East German general strike June 17, 1953, which in turn arose out of a turbulent strike movement throughout the countries of Eastern Europe, provides the explanation for what underlies the present crisis in the Soviet bureaucracy and world Stalinism. Far from connoting a "new direction" in the thinking and outlook of the bureaucracy, the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was only an expression of the defensive posture the bureaucracy has assumed in relation to the masses.

Further events will drive home this appraisal if it needs any more illustration and proof after Poznan. In the meantime it is necessary to grasp that the restiveness within the bureaucracy itself and among the intellectuals has considerable significance if viewed from the proper class vantage point.

Every time we hear of a courageous voice among the students or even in Stalinist party circles, we must reckon that the workers in the factories are making their own calculations and drawing their own inferences from the situation.

It was reported that in the Soviet Union four professors raised the question of a new party to prevent a recurrence of a leader cult.

In Hungary, the widow of the purged Laszlo Rajk spoke at a meeting of veteran Communists and said, "Murderers cannot be rehabilitated. They not only have destroyed my husband, held me in jail for five years without permitting me to see my baby, receive food, letters or clothes, but they have utterly destroyed our country's political and moral life."

At the same meeting, Professor Gyula Hadju of the University of Budapest,

said, "How can the Communist leaders know what is going on? They never mix with workers or ordinary people, they don't meet them in streetcars because they all ride automobiles, they don't meet them at stores or in the market place because they have special stores, they don't meet them in hospitals because they have special sanatoriums." This passage from the speech of the

74-year-old professor, who spent 50 years in the socialist movement, reads like an excerpt from Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*.

Another meeting heard the Hungarian Communist writer, Tiber Deri, declare, "It is high time that an end be made to this present regime of gendarmes and bureaucrats."

(Continued on page 107)

## John G. Wright

The death June 21 of Joseph Vanzler, who wrote under the pen name of John G. Wright, was a grievous blow to the *International Socialist Review*. For many years an editor of the magazine when it appeared under the name *Fourth International*, he was one of our most dependable contributors to the very end.

The main facts about the political life of Usick, as his friends affectionately called him, are given in *The Militant* of July 2 and July 9. The appreciations expressed there of his personality and his services to the cause of socialism are shared by us. We refer our readers especially to the articles by Art Preis and James P. Cannon and to Harry Ring's report of the memorial services in New York City.

As most of our readers well know, Comrade Wright was an outstanding Marxist theoretician. Following the assassination of Leon Trotsky in 1940, he had no equal, in our opinion, in his special field, that of unraveling the contradictory developments in the Soviet Union. The world Trotskyist movement as a whole is deeply indebted to Comrade Wright for his timely and penetrating analyses of the course of the struggle between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Soviet people in the past 16 years. As an ardent defender of the great conquests of the October 1917 Russian revolution, he followed the latest crisis in Stalinism with avid

interest, seeing it as the beginning of the regeneration of the workers state founded by Lenin and Trotsky.

In addition to his analyses of Soviet affairs, Comrade Wright was known to our readers for his contribution in economics. He was profoundly convinced of the unstable character of the current prosperity, seeing it based mainly on government spending for war and certain to end in a crisis of major proportions if the capitalist rulers do not decide to take the worse alternative of atomic war.

In the complex field of international politics, Comrade Wright kept abreast of events, being among the first to spot significant new developments in many countries. One of his achievements, for instance, was to call attention to the importance of the civil war in Yugoslavia when it broke out in the first years of World War II.

His greatest interest, however, was in philosophy and particularly dialectical materialism. Outside of the great Marxists, his predilection was for Kant, Schelling, Fichte and Hegel. He never hesitated to acknowledge his debt to these thinkers, especially Hegel, and to try to win another student to their writings. Since his approach was materialist, he was critical of the idealism of these philosophers and therefore highly appreciative of the insight the Marxist masters have given us of their views and their works. He did what he

could to make available to the English-speaking world some of the best representative material of this kind. His latest endeavor was to translate Plekhanov's study of Belinski, a contribution that was much appreciated by our readers.

As a defender of Marxist theory, Comrade Wright stood in the forefront not only against hostile bourgeois opinion but in the various factional struggles involving questions of theory in the world Trotskyist movement. Here, as in everything else he did, he was no lukewarm participant. He took as his model the movement created by Lenin where ardent defense of Marxist positions was the norm. For this he won not a few foes — but foes of the right kind.

As a collaborator and teacher in the struggle for socialism you could not ask for a better friend and teammate than Usick. He did not hesitate to express a difference if he saw it that way, but always gently, for he was a gentle and kindly man. And what he saw generally had a point to it. On the other hand, he did not hesitate to change when he became convinced that he might have been wrong. He tried to be objective. He knew how to fit into a team, too, subordinating himself without difficulty when that was required. To him, the organized revolutionary socialist movement constituted a collective, a collective in thought and theory, and a collective in action. He put consciousness above everything else, holding consciousness, in the final analysis, to be the mightiest power of all when it correctly reflects reality. When the world working class finally sees the capitalist system as it really is — and it is certain to do this in the not distant future — then the victory of socialism, he was profoundly convinced, will prove inevitable.

It will not be easy to fill the gap Usick leaves in our ranks. As a stimulating thinker, loyal collaborator and warmest of friends, our staff will miss him for a long time to come.

# From a Socialist Workers Party Candidate An Appeal to Radical Workers

Every socialist is now thinking and asking: How can the socialist forces in this country be unified and strengthened?

The Socialist Workers Party has a practical proposal to facilitate the beginning of united socialist action right now — a common election policy for all radical groups and individuals, designed to promote united action in the election campaign, to bring about the biggest

possible anti-capitalist and pro-socialist

This letter was published July 4 as "An Appeal to the Readers of the *Michigan Worker*" by Rita Shaw, SWP candidate for Governor of Michigan. It is an excellent presentation of the SWP policy in the 1956 elections, particularly in relation to the problems faced by radical workers.

protest vote at the polls this year, and to lay the foundations for closer collaboration of left-wing forces after the election.

Such united action is not only desirable, it is possible. It is possible for all who agree on a basic principle underlying Leninism (which will never become "outmoded" while capitalism survives) that it is impermissible to practice class collaboration in politics.

Political action, if it is to have progressive consequences and promote socialist consciousness and organization, must be based on the principle of the needs of the class struggle. It must include a program of struggle expressing the everyday needs of the workers and their allies, but more than that, it must pose the issue of class against class and the socialist solution.

That kind of political action can never be achieved by entering or supporting any capitalist party. To support the Democratic Party as a "lesser evil" is to deceive the people and to sow confusion, demoralization and defeatism among the more advanced workers.

The Democratic Party is not a lesser evil, despite its occasional liberal demagoguery. It is the party that started the cold war; that plunged the U.S. into the Korean civil war on the side of the counter-revolution; that insists on an even bigger arms budget than Eisenhower's Big Business cabinet demands; that offers rabid opposition to any moderation of the cold war against the Soviet Union; that initiated the witch hunt and the repressive laws used to persecute and jail Communist Party members and other radicals; that stands like a rock against the passage of any civil rights legislation in Washington; that helped to pass the Taft-Hartley Law, and refused to repeal it after winning the 1948 election on a platform promising repeal.

Anyone who participates in this election campaign and doesn't tell these truths about the Democratic Party, along with similar truths about the Republicans, doesn't deserve the name of socialist.

There is only one party running in the present campaign that reflects the sentiments and expresses the aspirations of class-conscious and politically advanced workers. It is the Socialist Workers Party.

The Socialist Workers Party is and always has been an uncompromising opponent of U.S. imperialism, its cold and hot wars, its preparations for another war to destroy the nationalized economy of the Soviet Union, China and the other workers' states. We fight to organize and educate the people to stop the imperialists who hope through war to restore capitalism in the workers' states and to preserve it elsewhere.

We have always defended workers' states and colonial struggles against imperialist attack, even when such states and struggles are temporarily under the leadership of Stalinist or Social-Democratic bureaucrats, whose crimes against the workers and the revolutionary movement we have opposed from the beginning. Our attitude in such cases is determined by the class criterion. It is like the attitude we take toward a bu-

reaucratized union, which we defend as a matter of principle, despite its misleaders, when it is under attack by the class enemy, as during a strike.

The SWP in this campaign, as in the past, fights the witch hunt in all its forms, and defends all its victims, despite differences with their political views. It is the only party in the campaign that advocates repeal of all "anti-subversive" laws and the liberation of all political prisoners.

Now as before the SWP gives unconditional support to the struggle against Jim Crow and for full Negro equality, and seeks to mobilize the aid of the white workers for the inspiring battles against segregation now being waged in the South.

In this election campaign we advocate, and in the unions we long have been working for, the formation of an independent labor party, based on the union, Negro and dirt farmer movements. The formation of a labor party will constitute a break with the two-party system, an inevitable step on the road to socialism. It will provide the American workers with the political organization through which they will begin for the first time to engage in political action independently, as a class, and it will provide them with the political experience through which they will reach socialist conclusions.

As the goal of a labor party we advocate the formation of a Workers and Farmers Government able and willing to reorganize the economy along socialist lines, and to end capitalism in the only country where it retains any real strength.

These are some of the things that the SWP represents in the 1956 election campaign, which distinguish it from all other parties running candidates. These are the things you will be voting for if you vote for and support the SWP.

The SWP election campaign therefore offers a realistic basis for united action this year by all radical and pro-socialist groups and individuals who see eye-to-eye on these fundamental questions.

We urge you to support our campaign and our candidates, to read and spread our campaign literature. We urge you, if you are a member of the Communist Party, to try to persuade the coming national conference of the CP (in September) that it would be criminal to continue the policy of supporting the Democratic Party, and that the CP should endorse the candidates of the SWP for the reasons given above.

If you are an unaffiliated radical, or if you belong to another radical group, we urge you too to endorse our candidates, to form your own committee to promote our campaign and to collaborate with us in bringing the revolutionary socialist message to the broadest circles of the American people.

The road to socialist unity cannot be covered in a single step. We do not pretend that there is complete programmatic unity between us. On many issues differences remain, and will continue for some time.

We do not believe at all that the Leninist analysis of imperialism, and its corollary that imperialist wars are inevitable as long as capitalism continues, has been "outmoded." We are opposed to the Stalin-Khrushchev theory of "peaceful coexistence" as a disarming of the revolutionary struggle against imperialist war. We consider as anti-Leninist many of the current formulations about "a peaceful transformation to socialism." We believe that, thanks to our assimilation of the lessons of the last 40 years and our study of the writings of Lenin and Trotsky, we have the Marxist explanation for the Stalinist bureaucratization and degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Marxist program for eliminating Stalinism in all forms and places.

But these and other questions of principle and tactics need not be an obstacle to united political action now. Provided there is agreement between us on the basic issues, we can act together on them while discussing in a comradely way the questions over which we still differ.

That, for example, is the general attitude expressed by Clifford T. McAvoy, a leader of the American Labor Party in New York who opposes entering or supporting the Democratic Party. At a symposium on June 24, McAvoy said that although he rejects our views on "peaceful coexistence" he is going to vote for the SWP candidates because he sees no other way of expressing his support for socialism at the polls this year.

We welcome your support, even if it is critical support, like McAvoy's. We pledge honest collaboration with all who want to help spread the message of socialism in this campaign, and we are eager to discuss our differences with all who want like us to build a mass revolutionary socialist movement in the United States.

This is our proposal to you. Let us know what you think.

**FARRELL DOBBS for President**  
**MYRA TANNER WEISS for Vice-President**

# The Vindication Of Trotskyism

by Murry Weiss

**T**HE Soviet Union is today in a stronger position in relation to the capitalist world than at any point since the revolution of October 1917. It is sufficient to mention that 600 million people of China after expelling the imperialists and overthrowing the capitalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek, are now allied to the Soviet Union.

Economically, the USSR has attained with unprecedented speed the status of the second industrial power in the world.

The authority and prestige of the Soviet Union is at an all-time high among the colonial and semi-colonial peoples who are fighting for their independence.

It would seem that the regime in power in the USSR should be enjoying its greatest stability and popularity. And yet, there is unmistakable evidence that the very progress the Soviet Union has made, the improvement of its position in relation to world capitalism, and the enlargement of its orbit of influence, has brought about the eruption of the deepest contradictions in Soviet society.

What are these contradictions? How will they be resolved? What place does the present turmoil in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have in the struggle for world socialism? These are the questions before us.

The most recent clue to the nature of the crisis unfolding in the land of the October Revolution is the revelations issuing from the Twentieth Congress of the Com-

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The following article is based on a speech given in New York City June 15.

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munist Party of the Soviet Union last February and in particular the report on Stalin made by Khrushchev to the closed session of the Congress.

Let us therefore consider the most important revelations contained in Khrushchev's speech:

In the first group are those pertaining to Stalin's regime of mass murder and terror. On this point Khrushchev admitted:

The Moscow Trials of the thirties were frame-ups.

The charge that the Trotskyists were spies, wreckers and terrorists was fabricated.

The confessions that formed the basis of the Moscow Trials were obtained by means of psychological and physical torture summed up by Stalin in the formula: "Beat, beat, and again beat!"

The assassination of Kirov, which was the starting point of the Moscow Trials, appears to have been carried out by Stalin's secret police.

The whole generation of Bolsheviks associated with Lenin in the leadership of the Russian Revolution of October 1917 was murdered, many of them after being tortured into confessing falsely that they were spies and terrorists.

Frame-ups, false confessions and mass murder were practiced on

tens of thousands of members of the Communist Party and hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants.

Revolutionary legality and workers' democracy were destroyed and replaced by police rule under the direct supervision of Stalin.

The second group of Khrushchev's admissions relate to the question of nationalities. As you know, the Soviet Union is a federation of numerous Republics. The October 1917 revolution gave freedom and autonomy to the national minorities, who had lived under the oppression of Great Russian chauvinism in what was called "the Czarist prison of the peoples."

Under the Stalin regime, Khrushchev revealed a number of small nations were subjected to mass deportations to faraway places in the course of which millions perished.

The third set of revelations deals with Stalin's crimes and blunders as a war leader: Here Khrushchev recounts how Stalin ignored all evidence of political reality and refused to believe Hitler would attack the Soviet Union.

Thus, Khrushchev points out, the Soviet Union was unprepared economically and militarily for the fascist onslaught in 1941.

Moreover, thousands of the best officers of the Red Army, from the company level up to the general staff had been liquidated in the purges and this badly disorganized the army.

Stalin, according to Khrushchev, was demoralized and helpless in the first stage of the war. Later he exerted his authority to commit military blunders that in one instance alone cited by Khrushchev cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

In short, Khrushchev shows that contrary to his own words at the Nineteenth Congress, in which he assigns the credit for the victory,



of Russia in the war to "Stalin's genius," the truth was that Stalin's regime brought the USSR to the edge of disaster during the war and cost the lives of millions of soldiers and civilians.

The fourth group of Khrushchev's counts denouncing Stalin pertain to the "cult of the individual."

Khrushchev goes into considerable detail on this point. He describes how Stalin replaced the government, the party, the Central Committee and the courts and established a one-man system of rule. He describes how Stalin demanded of one and all, not merely obedience to his command, but the utmost servility. Those who failed to shower Stalin with declarations of unbounded praise for his God-like genius were immediately suspect and subsequently fell under Stalin's terror.

In connection with the cult of the individual Khrushchev relates how Stalin personally edited histories and biographies to falsely depict his role as the all-wise, infallible, genius-leader.

The fifth group of revelations concern the relations of the Stalin regime to other workers' states, notably Yugoslavia. It is likely that a fuller text of the speech will reveal a lot more regarding China. But the evidence contained in Khrushchev's speech, plus what is already well known, establishes fully that Stalin adopted the same attitude toward the new workers' states outside the Soviet Union as he did toward the national minorities within the USSR.

The sixth and final point of Khrushchev's indictment of Stalin deals with Soviet agriculture. Khrushchev shows that contrary to the myth that Stalin was a deep student of the agrarian question and the leader of the great social transformations in Russian agriculture since the revolution, he was in reality abysmally ignorant of the problem. According to Khrushchev, Stalin's only contributions to the solution of agrarian problems consisted of sabotaging

all serious efforts to alleviate severe crises and proposing fantastically unreasonable taxation. (At one point Stalin proposed to tax the peasants an amount greater than their total income for the given period.)

#### Unrevealed Atrocities

There are many things that Khrushchev did not reveal in his report. The atrocities against the leaders of Jewish culture were not mentioned. Neither was Stalin's international murder-machine. Nor was anything said on how this machine was used in Spain, how it was used to liquidate Trotsky's secretaries, and how it was used to assassinate Leon Trotsky himself. We can expect that more revelations will come and more details will be given on what was already admitted.

The truth, as is well known, makes its way slowly, for long periods of time — but once it gains momentum it moves with great speed.

Now it is irrefutably established that the Trotskyist movement told the world working class the truth about the crimes of Stalinism. Each and every crime revealed by Khrushchev was exposed by the Trotskyists many years ago. Any fair-minded person can verify this by consulting the record of our movement — merely by looking through the files of *The Militant* since 1928.

\* \* \*

The Twentieth Congress disclosed one gigantic fact: The Russian workers are beginning the historic work of overthrowing the bureaucratic caste and restoring the democratic foundations of the revolution. This is the basis for a Marxist understanding of the feverish movement on the surface and at the summits of Soviet society.

The U. S. State Department propagandists are attempting to depict the Khrushchev revelations as a proof of the "inherent evil of communism."

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In the first place this pitiful ef-

fort rests on accepting the Stalinist falsehood that socialism has been victoriously achieved in one country — the Soviet Union. On that premise, it is, of course, not difficult to prove that socialism is not what the founders of the socialist movement said it would be.

However, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and the whole Bolshevik party including Stalin up to 1924, never dreamed of a reactionary utopian concept like achieving socialism within the boundaries of one country. The Russian Revolution established a society transitional to socialism. Socialism itself will be achieved only on the premise of the victorious revolution over capitalism in its main centers. The socialist society will be founded on the highest technological achievements of capitalism, as a world-wide productive system liberated from the fetters of national boundaries and capitalist private property.

#### State Department Propaganda

But let's take the State Department propagandists on their own premise for a moment. If the crimes of the Stalin cult are the expression of the "evils of communism," what is the exposure of these crimes? Why are these crimes being repudiated?

*The New York Times*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and other authoritative spokesmen for Big Business, agree that the only plausible explanation for the repudiation of the Stalin cult — the only factor that can explain why the present rulers would take the grave risk of destroying the very keystone of the whole Stalinist structure, is the movement of the Soviet people from below. But they don't dare say that this movement is pro-capitalist in its thought or direction!

Any hopes they had, that an uprising against Stalinism in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union would favor the return of capitalism were smashed by the June 17, 1953 insurrection of the East German working class. This working-

class insurrection, highly organized and magnificently disciplined, and embracing the entire East German industrial working class was anti-capitalist and socialist through and through.

As a matter of fact, only the Stalinist bureaucrats, tried to pin the label of a pro-West, imperialist-inspired movement on this revolutionary uprising. The capitalists knew better, as all the evidence shows. They were therefore unable to intervene.

Evidently, therefore, the so-called "evils of Communism" are being countered by an insurgent movement of the working people who have no thought of returning to capitalism but are bent on removing the barriers in the path to the free society of world socialism.

And then, if the bureaucratic degeneration that gripped the first workers state in history are to be depicted as the "evils of communism" what term will the State Department propaganda flunkies use to describe the two world wars, the world depression, the ten-year hell of Hitlerism, the 20-year rule of Mussolini and the dictatorship of the fascist butcher Franco? Are these not the expression of the "inherent evils of capitalism"?

Correctly understood, Stalinism itself is an expression of the evils of capitalism besetting an isolated workers' state. While the October Revolution established the foundations of a new social order, the weight of the Czarist past and the pressure of capitalist encirclement of a backward country imposed a cruel burden of bureaucratic parasitism and terror on the Russian people.

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Khrushchev opened his speech with a dissertation on the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the "cult of the individual." But although he uses the term "Marxist-Leninist" in practically every other paragraph of his speech, Khrushchev's method has nothing in common with Marxist thought on this question.

He reduces the question to one of modesty versus vanity. Marx was modest, he tells the audience. So was Engels; Lenin was *very* modest. But not Stalin. Stalin ceased to be modest and raised himself above the party and what is worse the Central Committee. Then he began to murder people who disagreed with him, and then still others for no reason at all. He began to commit all kinds of hideous crimes — all because he forgot that a Marxist-Leninist is modest.

#### Empty Explanations

Khrushchev says: "It is clear that in the situation of Socialist victory there was no basis for mass terror in the country." Then why the mass terror?

Khrushchev answers the question of "Why the Stalin cult?" with an empty tautology. The Stalin cult arose because Stalin raised himself above the Party and the Central Committee. It's the same as explaining the crimes of Stalin by his criminal conduct.

If a socialist society has been established, this signifies that mankind has raised its productive powers to the point where the class division of society has been eliminated. The elimination of the class struggle eliminates the need of a state with its special body of armed men to impose by force the rule of the dominant class.

If the Soviet Union has indeed entered the domain of socialism, then, how explain the fact that instead of witnessing the withering away of the functions of the state, it experienced, during the last three decades, the enormous growth of an oppressive state apparatus that maintained its rule by perpetrating the most heinous crimes against those subjected to its rule.

Surely, a Marxist-Leninist must see in such phenomena the expression of extremely acute, social contradictions. But, no, Khrushchev views the phenomenon of the growth of a repressive state which practiced mass murder for 22 years

according to his reckoning, as a result of an erroneous theory, that somehow got into Stalin's head, namely, the theory that precisely with the advent of socialism class strife sharpens.

How did this theory get into Stalin's head despite the achievement of a socialist society? Apparently it is associated with Stalin's tendency to lack modesty and to raise himself above the Central Committee. Purely arbitrary and half-baked idealist constructions! In Khrushchev's explanations there is not a trace of the Marxist method of materialist dialectic in which the role of the individual in history is regarded as a function of the struggle of classes and social strata within classes.

#### Trotsky's Method

The method of the cult of the individual is not abandoned in this type of explanation — it is only turned inside out. Instead of a god — we are presented with a devil. Contrast to this method the method of Trotsky, who 20 years ago, in his basic work *The Revolution Betrayed*, explained the Stalin cult as follows:

"The increasingly insistent deification of Stalin is, with all its elements of caricature, a necessary element of the regime. The bureaucracy has need of an inviolable super-arbiter, a first consul if not an emperor, and it raises upon its shoulders him who best responds to its claim for lordship. That 'strength of character' of the leader which so enraptures the literary dilettantes of the West, is in reality the sum total of the collective pressure of a caste which will stop at nothing in defense of its position. Each one of them at his post is thinking: *L'etat — c'est moi*. [I am the State.] In Stalin each one easily finds himself. But Stalin also finds in each one a small part of his own spirit. Stalin is the personification of the bureaucracy. That is the substance of his political personality."

The "personification of the bureaucracy" — that is the clue to understanding the role of Stalin. The bureaucracy that rose to power after the Russian Revolution is an historically illicit force. It came

to power on the wave of reaction — in a country exhausted by years of imperialist war, revolution and civil war.

The vanguard of the proletariat was bled white. The great ocean of petty peasant enterprise predominated over industry. The initial defeats of the European revolution further sapped the strength and revolutionary vitality of the Russian workers. With every defeat of a workers revolution abroad the bureaucratic tendencies in the Soviet Union were strengthened and with the strengthening of the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union it was able to crush the revolutionary wing of the party of Lenin. And then utterly crush the party itself.

### **Bureaucratic Usurpation**

The bureaucracy expressed its hunger for privilege amidst universal poverty in its adherence to Stalin. Stalin had the best qualifications for the job. His record as an old Bolshevik provided the necessary disguise for the process of bureaucratic usurpation.

That's why Khrushchev must say over and over again in his speech that Stalin was politically right as against Trotskyism. He means by that to justify the triumph of the bureaucratic caste over the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky.

Fundamentally that is what the great struggle was about. It was a struggle between a bureaucratic reaction which lifted the Stalinist oligarchy to power and the proletarian Left Opposition led by Trotsky that fought to defend the Bolshevik party, the Soviets and the trade unions from strangulation by the bureaucracy. It was the reenactment on a vast historical scale, of the same kind of struggle that has taken place in many unions, which started under fighting leadership, practiced wide internal democracy, conducted a policy of militant class struggle, reached out the hand of solidarity to workers in every industry — but subsequently, under different

social conditions, with the receding of the class struggle, became bureaucratized and headed by what Daniel DeLeon described as the "labor lieutenants of capitalism in the ranks of the working class."

### **Khrushchev Refuted**

Khrushchev says: "We must affirm that the party fought a serious fight against the Trotskyists, rightists and bourgeois nationalists and that it disarmed ideologically all the enemies of Leninism. The ideological fight was carried on successfully. . . Here Stalin played a positive role." The facts refute Khrushchev as completely on this question as on the later frame-ups in the Moscow Trials.

(1) Trotskyism was not defeated by ideological means. The record shows that bureaucratic usurpers, utilizing the pressure of a deep social reaction to the revolution, silenced their opponents from the beginning by methods of frame-ups and terror. If Stalin defeated Trotsky's Bolshevik opposition by "ideological means" what were thousands of Trotskyists doing in jail from 1927 on?

(2) The Stalinist faction did not fight for Leninism. On the contrary, as documentary evidence shows, Lenin opened a fight in the last years of his life against the Stalinist faction as the expression of the ominous bureaucratic tendency. Lenin fought the rise of Stalin and Stalinism from his deathbed and Trotsky continued the fight after Lenin's death.

Khrushchev says that Stalin was right in the fight against Trotskyism because without that fight Russia would have failed to industrialize or collectivize agriculture. One is almost compelled to stand in awe before the sweep and audacity of this lie.

Actually, it was the Trotskyist opposition that as early as 1923 proposed that the Soviet Union embark on a central industrial plan and that a struggle be opened to collectivize agriculture as a weapon against the growing kulak (capitalist) element in the coun-

tryside. This proposal was hooted down derisively by the Stalinist faction. Trotsky was called a fantastic super-industrialist, a dreamer and a charlatan. Stalin, the great expert on agriculture, said what the Russian peasant needed was not a plan but a good rain.

For his proposal to fight the growing power of the rich peasant kulak, Trotsky was accused of "underestimation of the peasantry." In a bloc with the right wing of the party, led by Bukharin, the Stalin faction conducted reactionary propaganda among the kulak elements to incite them against Trotskyism. They didn't even refrain from using anti-Semitism in this campaign.

Thus, while leaning on the social pressure of the capitalist elements, the bureaucracy throttled the opposition and expelled it from the party, drove the workers who supported the Left Opposition out of the factories and opened a reign of terror.

### **Left Opposition Confirmed**

Within months after the expulsion of Trotsky, the position of the Left Opposition was confirmed to the hilt. The kulak threat, which the Stalinists claimed did not even exist threatened to engulf the Soviet regime. The Stalinist faction then made a 180-degree turn. They took over Trotsky's program, and applied it. Industrialization? The first five-year plan was launched and it quickly confirmed the Left Opposition's estimates of the possibilities of planned economy. However, the bureaucracy gave its own distorted version to these measures — relying not on the creative power of the masses but on bureaucratic decree.

These historical questions are of urgent importance to the revolutionary movement. Not a single question confronting the radical workers today can be understood without tracing the struggle waged by Trotskyism from 1923 down to the present day. And the struggle of Trotskyism was only a con-

tinuation of the line of struggle of Marx, Engels and Lenin as it was tested and enriched by the October revolution.

Take the question of peaceful coexistence and the peaceful road to socialism — these so-called new theories of the Twentieth Congress, revising Lenin's conception of our epoch as "the epoch of imperialist war, proletarian revolution and colonial uprisings." Khrushchev and Company have not announced new theories, as the Stalinist leader in the U.S., Eugene Dennis, would have us believe. Peaceful coexistence between capitalism and socialism is the basic theory of Stalinism. That question was fought out in the great dispute over the theory of "socialism in one country" versus the Leninist-Trotskyist conception of permanent revolution.

The peaceful road to socialism? A bloc with the liberal capitalist? A multi-class coalition government? That was the program of the reformist right wing of the Second International which was vigorously opposed by Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

In the Russian workers' movement these were the questions that demarcated Bolshevism and Menshevism since 1903.

### **Bolshevism and Menshevism**

It was the essence of Menshevism to seek to ally the working class with the liberal bourgeoisie. Such an alliance results in the defeat of the proletariat, with the liberals turning up in the camp of reaction.

The essence of Bolshevism, defended by Lenin and Trotsky from 1905 through 1917 and to the end of their lives, was to organize the working class independently, against the parties of capitalism.

The arguments of the CP leaders about why we must work in the Democratic party are the very arguments, the sophistries of the lesser evil, that Lenin waged a life-long struggle against. It is all the more important to go back to the basic teachings of Lenin on

these principled questions because his name and authority are invoked by the Stalinist falsifiers — to support the very theories and arguments Lenin demolished.

### **The Basic Question**

The questions of class collaboration versus class struggle — this is at bottom the question dividing Stalinism and Trotskyism in the United States, in the Soviet Union and throughout the world.

*The Daily Worker* editors berate themselves for having blindly and subserviently parroted all the lies of Stalin. Why don't they ask themselves: How did it happen that a revolutionary party, which by its very nature must be headed by critical-minded independent leaders, tested in the class struggle, became headed by spineless bureaucrats who defended every crime, no matter how monstrous, that issued from the Kremlin?

The answer isn't hard to find. The CP in the U.S., like all Communist Parties, was destroyed as an independent revolutionary party, following the expulsion of the Trotskyists in 1928. The Stalinist bureaucracy used its power and prestige to pervert the Comintern into its factional instrument. All communist leaders who opposed this were bureaucratically driven out of their respective parties. Those who were willing to become the creatures of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR lost their capacity to be revolutionists at home. They lost their class bearings. They became capable, as a matter of course, of any deed of treachery.

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The position of the Soviet Union in relation to the capitalist world has, as we stated in the beginning, become considerably stronger since World War II. At the same time the power of the Stalinist regime has been undermined. For those who identified the destiny of the Soviet Union with Stalinism, this comes as a completely unexpected and bewildering phenomenon.

The Trotskyists, however, foresaw and were completely prepared for this development. They alone analyzed the basic contradiction in Soviet society as the contradiction between the new property forms of nationalized and planned economy established as a result of the October revolution and the domination of the workers' state by a bureaucratic oligarchy.

This contradiction, Trotskyism taught, manifested itself in the struggle between the Soviet working class and the dictatorship of the bureaucratic caste. The fate of the struggle between the workers and the bureaucracy was tied to the fate of the world-wide struggle of classes. Stalinism, the politics of the bureaucracy, was born and prospered in an epoch of defeats of proletarian revolution — it was the refraction of capitalist pressure and reaction within the Soviet Union and the world workers' movement. A major factor in promoting defeats, Stalinism became strengthened by them.

### **The Thunder of Revolution**

But despite the obstacle of Stalinism the anti-capitalist forces in the world and the Soviet Union have become enormously strengthened. The Soviet working class, now 50-million strong and augmented by the industrial working class of Eastern Europe, expresses this profound shift in the world relationship of forces by a revolutionary resurgence. The Twentieth Congress heard the echo of this revolutionary thunder in the halls of the bureaucracy. Everything they did there and everything they have done since is in the nature of panicky preparations for the onrushing revolutionary storm.

The world revolution and the world working class movement have entered a new stage marked by the appearance of the Soviet masses in the political arena. This stage can only culminate in the downfall of the Soviet bureaucratic caste, the victory of Russian bolshevism and the triumph of the world socialist revolution.

# Developments In the Soviet Union

by Daniel Roberts

**W**ITH the death of Stalin March 4, 1953, there opened a period of concessions to the Soviet masses. Stalin's heirs, in the first days following his death, cancelled a new blood purge the tyrant had prepared. They released the intended sacrificial victims — the Jewish doctors — and announced that subordinate MVD officials had prepared the frame-up. Following that the powers of the MVD were reduced, regimentation of artists and scientists relaxed and promises made to the masses of more consumer goods.

The "new course" came to a climax at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union last February, registering a new stage in the relations between the Soviet bureaucracy and the Soviet masses. At that gathering, sweeping changes were promised. On the economic plane these consisted of reduced hours of work, 30% wage increases "on an average" in the next five years, increase in old-age and disability pensions favoring especially the lower brackets, and planned increases in construction of housing, of furnishings and electrical appliances.

More meat, more butter, more fish, better service in the stores, better food and services in public dining rooms and catering services and more of these institutions were projected. To the last measures — of direct benefit to working women — were added exten-

sion of maternity leave from 88 to 112 days. Last December, abortions were once more legalized.

Tuition fees in the senior classes of secondary schools and in specialized secondary schools of higher educational establishments were decreed abolished. The offspring of the Soviet aristocracy — the "gilded youth" — have become notorious for debauchery and idleness. It has therefore become imperative for the regime to recruit new engineers, scientists and technicians from the lower strata of the population.

The directives of the Twentieth Congress for the Sixth Five-Year Plan also call for "Work to be continued on further perfection and reduction of the administrative apparatus and its maintenance cost, on elimination of superfluous sections of the apparatus, and on cutting down superfluous staff." In short, a pruning of the bureaucracy.

However, these promises, a number of which were enacted right after the Congress, were only the prelude to the most significant concession of all — the end of the Stalin cult. Many of the other concessions were compatible with reforms inaugurated prior to the Congress. Surrendering the Stalin cult meant something new. It registered an end to the arbitrary, one-man dictatorship exercised under Stalin.

All official proclamations of "collective leadership" notwithstanding, the very nature of the

bureaucracy's domination of the country calls for re-creation of one-man rule. That is why the Kremlin gave up the Stalin cult last of all and only under tremendous pressure from the masses in the Soviet Union and East European countries. As Mark Gayn points out in the April 28 *Nation*, last December, on the occasion of the seventy-sixth anniversary of Stalin's birth, the top bureaucrats still glorified Stalin in the accustomed Byzantine manner. Editorials in Pravda hailed him as "the faithful pupil and continuer of Lenin" and sang hymns to his "masterly exposition of Leninism." So far were Khrushchev and Co. from their own denunciations a bare 60 days later of Stalin as a mass murderer, despot, madman, traducer of Leninism and wrecker of Soviet development.

## Partial Nature of Concessions

If the whole trouble were really with the super-devil Stalin, as Khrushchev pleaded in his secret-session speech at the Twentieth Congress, the days after the Congress — if not indeed right after Stalin's death — should have produced a swirling rush of reforms. Instead the regime gives way only grudgingly, trying to yield as little as possible at a time. The impulse for the changes comes not from them but from below, from the Soviet masses now beginning to assert themselves again as an independent force. Confronted by their mounting pressure, the bureaucracy wants to "dole out" its retreat, seeking all the time to preserve the essentials of its position as a ruling privileged caste. Hence the extremely partial nature of any of its concessions.

For instance, the public liquidation of the Stalin cult in the USSR has proceeded by zigzags in which exposures of Stalin's crimes and his past have alternated with statements praising the "positive" side of his life's work. Thus the June

issue of *Kommunist*, main theoretical organ of the Soviet CP still praises Stalin in the following terms: "Generally known is the positive role of I. V. Stalin in preparation and carrying out of the socialist revolution, in the civil war, in the fight of the party and of its central committee against the 'perverts' and enemies of Leninism — Trotskyites, Zinovievites, right-wing opportunists, and bourgeois nationalists — in the struggle for the building of socialism in our country." Only a few days after this appeared, the Khrushchev closed-session speech was published throughout the world — by the U. S. State Department.

### Criminal Code Softened

Similarly, provisions of the criminal code freezing workers to the job and compelling their presence at work have now been abolished. It is true that the laws in question were largely inoperative during the last five years, anyway. Still, repeal of the provisions encourages competition among various trusts, factories and areas for the services of the workers. Plant management will thereby have to pay attention to such questions as housing for workers, catering services, etc. At the same time, a May 8 *Pravda* editorial urged a "good wrangle" between trade unions and industrial management, and the secretary of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League demanded abolition of the labor draft for young workers.

But a number of stringent restrictions on quitting a job remain. These include sanctions — such as loss for six months of temporary disability benefits. Strikes continue to be rigidly prohibited and would incur the most severe punishment. And the permanent "labor record" book, which the worker must show every time he applies for a job at a new place, has been retained. Union militants the world over know this as a device for keeping tab on "trouble

makers," "malcontents" — in short militants who stand up for the rights of the working class.

Again, salaries in certain of the highest brackets have been reduced. This is a sop to the burning indignation of the Soviet masses over the monstrous inequalities prevailing in Soviet society. However, the Soviet aristocracy continues to live off the fat of the land, enjoying swank automobiles, apartments, country homes, abundance of food and personal servants.

### Cultural "Thaw"

In the arts and sciences, a "thaw" has been in process since shortly after Stalin died. The bureaucratic tops began allowing somewhat greater scope for artistic self-expression and scientific objectivity. At the 20th Congress, Mikoyan even ordered artists and scientists — especially economists and historians — to "really get down to creative. . . activity." As if they could "really" create by bureaucratic edict!

Lysenko — the charlatan, who proclaimed a theory of genetics decreed by Stalin to be the only one compatible with "Marxism" and who faked evidence to "substantiate" the theory — has now been publicly denounced in the Soviet Union. Other instances of quackery by "scientific leaders" were also exposed. However, while ordering artists and scientists to engage in greater "creative activity," the Stalinist tops, speaking in the latest issue of *Party Life* warned: "Freedom of discussing scientific problems does not at all mean freedom of preaching bourgeois ideology, freedom of anti-Marxist views in this or that branch of science."

In Lenin's time, a party position on what is good or bad in art and true or untrue in natural sciences was considered by the Bolshevik leaders as anathema. But in imposing a totalitarian strait jacket on the country to serve the interests of the privilege-seekers, Stalin could not allow freedom in cul-

tural activity any more than other phases of Soviet life. The "thaw" instituted since Stalin's death serves a practical purpose as far as Stalin's heirs are concerned. Spelled out, the order to engage in "creative activity" means: write histories and novels glorifying the present Kremlin masters.

Turning to the field of Soviet justice, we find powers of the special arm of the secret police to hand out prison, concentration-camp, deportation and even death sentences in star-chamber proceedings abolished even prior to the Twentieth Congress. All "political crimes" must now be prosecuted in open court. The whole set of decrees under which the Moscow Frame-Up Trials were conducted in the 1930's have been repealed. The right to representation by attorney is extended to all cases and begins — theoretically, at least — from the moment of arrest. The magazine, *Kommunist*, has informed jurists that they can now convict a defendant only after absolute proof is established. Doubt must be resolved in favor of the defendant, who is under no obligation to prove his innocence. Hitting at the procedure of the Moscow Trials, the magazine declared that confession alone can never be the basis for conviction. It strongly condemned Vishinsky — the Trials' prosecutor — for having violated the rule at that time.

### Procedural Reforms

The new code was given a workout in the case of 20 Soviet Jews, who according to the May 7 *Christian Science Monitor*, were tried for possessing and distributing "illegal" Zionist literature. They were given the chance to plead not guilty — a departure from the old judicial procedure. "This relatively fair trial and the correctly conducted searches which preceded the arrest of the defendants did not prevent the authorities from imposing prison terms as severe as in the past, but there was an outward appearance of regularity," says the *Monitor*.

Thus frame-ups and political persecution continue, but with the Kremlin now showing greater concern with the propriety of the juridical forms. The crude amalgams of the Moscow Trials have been replaced with slicker models.

For the Soviet masses, the significance of the juridical reforms lies in the legality they provide the Soviet population in organizing for its rights against the dictatorship. Besides, each one of the reforms in this or any other sphere constitutes a damning self-indictment by the bureaucracy and spurs the determination of the masses to achieve its political overturn.

In addition to procedural reforms, the Kremlin has announced a forthcoming end to concentration camps (whose population numbers nearly 15 million) — and their replacement with “corrective labor” camps. The advantage to the inmates is supposed to be incarceration at locations closer to their homes.

Tens of thousands have also been released from prison camps outright. These barbaric institutions were first created under Stalin to take care of working class political opponents. Their population was then enlarged to take care of criminals, nationalities victimized by Stalin, German prisoners of war, bureaucrats in bad grace with the dictator, workers who quit their job without permission, etc. Those reported released fall in all categories but one. No political prisoners have been reported freed.

### “Rehabilitations”

A commission on rehabilitation of victims of Stalin’s terror has been created. It functions with the aid of old Bolsheviks still living. None of the victims of the Moscow trials have yet been rehabilitated officially. But the reputation of a number of oppositionists purged prior to the monster show trials has been restored. All in all, Khrushchev revealed at the Twentieth Congress that 7,679 purge victims had been rehabili-

tated, “many. . . posthumously.”

In the official Soviet press the Moscow Frame-Up Trials have been exposed piecemeal through Mikoyan’s admissions at the Twentieth Congress that there had been frame-ups and “violations of socialist justice” in Stalin’s time, through repudiation of the Rajk Trial confessions in Hungary, and through attacks on Vishinsky’s methods of conviction-by-confession. Nor is Trotsky referred to any longer as a “traitor” to the Soviet Union.

### But Silence on Trotsky

However, the Kremlin maintains its rude and bureaucratic silence to the request of Natalia Sedova, Trotsky’s widow, that his name and that of their son, Leon Sedov, be officially cleared of the Moscow trial charges. Nor have Khrushchev and Co. answered her request for information about the fate of her younger son, Serge, who disappeared over 20 years ago. Serge, an engineer, was non-political; Stalin victimized him purely for the sake of vengeance against Trotsky.

Several of Stalin’s falsifications of Soviet history have been rectified in piecemeal fashion. His role as a supporter of the capitalist Provisional Government in March 1917 and as an opponent of Lenin’s policy of steering for the seizure of power have been exposed. The Military Revolutionary Committee — whose chairman was Trotsky and of which Stalin was not a member — has been restored in official history to its true role as the practical organizer of the October 1917 Revolution. Lenin’s denunciation of Stalin as rude, disloyal and given to abuse of power has been publicized, although Lenin’s injunction in his Last Testament to remove Stalin from his post as party General Secretary — cited by Khrushchev in the secret-session speech — has not yet been published.

Again, in the sphere of the rights of nationalities, Khrushchev denounced Stalin in the same

terms used by Lenin in 1924 — namely, as a Great Russian chauvinist. Lenin applied this label at the time Stalin and his henchman Ordjonikidze (a present-day hero of Khrushchev and Co.) were ruthlessly suppressing a movement in their native Georgia for the right of national independence on Soviet foundations. The national-rights movement was led by prominent Georgian Bolsheviks. Lenin sent a letter to these Georgian party members declaring himself for them “with all my heart.” He sought Trotsky’s collaboration in waging the struggle against Stalin’s machine. Lenin realized that Stalin’s high-handed conduct in Georgia was a symptom of the rise of the bureaucracy and mortally endangered Soviet democracy. He prepared to come out openly against Stalin when the second stroke, then sudden death, removed him from political life.

### “Bourgeois-Nationalism”

In reviving Lenin’s characterization of Stalin, however, Khrushchev and Co. did not proclaim the right of national independence for any of the numerous national groupings within the Soviet bloc. On the contrary, the Kremlin chiefs continue to rage against “bourgeois-nationalism,” especially in Georgia, which designation they apply to any authentic strivings of the masses in the different national entities to redefine their relations with Moscow. In March, they conducted a bloody repression of demonstrations in Tiflis — where the population was accused of a “bourgeois nationalist” uprising. The Kremlin itself admits that at least 100 people were killed by Soviet troops. The full facts of the demonstration are still rigidly suppressed.

Khrushchev and Co. have remained silent about the revelations of the Polish Stalinist newspaper *Folksstimme* concerning Stalin’s persecutions against the Jewish cultural movement and his massacre of leading Jewish writers. Indeed, a softened form

of anti-Semitism is official policy in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev himself told the French Socialist delegation, visiting Moscow in May, that Jews were confined in obtaining administrative jobs to their proportion in the population as a whole. According to the June 10 New York Times, he justified this restriction in the same way as do upholders of the notorious quota system in capitalist countries.

### National Policy

However, the first reform moves in the field of national policy were undertaken shortly after Stalin's death. These concerned relations with China and Yugoslavia. China is too powerful to deal with as a satrapy as Stalin intended. And Yugoslavia, having successfully defied the Kremlin, has become valuable as an ally in Soviet diplomacy. There are also moves to ease the stranglehold of the Kremlin in Eastern Europe. But the crushing of the June 1953 uprising of East German workers, who wanted independence from Kremlin domination for the sake of promoting a united Socialist Germany, typifies basic policy towards Eastern Europe, Georgia and the Ukraine to this day.

For all the limitations the list of reforms is impressive as a gauge of the energetic pressure of the Soviet and East European masses upon the bureaucracy. The determination of the population to throw off the stifling rule can be seen even more clearly in all the reports of activity below. And just as the bureaucracy seeks to sharply limit all reforms, so does it seek to choke off all growing manifestations of rebellion. Thus far, none too successfully.

Foreign correspondents in the Soviet bloc unanimously report that the secret police, although still functioning, is losing its ability to terrorize the population. Soviet and East European citizens discuss their grievances against the regime openly among

themselves. This is a condition — as all previous experience with revolutionary struggle against tyranny proves — that permits the rather rapid build-up of underground revolutionary organizations.

### "Rotten Elements" And "Demagogues"

The temper of the masses is reflected in the crackdown on "rotten elements" and "demagogues" conducted in the Stalinist press since the Twentieth Congress. These are people — according to Stalinist accounts — who are going beyond what the government considers permissible in the attack on the Stalin cult. They criticize present party leaders, party policy and the party and government apparatus. Thus four members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences made a demand that a second party be created in the Soviet Union. The call was promptly denounced by Khrushchev, and the four academicians were expelled from the party forthwith and deprived of all official functions. The four, according to the May 28 *Christian Science Monitor* argued that only a new party independent of the CP apparatus could avert the danger of a new Stalin-type dictatorship. (Compare the harsh treatment of the four with the leniency shown Lysenko, who continues as a member of the very same Academy of Sciences.)

An intimation of how widespread is the movement of "rotten elements" is indicated by *Party Life*, an organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU. "The party cannot reconcile itself with those who hinder our creative work," ranted this magazine in a recent issue, "with those who try to use democracy and the weapon of criticism in order to sow a lack of confidence, discord and opposition among the masses to the leaders." (Emphasis added.) What seriously worries the Kremlin chiefs is that local party leaders are passive in the face of "antiparty demagogic

attacks." The inability to get rid of the movement and the reference to sowing "discord . . . among the masses," testifies to the profound surge of rebelliousness throughout Soviet society.

In the armed forces, Marshals Zhukov and Timoshenko attack Young Communist League units in the armed forces for failing to bolster the authority of commanding officers. They demand that the Prussian-type discipline imposed in the army in 1935 be upheld. The top army brass taxes young officers with neglecting forceful methods of exacting obedience in favor of efforts to convince troops by talk. The young officers reject compulsion as a remnant of "bourgeois order." Against them Timoshenko contended: "Our army does not need false democratism."

In Poland, the tide is taking big sections of the Communist Party apparatus in tow. "Had Poland passed through an authentic anti-Stalinist revolution, people would not be expressing themselves any differently than they are now doing — at least as regards a number of problems," writes K. A. Jelinski in the May 3 *France Observateur*, the leading French liberal weekly. The American liberal journalist, I. F. Stone, on the basis of his visit to the country, also finds Poland in the van of destruction of the Stalin cult. "Poland has begun to liberate itself," he reports in the June 4 *I. F. Stone Weekly*. His findings about Poland sharply contrast with his evaluation of Moscow where he found the official atmosphere deadening in its conformity. "Stalinism is far from liquidated," is his judgment on Moscow.

### Voices in Revolt

The revolt against the totalitarian strait jacket has found voice in the newspapers, in the writings of intellectuals, in debates in parliament, in the injunction of party leaders that the trade-unions should begin functioning as instruments of defense of the work-



ers, on proposals in the press to end the murderous speed-up and raise miserable wages. Some 90,000 persons have been released or are soon to be released from prisons or have had their sentence reduced. A number of top government officials associated with police terrorism have been removed from their posts.

National independence demands have been raised in both Poland and Czechoslovakia. In each case the demand envisages continued economic ties with the Soviet bloc. "A genuine independence would serve the interests of the USSR," correctly wrote a Polish Stalinist journal recently.

"The Czechs await another future," writes Flora Lewis in the June 3 *New York Times Magazine*. "... Nevertheless, all the indications permit a confident statement that they do not want to go back. Capitalism, if it means a magic reversal of the clock, is not attractive."

### New Relationship of Forces

The voice of the Soviet working class is not heard in the reports of even the most conscientious of foreign correspondents, whose conversations and interviews are restricted to the upper circles of Soviet society. But it must be clear that if the intellectuals are sounding off against the dictatorship with impunity, it is because they know the regime has its hands full coping with a far more powerful force — namely, the proletariat. The ferment among the intellectuals thus reflects the new relationship of forces between the working class and the bureaucracy.

What we have portrayed represents the start of the disintegration of the monolithic rule of the bureaucratic caste under the energetic pressure of the Soviet masses. It is impossible to view it in any other manner despite all the moves the bureaucracy makes to hold the line, to keep its grip, to give out as little and as grudgingly as possible and to buy political

stability with economic reforms. Somewhere along the line, the bureaucracy, alarmed by the growing rebelliousness, will turn to repression. And this action can trigger the revolutionary explosion.

What we have witnessed in the Soviet Union at and since the Twentieth Congress is analogous to what has been seen on the eve of all popular revolutions against tyranny. The whole edifice shakes, later cracks up. The dictatorship, determined up to the last moment to preserve itself intact, is suddenly compelled to yield, and this sets off a chain reaction.

Just the same, for a genuinely new course to be launched, the old order must first be overthrown and the masses must create their own organs of popular rule.

"All indications agree," wrote Leon Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), "that the further course of [Soviet] development must inevitably lead to a clash between the culturally developed forces of the people and the bureaucratic oligarchy. There is no peaceful outcome for this crisis. No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution."

The fact that the Soviet revolution will be a political and not a social revolution does not change the essential process. The fact that the Soviet bureaucracy is a caste and not a class only means that in the face of the popular mass it has far less resistance to offer.

### Political Revolution

When Trotsky wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* he set forth the program of the political revolution in the following terms:

"It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy. A restoration of the right of criticism, and a genuine freedom of elections, are necessary conditions for the further development of the country. This assumes a revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of Bolsheviks, and a

resurrection of the trade unions. The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interests of the toilers. Free discussion of economic problems will decrease the overhead expense of bureaucratic mistakes and zigzags. Expensive playthings — palaces of the Soviets, new theaters, show-off subways — will be crowded out in favor of workers' dwellings. 'Bourgeois norms of distribution' [that is, inequality of income] will be confined within the limits of strict necessity, and, in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to socialist equality. Ranks will be immediately abolished. The tinsel of decorations will go into the melting pot. The youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticize, make mistakes, and grow up. Science and art will be freed of their chains. And finally, foreign policy will return to the traditions of revolutionary internationalism."

All the reform measures from on top are concessions in the direction of the above-cited program. And the masses constantly seek by their pressure on the bureaucratic rulers to push Soviet society further along this road. In only one sphere has there been no motion away from Stalinism and that is in the field of foreign policy.

### The Struggle Beginning

The Soviet masses are only in the first stages of their struggle against the parasitic bureaucracy. Their demands center on the immediate issues at home — improving their living conditions, controlling social inequality, restoring freedom. They are not yet pressing on the lever of international revolutionary politics. This for the time being gives Khrushchev and Co. room to maneuver with imperialism for a world status-quo deal in order to cope with the mounting revolutionary threat at home. The so-called new theoretical "discoveries" announced at the Twentieth Congress were really the crassest expressions yet of the long-established Stalinist policy of international class collaboration.

But while the formulas went further than anything said in Stalin's time, the deeds have been

of the same nature: The Kremlin offers to barter the colonial revolution and the working-class movement in the West for a "peaceful coexistence" deal. In France, for instance, the CP delegates in the National Assembly support "Socialist" Mollet in his bloody, repressive course in Algeria. In the United States, the Stalinist chiefs have stepped up their turn to the Democratic Party and are snuggling up to the Reuther bureaucracy in the AFL-CIO.

In each case, however, the CP leaders had been there before in Stalin's time. Voting for French imperialism against the national independence aspirations in the French colonies featured Stalinist policy during the Popular Front period of 1936-1938, and again during and after World War II, when the French Stalinist leaders were allied with French imperialism. Similarly, the Stalinist leaders were deep in the Democratic Party and formed an integral section of the CIO bureaucracy from 1936 until 1947.

In order to begin reviving revolutionary internationalism, the working-class CP members must apply energetic pressure on their own Stalinist party bosses. The break up of Stalinist monolithism brought about by the Soviet masses has introduced a deep-going crisis in every one of the CP's outside the Soviet bloc. The most severely affected are such mass organizations as the French and Italian parties. Under the impact of the discussions that are opening up in these organizations, a revolutionary wing will have the opportunity to crystallize. It will merge with the ever more powerful tide of the Soviet working class in rebellion against the Soviet bureaucracy. In this manner the coming political revolution in the USSR will provide the point of departure for creating mass revolutionary parties throughout the world and for the extension of the October 1917 revolution on a world-wide basis.

# Early Years Of the American Communist Movement

by James P. Cannon

## After Ruthenberg

July 22, 1955

Dear Sir:

The sudden death of Ruthenberg in March 1927 upset the shaky equilibrium in the party, and called forth the second direct intervention of the Comintern to thwart the will of the party majority and to determine the composition of the party leadership over its head.

Ruthenberg had always played a big role in the party, and he had seemed to be perennially established in the office of General Secretary. His death in the prime of his life really shook things up. The two "big names" in the party at that time were those of Foster and Ruthenberg, and the prestige of both had been well earned by their previous record of constructive activity.

Foster was renowned for his

A student who is doing research work on the history of early American communism asked James P. Cannon, as well as other participants, a number of questions about the events and prominent figures of the pioneer movement. Cannon's answers, which began in the Summer 1954 issue of *Fourth International*, are continued here.

work as organizer and leader of the great steel strike of 1929 and his subsequent achievements as organizer of the TUEL; Ruthenberg for his heroic fight against the war and his outstanding activity as a pioneer communist, and also for his prison terms, bravely borne. The party members were well aware of the value of their public reputations and, by common consent, the two men held positions of special eminence as party leaders and public spokesmen for that reason. Factional activity had added nothing to the prestige of the two most popular leaders; if anything, it had somewhat tarnished it.

Of all the leading people in his faction, Ruthenberg had by far the greatest respect and personal influence in the party ranks. The faction was demonstratively called the "Ruthenberg Group" in order to capitalize on his prestige. But the Ruthenberg group, *with* Ruthenberg, was a minority in the party, as the hard-fought elections to the 1925 Convention had clearly demonstrated.

At the time of the 1925 Convention the "cable from Moscow," as interpreted by the Comintern representative on the ground, had

abruptly turned this minority into a majority and left the party members, who had innocently voted for their choice of delegates to the party convention, looking like fools who had mistakenly thought they had some rights and prerogatives in the matter of electing the party leadership.

Another "cable from Moscow" worked the same miracle of turning a minority into a majority in 1927. Supplementary decisions along the same line gradually bludgeoned the party members into acquiescence and reduced their democratic powers to a fiction. The role of the Comintern in the affairs of the American Communist Party was transformed from that of a friendly influence in matters of policy into that of a direct, brutal arbiter in organizational questions, including the most important question, the selection of the leadership.

Thereafter, the party retained only the dubious right to go through the motions; the decisions were made in Moscow. The process of transforming the party from a self-governing, democratic organization into a puppet of the Kremlin, which had been started in 1925, was advanced another big stage toward completion in 1927. That is the essential meaning of this year in party history. Everything else is secondary and incidental.

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The shaky formal "majority" of the Ruthenberg group had been upset even before Ruthenberg died by the defection of committee members Weinstone and Balam. Then came the sudden death of Ruthenberg, to deprive the faction of its most influential personality and its strongest claim to the confidence of the party ranks. How then could such an attenuated minority faction, *without* Ruthenberg, hope to "control" the party and avoid coming to agreement for cooperation with the other groups who constituted the majority in the Central Executive Committee?

We took it for granted that it couldn't be done, and proceeded on the assumption that a re-arrangement of the leading staff had to follow as a matter of course. But it didn't work out that way. The cards were stacked for a different outcome, and we were defeated before we started. All we had on our side were the rules of arithmetic, the constitutional rights of the majority of the Central Executive Committee, the logic of the situation, and the undoubted support of the majority of the party at the time. All that was not enough.

On his side, Lovestone had his own driving frenzy to seize control of the party, regardless of the will of the majority, and — the support of Moscow. These proved to be the ace cards in the game that was drawn out over a period of six months to its foreordained conclusion. Lovestone came out of the skirmish of 1927 with the "majority" — given to him by the Comintern — and held it until the same supreme authority decided to take it away from him two years later.

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Lovestone took the first trick by having himself appointed by the Political Committee to the post of General Secretary, vacated by Ruthenberg's death. Constitutionally, this was out of order. The right to appoint party officers belonged to the full Plenum of the Central Executive Committee, the Political Committee being merely a sub-committee of that body.

We demanded the immediate calling of a full Plenum to deal with all the problems arising from Ruthenberg's death, including the appointment of his successor in the post of party secretary. Weinstone and I had come to agreement with Foster that Weinstone should become the new party secretary; and since we represented a majority of the Plenum, we expected to execute the decision.

Then came trick number two for Lovestone. The Comintern

cabled its decision that the Plenum could meet all right, but it could not make any binding decisions on organization questions pending a consideration of the whole matter in Moscow. All the leading representatives of the factions were to come to Moscow for that purpose. Since the chief "organizational questions" were the reorganization of the Political Committee along the lines of the Plenum majority, and the appointment of a new party secretary, this cable of the Comintern, ostensibly withholding judgment, actually left Lovestone in control at both points — *de facto* if not *de jure*.

The meeting of the sovereign Plenum of the Communist Party of the United States, forbidden in advance to make any binding decisions, was made even more farcical by the failure of Lovestone to show up for the second session. He and Gitlow had abruptly departed for Moscow, where the decisions were to be made, without so much as a by-your-leave or goodbye to the elected leading body of the party to which they, like all other party members, were presumably — or so it said in the constitution — subordinate.

In a moderately healthy, self-governing party, involved in the class struggle in its own country and functioning under its own power, such reckless contempt for its own leading body would no doubt be sufficient to discredit its author and bring prompt condemnation from the party ranks. Nothing like that happened in reaction to the hooligan conduct of Lovestone on this occasion. The majority of the Plenum blew up in anger. Foster fussed and fumed and gave vent to his indignation in unparliamentary language. But there was nothing that we, the duly elected majority, could do about it; we could not make any "binding decisions" on any question — the Comintern cable had forbidden that.

Since 1925 the party had grad-

ually been acquiescing in the blotting out of its normal rights as a self-governing organization until it had already lost sight of these rights. Lovestone's scandalous action on this occasion only underscored the real status of the party in relation to the Moscow overlords.

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There was nothing to do but head for Moscow once again in order to try to straighten out another supposed "misunderstanding." Viewed retrospectively, our credulity in those days passeth all understanding, and it gives me a sticky feeling to recall it. I feel a bit shy about admitting it even now, after the lapse of so many years and the occurrence of so many more important things, but Weinstone and I went to Moscow together full of confidence that our program for the re-arrangement of the leadership on a collective basis, and the liquidation of the old factions, would receive the support of the Comintern.

Since neither of the other factions claiming the right to control and "hegemony" in the leadership could muster a majority in the Central Executive Committee, while we constituted a definite balance of power, we believed that the other factions would be compelled to acquiesce in our program, at least for the next period.

We ourselves did not aim at organizational control of the party, either as a separate faction or in combination with one of the others. Our aim was to loosen up all the factional alignments and create conditions in the leading committee where each individual would be free to take a position objectively, on the merits of any political question which might come up, without regard to previous factional alignments.

In discussion among ourselves, and in our general propaganda in the party, we were beginning to emphasize the idea that political questions should take precedence over organization considerations, including even party "control."

There were no irreconcilable political differences between the factions at the moment. That seemed to favor our program for the assimilation of the leading elements of each faction in a collective leading body. We believed that the subordination of political questions to organizational considerations of faction control — a state of affairs already prevailing to a considerable extent — could only miseducate and corrupt the party membership as well as the leadership.

For my part, I was just then beginning to assimilate with full understanding, and to take in dead earnest, the Leninist principle that important political considerations should always come first. That marked the beginning of a reorientation which was eventually to lead me out of the factional jungle of that time onto the high road of principled politics. I did not see how the Comintern, which I still regarded as the embodied representative of the principles of Lenin, could fail to support our stand.

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Sharp practices in many factional struggles have given rise to the skeptical saying: "When one accepts a position 'in principle' it means that he rejects it in practice." That is not always true, but that is what we got in Moscow in 1927 — an acceptance of our program "in principle," with supplementary statements to vitiating it. We found agreement on all sides that the factions should be liquidated and the leadership unified. But this was followed by the intimation in the written decision that the Lovestoneites should have "hegemony" in the unification — which was the surest way to guarantee that the "unification" would be a farcical cover for factional domination.

The official decision condemned "the sharpening of the factional struggle" — which the Lovestoneites had caused by their conduct at the party Plenum — but blamed the "National Committee

of the Opposition Bloc" for this "sharpening." The decision incorporated our formula that "the previous political and trade union differences have almost disappeared." Then it went on to condemn "factionalism without political differences as the worst offense against the party" — which was precisely what the Lovestoneites' attempt to seize party control consisted of — but blamed this "offense" on the "Opposition Bloc." The Comintern decision on the "American Question" in 1927 is a real study in casuistry — for those who may be interested in that black art.

There was nothing clear-cut and straightforward in the Comintern decision this time, as had been the case in earlier times over disputed political questions. The moderation of factional struggle, party peace, unity and cooperation were emphasized. But the official decision was slanted to imply — without anywhere clearly stating — that the Lovestone faction was favored in the coming election of delegates to the party convention. That made certain that there would be no unity and cooperation, but a factional gang-fight for control of the convention, and a factional regime in the party afterward if the Lovestoneites gained a majority.

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We knew that we had won no victory at Moscow in 1927. But the acceptance of our "general principles" encouraged us to continue the fight; we knew that these general principles did not have a dog's chance in the party if the Lovestone faction established itself in control with a formal majority at the Convention.

It was only then, in the course of the discussion in Moscow and after the formal decision, that the bloc of Weinstone-Cannon with Foster was formally cemented to put up a joint slate in the pre-convention struggle for delegates to the pending party convention. Previously there had been only an agreement at the Plenum to vote

for Weinstone as party secretary. Now we agreed to unite our forces in the pre-convention fight to prevent the Lovestoneites from gaining factional control.

That six-months period, from the death of Ruthenberg to the party convention at the end of August, was an eye-opener to me in two respects. First, clearly apparent changes had taken place in the party which already then aroused in me the gravest misgivings for the future. The party had started out as a body of independent-minded rebels, regulating its internal affairs and selecting its own leaders in an honest, free-and-easy democracy. That had been one of its strongest attractions.

But by 1927 the Communist Party was no longer its original self. Its membership was visibly changing into a passive crowd, subservient to authority and subject to manipulation by the crudest demagoguery. This period showed, more clearly than I had realized before, the extent to which the independent influence of the national party leaders, as such, had been whittled down and subordinated to the over-riding authority of Moscow. Many party members had begun to look to Moscow, not only for decisions on policy, but even for suggestions as to which national leader or set of leaders they should vote for.

Secondly, in 1927 Lovestone became Lovestone. That, in itself, was an event boding no good for the party. Previously Lovestone had worked under cover of Ruthenberg, adapting himself accordingly and buying the favor, or at least the toleration, of the party on Ruthenberg's credit. In those days, even the central leaders of the factions, who encountered Lovestone at close quarters and learned to have a healthy awareness of his malign talents, never saw the whole man.

We now saw Lovestone for the first time on his own, with all his demonic energy and capacity for reckless demagoguery let loose, with-

out the restraining influence of Ruthenberg. It was a spectacle to make one wonder whether he was living in a workers' organization, aiming at the rational reorganization of society, or had wandered into a madhouse by mistake.

The death of Ruthenberg was taken by everyone else as a heavy blow to the faction he formally headed. But Lovestone bounded forward from the event as though he had been freed from a strait-jacket. Beginning with the announcement, before Ruthenberg's body was cold, that he had expressed the dying wish for Lovestone to become his successor in office, and a simultaneous appeal to Moscow to prevent the holding of a Plenum to act on the question, Lovestone was off to a running start in the race for control of the party; and he set a pace and a pattern in party factionalism, the life of which the faction-ridden party had never seen before.

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Many critical observers were amazed and depressed by the cynical efficiency with which Eisenhower and Nixon were packaged and sold to a befuddled electorate in the last presidential election. I was perhaps less astonished by this slick and massively effective manipulation because I had seen the same kind of thing done before — in the Communist Party of the United States. Allowing for the necessary differences of scale and resources involved, Lovestone's job of selling himself as the chosen heir of Ruthenberg and the favorite son of Moscow, in the 1927 party elections, was no less impressive than the professional operation of the Madison Avenue hucksters in 1952.

The sky was the limit this time, and all restraints were thrown aside. The internal party campaign of 1927 was a masterpiece of brazen demagoguery calculated to provoke an emotional response in the party ranks. The pitch was to

sell the body of Ruthenberg and the decision of the Comintern, with Lovestone wrapped up in the package. Even the funeral of Ruthenberg, and the attendant memorial ceremonies, were obscenely manipulated to start off the factional campaign on the appropriate note.

Lovestone, seconded by Wolfe, campaigned "For the Comintern" and created the atmosphere for a yes or no vote on that question, as though the elections for convention delegates simply posed the question of loyalty or disloyalty to the highest principle of international communism. The Comintern decision was brandished as a club to stampede the rank and file, and fears of possible reprisals for hesitation or doubt were cynically played upon.

These techniques of agitation, which, properly speaking, belong to the arsenal of fascism, paid off in the Communist Party of the United States in 1927. None of the seasoned cadres of the opposition were visibly affected by this unbridled incitement, but all along the fringes the forces of the opposition bloc gave way to the massive campaign. New members and weaker elements played safe by voting "for the Comintern"; furtive careerist elements, with an eye to the main chance, came out of their hiding places and climbed on the bandwagon.

The Lovestone faction, now headed by Lovestone, perhaps the least popular and certainly the most distrusted man in the party leadership, this time accomplished what the same faction, formerly headed by the popular and influential Ruthenberg, had never been able to do. Lovestone won a majority in the elections to the party convention and established the faction for the first time in real, as well as formal, control of the party apparatus.

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Lovestone sold himself to the party as the choice of Moscow. He couldn't know at that time,  
(Continued on page 107)

# The Soviet Union Today

## The Workers State and the Question Of Thermidor and Bonapartism

by Leon Trotsky

**T**HE foreign policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy — within both its channels, the primary one of diplomacy, and the subsidiary channel of the Comintern — have taken a sharp turn toward the League of Nations, toward the preservation of the *status quo*, and alliances with reformists and bourgeois democracy. At the same time, the domestic policies have turned toward the market and the “well-to-do collective farmer.” The latest drive against oppositionist and semi-oppositionist groups, as well as against isolated elements who are in the least critical, and the new mass purge of the party have for their object to give Stalin a free hand for the course to the Right. Involved here is essentially the return to the old organic course (staking all on the kulak, alliance with the Kuo Min Tang, the Anglo-Russian Committee, etc.), but on a much larger scale and under immeasurably more onerous conditions. Where does this course lead? The word “Thermidor” is heard again on many lips. Unfortunately, this word has become worn from use, it has lost its concrete content and is obviously inadequate for the task of characterizing either that stage through which the Stalinist bureaucracy is passing, or the catastrophe which it is

preparing. We must, first of all, establish our terminology.

*Controversies Over “Thermidor” in the Past.* The question of “Thermidor” is bound up closely with the history of the Left Opposition in the USSR. It would be no easy task today to establish

This article, first published in *The New Internationalist* in July 1935, is of exceptional interest today in the light of the end of the Stalin cult. Trotsky here concisely states his basic analysis of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist bureaucracy, utilizing as a historic analogy the period of Thermidorian and Bonapartist reaction in the Great French Revolution. The article constitutes the thesis that is elaborated in his well-known book *The Revolution Betrayed*.

The reference to the appearance of terrorist activity among the Soviet youth is to the assassination of Kirov. Trotsky's prediction that this would play into the hands of the worst reaction was fully confirmed in the Moscow Frame-up Trials which shortly followed, for Stalin blamed the death of Kirov on the defendants in each of the trials.

The death agony of the Stalinist bureaucracy has stretched out for a much longer period than Trotsky expected, largely due to the intervention of World War II. But the end of the Stalin cult is a signal that the Soviet workers are again in movement, pressing for an end to the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and a return to the democracy they knew under Lenin and Trotsky.

who resorted first to the historical analogy of Thermidor. In any case the positions on this issue in 1926 were approximately as follows: the group of “Democratic Centralism” (V. M. Smirnov, Sapronov, and others who were hounded to death in exile by Stalin) declared, “Thermidor is an accomplished fact!” The adherents to the platform of the Left Opposition, the Bolshevik-Leninists, categorically denied this assertion. And it was over this issue that a split occurred. Who has proved to be correct? To answer this question we must establish precisely what each group itself understood “Thermidor” to mean: historical analogies allow of various interpretations, and may therefore be easily abused.

The late V. M. Smirnov — one of the finest representatives of the old Bolshevik school — held that the lag in industrialization, the growth of the kulak and of the Nepman (the new bourgeois), the liaison between the latter and the bureaucracy, and finally, the degeneration of the party had progressed so far as to render impossible a return to the socialist road without a new revolution. The proletariat had already lost power. With the crushing of the Left Opposition, the bureaucracy began to express the interests of a regenerating bourgeois regime. The fundamental conquests of the October revolution had been liquidated. Such was in its essentials the position of the group of “Democratic Centralists.”

The Left Opposition argued that although the elements of dual power had indubitably begun to sprout within the country, the transition from these elements to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie could not occur otherwise than by means of a counter-revolutionary overturn. The bureaucracy was already linked to the Nepman and the kulak, but its main roots still

extend into the working class. In its struggle against the Left Opposition, the bureaucracy undoubtedly was dragging behind it a heavy tail in the shape of Nepmen and kulaks. But on the morrow this tail would strike a blow at the head, that is, at the ruling bureaucracy. New splits within the bureaucratic ranks were inevitable. Face to face with the direct danger of a counter-revolutionary overturn, the basic core of the Centrist bureaucracy would lean upon the workers for support against the growing rural bourgeoisie. The outcome of the conflict was still far from having been decided. The burial of the October revolution was premature. The crushing of the Left Opposition facilitated the work of Thermidor. But Thermidor had not yet occurred.

We need only review accurately the *gist* of the controversies of 1926-1927 for the correctness of the position of the Bolshevik-Leninists to emerge in all its obviousness, in the light of subsequent developments. As early as 1927 the kulaks struck a blow at the bureaucracy, by refusing to supply it with bread which they had managed to concentrate in their own hands. In 1928, an open split took place in the bureaucracy. The Right was for further concessions to the kulak. The Centrists, arming themselves with the ideas of the Left Opposition whom they had smashed conjointly with the Rights, found their support among the workers, routed the Rights, and took to the road of industrialization and, subsequently, collectivization. The basic social conquests of the October revolution were saved in the end at the cost of countless unnecessary sacrifices.

The prognosis of the Bolshevik-Leninists (more correctly, the "optimum variant" of their prognosis) was confirmed completely. Today there can be no controversy on this point. Development of the productive forces proceeded not by way of restoration of private

property but on the basis of socialization, by way of planned management. The world historical significance of this fact can remain hidden only to the political blind.

*The Real Meaning of Thermidor.* Nevertheless, today, we can and must admit that the analogy of Thermidor served to becloud rather than to clarify the question. Thermidor in 1794 produced a shift of power from certain groups in the Convention to other groups, from one section of the victorious "people" to other strata. Was Thermidor counter-revolution? The answer to this question depends upon how wide a significance we attach, in a given case, to the concept of "counter-revolution." The social overturn of 1789 to 1793 was bourgeois in character. In essence it reduced itself to the replacement of fixed feudal property by "free" bourgeois property. The counter-revolution, corresponding to this revolution, would have had to attain the reestablishment of feudal property. But Thermidor did not even make an attempt in this direction. Robespierre sought his support among the artisans — the Directorate, among the middle bourgeoisie. Bonaparte allied himself with the banks. All these shifts — which had, of course, not only a political but a social significance — occurred, however, on the basis of the new bourgeois society and state.

*Thermidor Was Reaction in Operation on the Social Foundation of the Revolution.* Of the very same import was the Eighteenth Brumaire of Bonaparte, the next important stage on the road of reaction. In both instances it was a question not of restoring either the old forms of property, or the power of former ruling estates; but of dividing the gains of the new social regime among the different sections of the victorious "Third Estate." The bourgeoisie appropriated more and more property and power (either directly and immediately, or through spe-

cial agents like Bonaparte), but made no attempt whatever against the social conquests of the revolution; on the contrary, it solicitously sought to strengthen, organize and stabilize them. Napoleon guarded bourgeois property, including that of the peasant, against both the "rabble" and the claims of the expropriated proprietors. Feudal Europe hated Napoleon as the living embodiment of the revolution, and it was correct, according to its lights.

*The Marxian Evaluation of the USSR.* There is no doubt the USSR today bears very little resemblance to that type of the Soviet republic which Lenin depicted in 1917 (no permanent bureaucracy or permanent army; the right of recalling all elected officials at any time and the active control over them by the masses "regardless who the individual may be"; etc.). The domination of the bureaucracy over the country, as well as Stalin's domination over the bureaucracy have well-nigh attained their absolute summation. But what conclusions would follow from this? There are some who say that since the actual state which has emerged from the proletarian revolution does not correspond to ideal *a priori* norms, therefore they turn their backs on it. That is political snobbery, common to pacifist-democratic, libertarian, anarcho-syndicalist, and generally ultra-Left circles of petty bourgeois intelligentsia. There are others who say that since this state has emerged from the proletarian revolution therefore every criticism of it is sacrilege and counter-revolution. That is the voice of hypocrisy behind which lurk most often the immediate material interests of certain groups among this very same petty bourgeois intelligentsia, or among the workers bureaucracy. These two types — the political snob and the political hypocrite — are readily interchangeable, depending upon personal circumstances. Let us pass them both by.

A Marxist would say that the present-day USSR obviously does not approximate to the *a priori* norms of a Soviet state; let us discover, however, what we failed to foresee when working out the programmatic norms; let us furthermore analyze what social factors have distorted the workers state; let us check once again if these distortions have extended to the economic foundations of the state, that is to say, if the basic social conquests of the proletarian revolution have been preserved; if these have been preserved, then in what direction are they changing; and if there obtain in the USSR and on the world arena such factors as may facilitate and hasten the preponderance of progressive trends of development over those of reaction. Such an approach is complex. It brings with it no ready-made key for lazy minds which the latter love so much. In return, however, not only does it preserve one from the two plagues, snobbery and hypocrisy, but it also presents the possibility of exerting an active influence upon the fate of the USSR.

When the group of "Democratic Centralism" declared in 1926 that the workers state was liquidated, it was obviously burying the revolution while it was still alive. In contradistinction to this, the Left Opposition worked out a program of reforms for the Soviet regime. The Stalinist bureaucracy smashed the Left Opposition in order to safeguard and entrench itself as a privileged caste. But in the struggle for its own positions it found itself compelled to take from the program of the Left Opposition all those measures which alone made it possible to save the social basis of the Soviet state. That is a priceless political lesson! It shows how specific historical conditions, the backwardness of the peasantry, the weariness of the proletariat, the lack of decisive support from the West, prepare for a "second chapter" in the revolution, which is char-

acterized by the suppression of the proletarian vanguard and the smashing of revolutionary internationalists by the conservative national bureaucracy. But this very same example shows how a correct political line enables a Marxian grouping to fructify developments even when the victors of the "second chapter" run roughshod over the revolutionists of the "first chapter."

A superficial idealistic mode of thinking which operates with ready-made norms, mechanically fitting living processes of development to them, easily leads one from enthusiasm to prostration. Only dialectic materialism, which teaches us to view all existence in its process of development and in the conflict of internal forces, can impart the necessary stability to thought and action.

*The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy.* In a number of previous writings, we established the fact that despite its economic successes, which were determined by the nationalization of the means of production, *Soviet society* completely preserves a contradictory transition character, and, measured by the position of the toilers, the inequality of living conditions, and the privileges of the bureaucracy, it still stands much closer to the regime of capitalism than to future communism.

At the same time, we established the fact that despite monstrous bureaucratic degeneration, the *Soviet state* still remains the historical instrument of the working class, in so far as it assures the development of economy and culture on the basis of nationalized means of production, and by virtue of this prepares the conditions for a genuine emancipation of the toilers through the liquidation of the bureaucracy and of social inequality.

Whoever has not seriously pondered and accepted these two fundamental propositions; whoever, in general, has not studied the literature of the Bolshevik-Lenin-

ists on the question of the USSR from 1923 on, runs the risk of losing the leading thread with every new event, and of forsaking Marxist analysis for abject lamentations.

The Soviet (it would be more correct to say, the anti-Soviet) bureaucratism is the product of social contradictions between the city and the village; between the proletariat and the peasantry (these two kinds of contradictions are not identical); between the national republics and districts; between the different groups of peasantry; between the different layers of the working class; between the different groups of consumers; and, finally, between the Soviet state as a whole and its capitalist environment. Today, when all relationships are being translated into the language of monetary calculation, the economic contradictions come to the forefront with exceptional sharpness.

Raising itself above the toiling masses, the bureaucracy regulates these contradictions. It uses this function in order to strengthen its own domination. By its uncontrolled and self-willed rule, subject to no appeal, the bureaucracy accumulates new contradictions. Exploiting the latter, it creates the regime of bureaucratic absolutism.

The contradictions within the bureaucracy itself have led to a system of hand-picking the main commanding staff; the need for discipline within the select order has led to the rule of a single person, and to the cult of the infallible leader. One and the same system prevails in factory, *kolchoz* [collective farm], university, and the government: a leader stands at the head of his faithful troop; the rest follow the leader. Stalin never was and, by his nature, could never be a leader of masses: he is the leader of bureaucratic "leaders," their consumption, their personification.

The more complex the economic tasks become, the greater the demands and the interests of the



population become, all the more sharp becomes the contradiction between the bureaucratic regime and the demands of socialist development; all the more coarsely does the bureaucracy struggle to preserve its positions; all the more cynically does it resort to violence, fraud and bribery.

The constant worsening of the political regime in face of the growth of economy and culture — this crying fact finds its explanation in this, and this alone: that oppression, persecution, and suppression serve today in a large measure not for the defense of the state, but for the defense of the rule and privileges of the bureaucracy. This is also the source of the ever increasing need to mask repression by means of frauds and amalgams.

“But can such a state be called a *workers state*?” — thus speak the indignant voices of moralists, idealists, and “revolutionary” snobs. Others a bit more cautious express themselves as follows, “Perhaps this is a workers state, in the last analysis, but there has not been left in it a vestige of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We have here a degenerated workers state under the dictatorship of the bureaucracy.”

We see no reason whatever to resume this argumentation as a whole. All that has to be said on this score has been said in the literature and in the official documents of our tendency. No one has attempted to refute, correct, or supplement the position of the Bolshevik-Leninists on this most important question.

We shall here limit ourselves solely to the question whether the factual dictatorship of the bureaucracy may be called the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The terminological difficulty here arises from the fact that the term *dictatorship* is now used in a restricted political sense, and, again, in a more profound, sociological sense. We speak of the “dictatorship of Mussolini” and at the same time declare that

Fascism is only the instrument of finance capital. Which is correct? Both are correct, but on different planes. It is incontestable that the entire executive power is concentrated in Mussolini’s hands. But it is no less true that the entire actual content of the state activity is dictated by the interests of finance capital. The *social* domination of a class (its “dictatorship”) may find extremely diverse *political* forms. This is attested by the entire history of the bourgeoisie, from the Middle Ages to the present day.

The experience of the Soviet Union is already adequate for the extension of this very same sociological law — *with all the necessary changes* — to the dictatorship of the proletariat as well. In the interim between the conquest of power and the dissolution of the workers state within the socialist society, the forms and methods of proletarian rule may change sharply, depending upon the course of the class struggle, internally and externally.

Thus, the present-day domination of Stalin in no way resembles the Soviet rule during the initial years of the revolution. The substitution of one regime for the other did not occur at a single stroke, but through a series of measures, by means of a number of minor civil wars waged by the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard. In the last historical analysis, the Soviet democracy was blown up by the pressure of social contradictions. Exploiting the latter, the bureaucracy wrested the power from the hands of mass organizations. In this sense we may speak about the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and even about the personal dictatorship of Stalin. But this usurpation was made possible and can maintain itself only because the *social content of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy is determined by those productive relations which were created by the proletarian revolution*. In this sense we may say with complete justification

that the dictatorship of the proletariat found its distorted but indubitable expression in the dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

*The Historical Analogy Must Be Revised and Corrected.* In the internal controversies of the Russian and the international Opposition we conditionally understood by Thermidor, the first stage of bourgeois counter-revolution, aimed against the social basis of the workers state.\* Although the substance of the controversy, as we have seen, did not suffer by it in the past, nevertheless, the historical analogy became invested with a purely conditional, and not a realistic character, and this conditional character comes into ever increasing contradiction with the demands for an analysis of the most recent evolution of the Soviet state. Enough to mention the fact that we ourselves often speak — and with ample cause — of the plebiscitary or Bonapartist regime of Stalin. But Bonapartism, in France, came after Thermidor? If we are to remain within the framework of the historical analogy, we must necessarily ask the question: Since there has been no Soviet “Thermidor” as yet, whence could Bonapartism have arisen? Without making any changes *in essence* in our former evaluations — there is no reason whatever to do so — we must radically revise the historical analogy. This will enable us to gain a closer view of certain old facts, and better to understand certain new manifestations.

The overturn of the Ninth Thermidor did not liquidate the

\*The Mensheviks also speak about Thermidorian degeneration. It is impossible to understand what they mean by this. The Mensheviks were opposed to the seizure of power by the proletariat. Even today, the Soviet state is non-proletarian, in their opinion; (what it really is — remains a mystery). In the past they demanded the return to capitalism, today they demand the return to “democracy.” If they themselves are not representatives of Thermidorian tendencies, then what does “Thermidor” mean at all? Self-evidently, it is merely a current literary expression.

## Leon Trotsky



1879-1940

basic conquests of the bourgeois revolution; but it did transfer the power into the hands of the more moderate and conservative Jacobins, the better-to-do elements of bourgeois society. Today, it is impossible to overlook that in the Soviet revolution also a shift to the Right took place a long time ago, a shift entirely analogous to Thermidor, although much slower in tempo, and more masked in forms. The conspiracy of the Soviet bureaucracy against the Left wing could preserve its comparatively "dry" character during the initial stages only because the conspiracy itself was executed much more systematically and thoroughly than the improvisation of the Ninth Thermidor.

Socially the proletariat is more homogeneous than the bourgeoisie, but it contains within itself an entire series of strata which become manifest with exceptional clarity following the conquest of power, during the period when the bureaucracy and a workers aristocracy connected with it, begin to take form. The smashing of the Left Opposition implied in the most direct and immediate sense the transfer of power from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class. The year 1924 — that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor.

Involved here, of course, is not the question of historical identity but of historical analogy which always has as its limits the different social structures and epochs. But the given analogy is neither superficial nor accidental: it is determined by the extreme tension in the class struggle which prevails during the period of revolution and counter-revolution. In both cases the bureaucracy raised itself upon the backs of plebeian democracy which had assured the victory for the new regime. The Jacobin clubs were strangled gradually. The revolutionists of 1793 died on the battlefields; they

became diplomats and generals, they fell under the blows of repression. . . or went underground. Subsequently, other Jacobins successfully transformed themselves into Napoleon's prefects. Their ranks were swelled in ever increasing numbers by turncoats from old parties, by former aristocrats, and crass careerists. And in Russia? The very same picture of degeneration, but on a much more gigantic arena and a much more mature background, is reproduced, some 130-140 years later by the gradual transition from Soviets and party clubs seething with life to the commandeering of secretaries who depend solely upon the "passionately beloved leader."

In France, the prolonged stabilization of the Thermidorian-Bonapartist regime was made possible only thanks to the development of the productive forces which had been freed from the fetters of feudalism. The lucky ones, the plunderers, the relatives, and the allies of the bureaucracy enriched themselves. The disillusioned masses fell into prostration.

The upsurge of the nationalized

productive forces, which began in 1923, and which came unexpectedly to the Soviet bureaucracy itself, created the necessary economic prerequisites for the stabilization of the latter. The upbuilding of the economic life provided an outlet for the energies of active and capable organizers, administrators, and technicians. Their material and moral position improved rapidly. A broad, privileged stratum was created, closely linked to the ruling upper crust. The toiling masses lived on hopes or fell into apathy.

It would be banal pedantry to attempt to fit the different stages of the Russian revolution to analogous events in France that occurred toward the close of the eighteenth century. But one is literally hit between the eyes by the resemblance between the present Soviet political regime and the regime of the First Consul, particularly at the end of the Consulate when the period of the Empire was nigh. While Stalin lacks the luster of victories, at any rate, he surpasses Bonaparte the First in the regime of organized cringing. Such power could be attained only by strangling the party, the Soviets, the working class as a whole. The bureaucracy upon which Stalin leans is materially bound up with the results of the consummated national revolution, but it has no point of contact with the developing international revolution. In their manner of living, their interests and psychology, the present-day Soviet functionaries differ no less from the revolutionary Bolsheviks than the generals and prefects of Napoleon differed from the revolutionary Jacobins.

*Thermidorians and Jacobins.* The Soviet ambassador to London, Maisky, recently explained to a delegation of British trade unionists how necessary and justifiable was the Stalinist trial of the "counter-revolutionary" Zinovievists. This striking episode — one from among a thousand — imme-

diately brings us to the heart of the question. We know who the Zinovievists are. Whatever their mistakes and vacillations, one thing is certain: they are representatives of the "professional revolutionist" type. The questions of the world workers movement — these have entered into their blood. Who is Maisky? A right-wing Menshevik who broke with his own party in 1913, going to the Right in order to avail himself of the opportunity to enter as a Minister into the Trans-Ural White Government, under the protection of Kolchak. Only after Kolchak was annihilated did Maisky consider the time ripe for turning his face toward the Soviets. Lenin -- and I along with him -- had the greatest distrust, to say nothing of contempt, for such types. Today, Maisky, in the rank of ambassador, accuses "Zinovievists" and "Trotskyists" of striving to provoke military intervention in order to restore capitalism — the very same capitalism which Maisky had defended against us by means of civil war.

The present ambassador to the United States, A. Troyanovsky, joined the Bolsheviks in his youth; shortly afterward he left the party; during the war he was a patriot; in 1917, a Menshevik. The October revolution found him a member of the Menshevik Central Committee, in addition to which, during the next few years, Troyanovsky carried on an illegal struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat; he entered the Stalinist party, more correctly, the diplomatic service, after the Left Opposition was crushed.

The ambassador to Paris, Potemkin, was a bourgeois professor of history during the period of the October revolution; he joined the Bolsheviks after the victory. The former ambassador to Berlin, Khinchuk, participated, as a Menshevik, during the days of the October overturn, in the counter-revolutionary Moscow Committee for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Revolution, together

with Grinko, a right-wing Social Revolutionist, the present People's Commissar of Finance. Surtitz, who replaced Khinchuk in Berlin, was the political secretary of the Menshevik Chkheidze, the first chairman of the Soviets; he joined the Bolsheviks after the victory. Almost all other diplomats are of the same type; and in the meantime there are being appointed abroad — especially after the experience with Besedovsky, Dimitrievsky, Agabekov and others — only the most dependable people.

Not so long ago dispatches appeared in the world press relating to the major successes of the Soviet gold mining industry, with comments concerning its organizer, the engineer Serebrovsky. The Moscow correspondent of the *Temps*, who is today successfully competing with Duranty and Louis Fischer as the official spokesman for the bureaucratic uppercrust, took particular pains to stress the fact that Serebrovsky is a Bolshevik from 1903, a member of the "Old Guard." That is what Serebrovsky's party card actually states. As a matter of fact, he participated in the 1905 revolution as a young student and Menshevik in order to then go over to the camp of the bourgeoisie for many long years. The February revolution found him holding the post of government director of two munitions plants, a member of the Board of Trade, and an active participant in the struggle against the metal workers union. In May 1917, Serebrovsky declared that Lenin was a "German spy"! After the victory of the Bolsheviks, Serebrovsky along with other "spetzes" was drawn into technical work by myself. Lenin did not trust him at all; I had hardly any faith in him myself. Today, Serebrovsky is a member of the Central Committee of the party!

The theoretical journal of the Central Committee, *Bolshevik*, (Dec. 31, 1934) carries an article by Serebrovsky, "On the Gold

Mining Industry of the USSR." We turn to the first page: "...under the leadership of the beloved leader of the party and the working class, comrade Stalin. . ."; three lines down: "...comrade Stalin in a conversation with the American correspondent, Mr. Duranty. . ."; five lines further down: "...the concise and precise reply of comrade Stalin. . ."; at the bottom of the page: "...that's what it means to fight for gold in the Stalinist way." Page two: "...as our great leader, comrade Stalin teaches us. . ."; four lines down: "...replying to their [the Bolsheviks'] report comrade Stalin wrote: "Congratulations on your success. . ."; further down on the same page: "...inspired by the guidance of comrade Stalin. . ."; one line below: "...the party with comrade Stalin at the head. . ."; two lines following: "...the guidance of our party and [!!] comrade Stalin." Let us now turn to the conclusion of the article. In the course of a half a page we read: "...the guidance of the genius leader of the party and the working class, comrade Stalin. . ."; and three lines later: "...the words of our beloved leader, comrade Stalin. . ."

Satire itself stands disarmed in the face of such a flood of sycophancy! "Beloved leaders," one should imagine, are never in need of having declarations of love made to them five times on each page, and, besides, in an article devoted not to the leader's anniversary but to . . . the mining of gold. On the other hand, the author of an article, with a capacity for such fawning, obviously cannot have anything in him of a revolutionist. Of such caliber is this former Czarist director of large factories, bourgeois and patriot, who waged a struggle against the workers, and who is today a bulwark of the regime, member of the Central Committee, and 100% Stalinist!

Another specimen. One of the pillars of the present-day *Pravda*,

Zaslavsky, propounded in January of this year that it was just as impermissible to publish the reactionary novels of Dostoevsky as the "counter-revolutionary works of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev." Who is this Zaslavsky? In the dim past — a right-wing Bundist (Menshevik of the Jewish Bund), later a bourgeois journalist who carried on a most contemptible campaign in 1917 against Lenin and Trotsky as agents of Germany. In Lenin's articles for 1917 there is to be found, as a refrain, the phrase, "Zaslavsky and other scoundrels like him." Thus has Zaslavsky entered into the literature of the party, as the consummate type of venal bourgeois calumniator. During the civil war period, he was in hiding in Kiev, a journalist for White Guard publications. Only in 1923 did he go over to the side of the Soviet power. Today he defends Stalinism from the counter-revolutionists Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev! In the USSR as well as abroad, Stalin's press is crammed with such individuals.

The old cadres of Bolshevism have been smashed. Revolutionists have been supplanted by functionaries with supply spines. Marxian thinking has been driven out by fear, flattery, and intrigue. Of Lenin's Political Bureau, only Stalin has remained: two members of the Political Bureau are broken politically and grovel in the dust (Rykov and Tomsky); two members are in prison (Zinoviev and Kamenev); and one is exiled abroad and deprived of his citizenship (Trotsky). Lenin, as Krupskaya herself expressed it, was spared only by death from the repressions of the bureaucracy: failing the opportunity to put him in prison, the epigones shut him up in a mausoleum. The entire warp of the ruling layer has degenerated. The Jacobins have been pushed out by the Thermidorians and Bonapartists; Bolsheviks have been supplanted by Stalinists.

To the broad stratum of the

conservative and nowise disinterested Maisky's, Serebrovsky's, and Zaslavsky's, large, medium, and petty, Stalin is the judge-arbiter, the fountain of all boons, and the defender from all possible oppositions. In return for this, the bureaucracy, from time to time, presents Stalin with the sanction of a national plebiscite. Party congresses, like Soviet congresses, are organized upon a sole criterion: *for* or *against* Stalin? Only "counter-revolutionists" can be *against*, and they are dealt with as they deserve. Such is the present-day mechanism of rule. This is a *Bonapartist* mechanism. No other definition for it can be found as yet in a political dictionary.

*The Difference Between the Roles of a Bourgeois and a Workers State.* Without historical analogies we cannot learn from history. But the analogy must be concrete: behind the traits of resemblance we must not overlook the traits of dissimilarity. Both revolutions put an end to feudalism and serfdom. But one of them, in the shape of its extreme wing, could only strive in vain to pass beyond the limits of bourgeois society; the other actually overthrew the bourgeoisie and created the workers state. This fundamental class distinction which introduces the necessary material limits to the analogy bears a decisive significance for the prognosis.

After the profound democratic revolution, which liberates the peasants from serfdom and gives them land, the feudal counter-revolution is generally impossible. The overthrown monarchy may reestablish itself in power, and surround itself with medieval phantoms. But it is already powerless to reestablish the economy of feudalism. Once liberated from the fetters of feudalism, bourgeois relations develop automatically. They can be checked by no external force: they must themselves dig their own grave, having pre-

viously created their own gravedigger.

It is altogether otherwise with the development of socialist relations. The proletarian revolution not only frees the productive forces from the fetters of private ownership but it transfers them to the direct disposal of the state it itself creates. While the bourgeois state, after the revolution, confines itself to a police role, leaving the market to its own laws, the workers state assumes the direct role of economist and organizer. The replacement of one political regime by another exerts only an indirect and superficial influence upon market economy. On the contrary, the replacement of a workers government by a bourgeois or petty bourgeois government would inevitably lead to the liquidation of the planned beginnings and, subsequently, to the restoration of private property. *In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously.* Progress toward socialism is inseparable from that state power which is desirous of socialism, or which is constrained to desire it. Socialism can acquire an immutable character only at a very high stage of development, when its productive forces have far transcended those of capitalism, when the human wants of each and all can obtain bounteous satisfaction, and when the state will have completely withered away, dissolving in society. But all this is still in the distant future. At the given stage of development, the socialist construction stands and falls with the workers state. Only after thoroughly pondering the difference between the laws of the formation of bourgeois ("anarchistic") and socialist ("planned") economy, is it possible to understand those limits beyond which the analogy with the Great French Revolution cannot pass.

October 1917 completed the democratic revolution and initiated the socialist revolution. No force in the world can turn back

the agrarian-democratic overturn in Russia: in this we have a complete analogy with the Jacobin revolution. But a *kolkhoz* overturn is a threat that retains its full force, and with it is threatened the nationalization of the means of production. Political counter-revolution, even were it to recede back to the Romanov dynasty, could not reestablish feudal ownership of land. But the restoration to power of a Menshevik and Social Revolutionary bloc would suffice to obliterate the socialist construction.

*The Hypertrophy of Bureaucratic Centrism into Bonapartism.* The fundamental difference between the two revolutions and consequently between the counter-revolutions "corresponding" to them is of utmost importance for understanding the significance of those *reactionary political shifts which compose the essence of Stalin's regime.* The peasant revolution, as well as the bourgeoisie that leaned upon it, was very well able to make its peace with the regime of Napoleon, and it was even able to maintain itself under Louis XVIII. The proletarian revolution is already exposed to mortal danger under the present regime of Stalin: it will be unable to withstand a further shift to the Right.

The Soviet bureaucracy — "Bolshevik" in its traditions but in reality having long since renounced its traditions, petty bourgeois in its composition and spirit — was summoned to regulate the antagonism between the proletariat and the peasantry, between the workers state and world imperialism: such is the social base of *bureaucratic Centrism*, of its zigzags, its power, its weakness, and its influence on the world proletarian movement which has been so fatal.\* As the bureaucracy becomes more independent, as more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the more does *bureaucratic Centrism* turn into *Bonapartism.*

The concept of Bonapartism,

being too broad, demands concretization. During the last few years we have applied this term to those capitalist governments which, by exploiting the antagonisms between the proletarian and Fascist camps and by leaning directly upon the military-police apparatus, raise themselves above parliament and democracy, as the saviors of "national unity." We always strictly differentiated between this Bonapartism of decay and the young, advancing Bonapartism which was not only the gravedigger of the political principles of the bourgeois revolution, but also the defender of its social conquests. We apply a common name to these two manifestations because they have common traits; it is always possible to discern the youth in the octogenarian despite the merciless ravages of time.

The present-day Kremlin Bonapartism we juxtapose, of course, to the Bonapartism of bourgeois rise and not decay: with the Consulate and the First Empire and not with Napoleon III and, all the more so, not with Schleicher or Doumergue. For the purposes of such an analogy there is no need to ascribe to Stalin the traits of Napoleon I: whenever the social conditions demand it, Bonapartism can consolidate itself around axes of the most diverse caliber.

From the standpoint that interests us, the difference in the social basis of the two Bonapartisms, of Jacobin and of Soviet origin, is much more important. In the former case, the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international program, its leading party, its Soviets. Developing the policies of Thermidor, Napoleon waged a struggle not only against the feudal world, but also against the "rabble" and the democratic circles of the petty

and middle bourgeoisie; in this way he concentrated the fruits of the regime born out of the revolution in the hands of the new bourgeois aristocracy. Stalin guards the conquests of the October revolution not only against the feudal-bourgeois counter-revolution, but also against the claims of the toilers, their impatience, and their dissatisfaction; he crushes the Left wing which expresses the ordered historical and progressive tendencies of the unprivileged working masses; he creates a new aristocracy, by means of an extreme differentiation in wages, privileges, ranks, etc. Leaning for support upon the topmost layer of the new social hierarchy against the lowest — sometimes *vice versa* — Stalin has attained the complete concentration of power in his own hands. What else should this regime be called, if not Soviet Bonapartism?

Bonapartism, by its very essence, cannot long maintain itself: a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must invariably roll down on one side or the other. But it is precisely at this point, as we have already seen, that the historical analogy runs up against its limits. Napoleon's downfall did not, of course, leave untouched the relations between classes; but in its essence, the social pyramid of France retained its bourgeois character. The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into ques-

\*The Brandlerites, including the leaders of the SAP, remaining even today the theoretical pupils of Thalheimer, saw only "ultra-Leftism" in the policies of the Comintern, and denied (and continue to deny) the very meaning of bureaucratic centrism. The present "Fourth Period" when Stalin is pulling the European workers movement on the hook of the Comintern to the Right of official reformism demonstrates how shallow and opportunistic is the political philosophy of Thalheimer-Walcher and Co. These people are incapable of thinking a single question out to its conclusion. Precisely for this reason have they such a revulsion for the principle of saying what is, i.e., the highest principle of every scientific analysis and every revolutionary policy.

tion the character of the USSR as a workers state. Socialist economy cannot be constructed without a socialist power. The fate of the USSR as a *socialist* state depends upon that *political* regime which will arise to replace Stalinist Bonapartism. Only the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat can regenerate the Soviet system, if it is again able to mobilize around itself the toilers of the city and the village.

*Conclusion.* From our analysis there follows a number of conclusions which we set down briefly below:

1. The Thermidor of the Great Russian Revolution is not before us but already far behind. The Thermidorians can celebrate, approximately, the tenth anniversary of their victory.

2. The present political regime in the USSR is the regime of "Soviet" (or anti-Soviet) Bonapartism, closer in type to the Empire than the Consulate.

3. In its social foundation and economic tendencies, the USSR still remains a workers state.

4. The contradiction between the political regime of Bonapartism and the demands of socialist development represents the most important source of the internal crises and is a direct danger to the very existence of the USSR as a workers state.

5. Due to the still low level of productive forces and to the capitalist environment, classes and class contradictions, now weakening, now sharpening, will still continue to exist within the USSR for an indeterminately long period of time, in any case, up to the complete victory of the proletariat in the important capitalist nations of the world.

6. The existence of the proletarian dictatorship also remains for the future the necessary condition for the development of economy and culture in the USSR. Therefore the Bonapartist degeneration of the dictatorship represents the direct and immediate threat to all the social conquests of the proletariat.

7. The terrorist tendencies within the ranks of the communist youth are one of the most virulent symptoms of the fact that Bonapartism has exhausted its political possibilities and has entered the period of the most ruthless struggle for its existence.

8. The inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime will lead to the establishment of Soviet democracy only in the event that the removal of Bonapartism comes as the conscious act of the proletarian vanguard. In all other cases, in place of Stalinism there could only come the Fascist-capitalist counter-revolution.

9. The tactic of individual terrorism, no matter under what banner it proceeds, can, under the given conditions, play only into the hands of the worst enemies of the proletariat.

10. The political and moral responsibility for the very inception of terrorism within the ranks of the communist youth falls upon the gravedigger of the party — Stalin.

11. The chief cause, which weakens the proletarian vanguard of the USSR in the struggle against Bonapartism, is the uninterrupted defeats of the world proletariat.

12. The chief cause for the defeats of the world proletariat is the criminal policies of the Comintern, the blind servant of Stalinist Bonapartism and, at the same time, the best ally and defender of the reformist bureaucracy.

13. The first condition for successes upon the international arena is the liberation of the international proletariat from the demoralizing influence of Soviet Bonapartism, i.e., from the venal bureaucracy of the so-called Comintern.

14. The struggle for the salvation of the USSR as a socialist state, coincides completely with the struggle for the Fourth International.

*Postscript.* Our opponents — and they are welcome — will

seize upon our "self-criticism." So! they will shriek, you have changed your position on the fundamental question of Thermidor: hitherto you spoke only about the danger of Thermidor; now you suddenly declare that Thermidor already lies behind. This will probably be said by Stalinists, who will add for good measure that we have changed our position in order the more easily to provoke military intervention. The Brandlerites and the Lovestoneites on the one hand and, on the other hand, certain "ultra-Left" wiseacres, may express themselves in the self-same key. These people were never able to point out to us what was erroneous in the analogy with Thermidor; they will shriek all the louder now that we have disclosed the error ourselves.

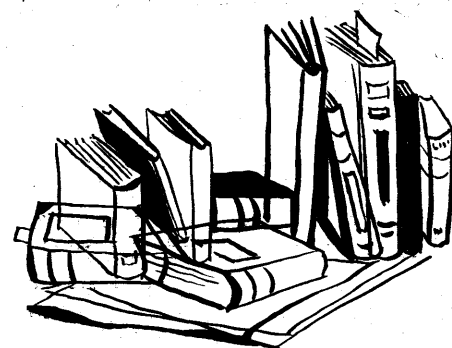
We have indicated above the position of this error in our general appraisal of the USSR. In no case is it a question of *changing* our principled position as it has been formulated in a number of official documents, but only a question of rendering it more *precise*. Our "self-criticism" extends not to the analysis of the class character of the USSR or to the causes and conditions for its degeneration but only to the historical clarification of these processes by means of establishing analogies with well-known stages of the Great French Revolution. The correction of a partial, even though an important error, not only leaves unshaken the basic position of the Bolshevik-Leninists, but, on the contrary, enables us to establish it more precisely and concretely by means of more correct and more realistic analogies. It should also be added that the disclosure of the error was greatly facilitated by the fact that the very processes of the political degeneration, which are under discussion, have in the meantime assumed much more distinct shape.

Our tendency never laid claim to infallibility. We do not receive

(Continued on page 105)

# "But Why Did They Confess?"

by Joseph Hansen



**Ritual of Liquidation, Bolsheviks on Trial**, by Nathan Leites and Elsa Bernaut. The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill. 1954. 515 pp. \$6.50.

The political and ideological representatives of capitalism have manifested a dual attitude toward Stalinism. For them the Stalinist bureaucracy from the beginning constituted an indispensable agency in the reactionary work of undermining, misleading, betraying and crushing revolutionary movements. This led the imperialist statesmen, in the interests of the counter-revolutionary combination, to deliberately facilitate the efforts of the Stalinist bureaucracy to present itself to the oppressed masses of the world as "progressive." A typical instance out of hundreds that could be cited is the Hollywood film *Mission to Moscow*, which justified the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials and pictured the mass-murderer Stalin as a kindly, well-meaning leader alert to "plots" and "conspiracies" subversive to the interests of the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, the bourgeois propagandists have missed few opportunities to voice pious indignation at the horrors of the Stalinist regime and to "explain" them as inherent in socialism itself. Their objective is to instill in the minds of politically conscious workers the paralyzing fear that their own struggle for a better society can lead nowhere except to the extension or duplication of Stalinist totalitarianism with its purges, frame-ups, firing squads and slave-labor camps.

**Ritual of Liquidation** is an example of this kind of anti-Stalinism. Through a "documented study" of the Moscow Trials, the book attempts to turn the crimes of Stalinism against the cause of revolutionary socialism and the Soviet Union. The theme is that Stalinism is the logical continuation of Leninism and that the Moscow Trials, down to minute nuances, were all foreshadowed in the development of Lenin's views. The theme is put in the form of a highly elaborated but completely speculative answer to the question, "Why did they confess?"

The authors accept the findings of the Dewey Commission, which proved

in 1937 that the Moscow Trials were frame-ups. Without this, of course, they could not even pretend to objectivity in their study. They also call attention to the fact that neither the Nuremberg nor Tokyo post-war trials of heads of the German and Japanese war machines turned up the slightest evidence to support the Stalinist allegations that the victims of the Moscow Trials had engaged in espionage for these powers.

The authors are silent, however, about the obliging failure of the Western powers to embarrass their Stalinist allies in these trials by seeking verification of the Moscow Trial allegations. (Not even Hess, who was named in the Moscow Trials, was questioned about the role ascribed to him in the "confessions" of the defendants.) They are silent, too, about Trotsky's Marxist interpretation of the meaning of the Moscow Trials.

## "Psychological Predispositions"

What Leites and Bernaut seek to prove is that there was a psychological predisposition on the part of the accusers to stage the frame-up trials and a similar psychological predisposition on the part of the defendants to willingly cooperate in their own victimization.

(1) As Russians, the participants in the Moscow Trials were conditioned in childhood for their later ignominious role. Study of the statements of the prosecutor and the victims reveals patterns of thought and feeling strikingly similar, the authors contend, to those evident among families of Russian intellectuals under Czarism. In proof of this, the authors take selections from the records of the trials and juxtapose to them apt quotations from classic Russian literature. Some of the statements in the trials seem almost plagiarized from Dostoevsky and other Russian novelists.

(2) On top of these conditioned reflexes, set up by the petty-bourgeois Russian family, came Bolshevik training in youth and early adulthood. Bolshevism, according to the authors, viewed everything in black and white; any political or theoretical position, in

the final analysis, represented the interests of either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Any deviation, therefore, from Bolshevism must, if persisted in, serve the bourgeoisie. In Lenin's time this was interpreted only in a general ideological sense. In Stalin's time the view was translated into the literal sense of wishing for the restoration of capitalism and of deliberately selling out to the bourgeoisie. In proof, the authors select statements by the victims in the trials of literal service to the bourgeoisie and juxtapose to them statements from Lenin's polemics charging that the positions of his opponents served the interests of the bourgeoisie. Lenin meant this in an objective sense, the authors acknowledge, but by its own logic Bolshevik extremism wound up in the subjective sense apparent in the "confessions" of the victims of the Moscow Trials when they said they "desired" the restoration of capitalism. As Bolsheviks the defendants had been conditioned to regard deviations as service to the bourgeoisie, therefore as "crimes," and therefore to consider themselves as "guilty" insofar as they represented oppositional tendencies that had been proved wrong by events.

(3) Psychoanalysis, with "further research" as to exact facts, the authors hold, may give us deeper insight into "the unconscious significance of Bolshevik attitudes," and thus help us appreciate better the motivation of Bolsheviks on trial willingly confessing to "guilt." Perhaps Stalin constituted a "father" image and the Bolshevik Party a "mother" image. The unconscious rebellion against the "father" led to feelings of "guilt." This was rationalized politically. For example, Zinoviev and Kamenev participated in a political opposition to Stalin; but their predictions about the disastrous consequences of Stalin's policies proved wrong and Stalin proved right. Unconscious guilt thus became translated into political guilt which was further translated by the NKVD, in cooperation with the defendants, into guilt of a criminal character. By "confessing," the defendants performed a "last service" for the party and thus won atonement.

Let us start with the last "speculation" — which is much more than speculation, since the authors use the word "guilt" so heavily in connection with the defendants as to obscure the clear findings of the Dewey Commission on their innocence. In psychoanalytic terminology, unconscious "guilt" is a form of neurotic anxiety having nothing to do with legal guilt or innocence in a juridical trial, still less a juridical frame-up. To speculate about the possible "guilt" feelings of a mass of frame-up victims is beside the point. Worse than that is the injustice it does the victims. Why should they be singled out for such speculations? The prosecutor Vishinsky may have had deeper "guilt" feelings than the defendants, but that did not lead him to join the prisoners and confess even though he was actually guilty of both conspiring against and of murdering leaders of the Soviet Union.

### Vulgar Parody

Anxiety is a common mass phenomenon of our times. Psychoanalysts no doubt see its manifestations, in their daily practice, in an endless variety of individual forms. But to attempt to utilize this common phenomenon as a specific explanation of "why they confessed," as Leites and Bernaut do, is an unspeakably vulgar parody of psychoanalysis. "Further research" — to use a favorite phrase of the authors — might disclose that more to the point is the projection in the book of the "attitudes" of the authors, including their own "unconscious guilt." It is a rule of psychoanalysis, which is a serious science, that its practitioners must first undergo psychoanalysis themselves preliminary to trying it out on others.

Before passing on, we note what our amateur psychologists were willing to pay politically to the Stalinist frame-up system for the sake of their dubious speculation: They granted the truth of those parts of the frame-up script prepared by the secret political police which have the victims speak about the good treatment they received in prison, their free will in "confessing," and their relief at finally unburdening their guilty souls in public.

Leites and Bernaut fare no better with their second attempted explanation — that Stalinism is the end product of Bolshevism. To maintain this thesis they had to maintain that the defendants in the show trials were genuine Bolsheviks. Even more, that those on the side of the prosecution were genuine Bolsheviks. And, on top of this, that no special selection was involved on either side, all of them running true to type like random samples from a garbage truck.

They thus left out of consideration: (1) Cases where "confessions" were

repudiated. (Except the lone case of Krestinsky, who retracted his "confession" one day in court only to reaffirm it the next day.) (2) Cases where no "confessions" were made and which therefore did not come to court although the victims were shot just the same. (3) Cases where Bolsheviks exposed the whole frame-up and "confession" system and denounced it as the complete antithesis of everything in Bolshevism.

Not much "further research" is needed to establish that the authors apparently deemed it inexpedient to deal with such unwelcome "exceptions" flatly contradicting their not-so-original thesis. From the viewpoint of method — if they can be accused at all of concern about scientific method — the authors were thus guilty of assuming what they sought to prove: that both the organizers of the frame-ups and the victims who "confessed" were genuine Bolsheviks truly representative of the species.

We now come to the contention of Leites and Bernaut that Russian literature is rich in prototypes for passages in the scripts of the trials and that this casts a revealing light on the national psychology and family background of the defendants and the motives for their "confessions." What does this really prove except that the literary background of the authors of the frame-up scripts was more Russian than, let us say, Spanish? It is not unusual to trace the literary influences visible in the work of a playwright. It is somewhat more than unusual, however, on the part of a dramatic critic to attempt to estimate the unconscious attitudes of an actor by the content of the lines he recites, especially if the lines are chosen for him by someone else and he is forced to recite them with a Mauser at the base of his skull.

### No New Light

*Ritual of Liquidation* casts no new light whatsoever on the Moscow Trials. Not a single new fact is added to the ones already uncovered by the Trotskyists and the Dewey Commission. Instead of light, Leites and Bernaut offer a sticky cobweb of worthless speculation.

The Moscow Trials can be properly understood only in the context of the social and political relations that developed in the isolated workers state under the influence of the counter-revolutionary imperialist world that surrounded it and that actively sought to crush it. In this context Stalinism appears as the counter-revolutionary internal reflection of the external pressures. It is the logical extension — not of Leninism! — but of bourgeois reaction pushing for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

Stalin's frame-up system bears no resemblance to the outlook of the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. But it does bear a strong resemblance to the "justice" of Fascism and Nazism and the lynch-law of the Bourbon South or the anti-unionism of the economic royalists in the corporation-dominated North. Stalinism was not the product of Bolshevism but a throw-back, a reversion toward everything the Bolsheviks fought against. Thus the Communist Party under Stalin was not the same as it was under Lenin — it was qualitatively different. The old roots into the working class withered. New roots were sunk into the petty-bourgeoisie, into the most backward and reactionary elements left as a heritage from Czarist Russia.

The crushing of the Left Opposition marked the crushing of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. After that the scene was left mainly to the usurpers of the power and to those who weakened and capitulated, giving up their Bolshevik tradition and program. The crushing of the Left Opposition constituted the first preparation for the frame-up system that reached its most spectacular expression in the Moscow Trials. The capitulations to Stalinism in the twenties constituted the first preparation of the Zinovievs, Kamenevs, and Radeks for their ultimate "confessions" in the Moscow Trials.

I call attention to this not to set Leites and Bernaut right, for they know better. They indicate by their references that they have read Trotsky's analysis of the Moscow Trials. Their silence about the analysis shows that they reject it. However, it remains the only materialist explanation, the only explanation of the frame-ups in terms of economic, social and political relations. To reject it means in advance to stultify any further analysis of the trials.

This has now been demonstrated in a way that should put the finish once and for all to books like *Ritual of Liquidation*. The first new facts about "why they confessed" came just two years after publication of this exercise in scholastic speculation. We refer to Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party:

"The commission has become acquainted with a large quantity of materials in the NKVD archives and with other documents and has established many facts pertaining to the fabrication of cases against Communists, to glaring abuses of Socialist legality which resulted in the death of innocent people. It became apparent that many party, Government and economic activists who were branded in 1937-38 as 'enemies,' were actually never ene-



mies, spies, wreckers, etc., but were always honest Communists.

"They were only so stigmatized and often, no longer able to bear barbaric tortures, they charged themselves (at the order of the investigative judges — falsifiers) with all kinds of grave and unlikely crimes."

Not only tortures, we observe, but barbaric tortures. What happens to the thesis about the willingness of the victims to participate in the frame-up show?

We skip much of interest in Khrushchev's revelations until we come to the order issued at Stalin's instance, after the killing of Kirov, ordering a "speed up" in the processing of frame-ups and immediate execution of death sentences.

"This directive," says Khrushchev, "became the basis for mass acts of abuse against Socialist legality. During many of the fabricated court cases the accused were charged with 'the preparation' of terroristic acts; this deprived them of any possibility that their cases might be re-examined, even when they stated before the court that their 'confessions' were secured by force, and when, in a convincing manner, they disproved the accusations against them."

Why did Leites and Bernaut overlook the possibility of such cases in deciding what represented the Bolshevik tradition and what didn't?

Khrushchev did not make a slip of the tongue in specifying barbaric tortures as the device for securing confessions:

"Now when the cases of some of these so-called 'spies' and 'saboteurs' were examined it was found that all their cases were fabricated. Confessions of guilt of many arrested and charged with activity were gained with the help of cruel and inhuman tortures."

### Khrushchev's Alibi

As his own alibi for active participation in Stalin's frame-up system, Khrushchev avers:

"At the same time Stalin, as we have been informed by members of the Political Bureau of that time, did not show them the statements of many accused political activists when they retracted their confessions before the military tribunal and asked for an objective examination of their cases. There were many such declarations, and Stalin doubtlessly knew of them."

That should be underlined: "There were many such declarations. . . ." Mathematicians Leites and Bernaut, interested in proving the truth of the false equation: Stalinism = Leninism, overlooked that possibility.

As an example of "vile provocation, of odious falsification and of criminal violation of revolutionary legality,"

Khrushchev cites the case of Robert I. Eikhe:

"Eikhe was forced under torture to sign ahead of time a protocol of his confession prepared by the investigative judges, in which he and several other eminent party workers were accused of anti-Soviet activity.

"On Oct. 1, 1939, Eikhe sent his declaration to Stalin in which he categorically denied his guilt and asked for an examination of his case."

Eikhe tried to prove that he was a loyal Stalinist but that did not save him. He was shot just the same. We note that it was a case of "confession" under torture and a "confession" that was later repudiated in court. But the record of that court case was never made available. We can see why Stalin would be interested in hiding such records from public knowledge, but it is difficult for us to account for the psychological blindness in Leites and Bernaut that would not permit them to visualize cases like that.

### How the Scripts Were Prepared

Khrushchev utilizes the case of Rozenblum to illustrate how the "NKVD workers manufactured fictitious 'anti-Soviet centers' and 'blocs' with the help of provocatory methods":

"When Rozenblum was arrested in 1937 he was subjected to terrible torture, during which he was ordered to confess false information concerning himself and other persons."

He was offered his freedom if he would cooperate, and Rozenblum quoted NKVD official Zakovsky on how everything would work out: "You yourself will not need to invent anything. The NKVD will prepare for you a ready outline for every branch of the center; you will have to study it carefully and to remember well all questions and answers which the court might ask. This case will be ready in four to five months, or perhaps a half year. During all this time you will be preparing yourself so that you will not compromise the investigation and yourself. Your future will depend on how the trial goes and on its results. If you begin to lie and to testify falsely, blame yourself. If you manage to endure it, you will save your head and we will feed and clothe you at the government's cost until your death."

In the light of that revelation from a most authoritative source on how the NKVD prepared its scripts and its actors, what happens to the "psycho-analysis" of the victims, thought up by Leites and Bernaut, to explain the smooth cooperation when the show was finally staged?

Khrushchev emphasizes repeatedly that the "confessions" were obtained by torture:

"When Stalin said that one or another

should be arrested, it was necessary to accept on faith that he was an 'enemy of the people.' Meanwhile, Beria's gang, which ran the organs of state security, outdid itself in proving the guilt of the arrested and the truth of materials which it falsified.

"And what proofs were offered? The confessions of the arrested, and the investigative judges accepted these 'confessions.' And how is it possible that a person confesses to crimes which he has not committed? Only in one way — because of application of physical methods of pressuring him, tortures, bringing him to a state of unconsciousness, deprivation of his judgment, taking away of his human dignity. In this manner were 'confessions' acquired."

### An Infamous Telegram

Is all this new to Leites and Bernaut, who claim to have made "The First Fully Documented Study of Why They Confessed"? Khrushchev cites a new document they can add to any future edition of their work, a "coded telegram" sent by Stalin Jan. 20, 1939 "to the committee secretaries of oblasts and krajs, to the Central Committees of republic Communist parties, to the Peoples Commissars of Internal Affairs and to the heads of NKVD organizations." This infamous telegram, which sounds like something from the days of the Spanish Inquisition, "explains that the application of methods of physical pressure in NKVD practice is permissible from 1937 on. . ." The order ends on a note typical of Stalin's genius, "physical pressure should still be used obligatorily, as an exception applicable to known and obstinate enemies of the people, as a method both justifiable and appropriate."

Khrushchev describes a judge who functioned under Stalin, one Rodos. "He is a vile person, with the brain of a bird, and morally completely degenerate." Rodos told the Central Committee Presidium, according to Khrushchev: "I was told that Kosior and Chubar were people's enemies and for this reason, I, as an investigative judge, had to make them confess that they are enemies."

"He could do this," Khrushchev explained, "only through long tortures, which he did, receiving detailed instructions from Beria."

After taking up Stalin's conduct of the war, which cost the Soviet Union millions of unnecessary deaths, Khrushchev returned to the subject of how "confessions" were obtained, this time in relation to the Doctors Plot, which was being prepared at the time of Stalin's sudden death.

Stalin "issued orders to arrest a group of eminent Soviet medical specialists. He personally issued advice on

the conduct of the investigation and the method of interrogation of the arrested persons.

"He said the academician, Vinogradov, should be put in chains, another one should be beaten. Present at this congress as a delegate is the former Minister of State Security, Comrade Ignatiev, Stalin told him curtly, 'If you do not obtain confessions from the doctors we will shorten you by a head.'

"Stalin personally called the investigative judge, gave him instructions, advised him on which investigative methods should be used; these methods were simple — beat, beat and, once again beat.

"Shortly after the doctors were arrested we members of the Political Bureau received protocols from the doctors; confessions of guilt. After distributing these protocols Stalin told us, 'You are blind like young kittens; what will happen without me? The country will perish because you do not know how to recognize enemies.'

Khrushchev's speech, of course, was aimed at getting rid of the mantle of Stalin under which the late dictator's heirs feel they will be smothered. It is aimed at appealing to the universal hatred in the Soviet Union for "the most sinister figure in all history," as Trotsky put it. Nevertheless Khrushchev's speech cuts in two directions. At one stroke it smashes the Stalin cult. But it likewise wrecks the carefully balanced house of cards that tries to establish a psychological and political identity between Stalinism and Leninism. That is done by revelation of the simple formula, conceived in the fertile brain of Stalin, "beat, beat, and once again, beat." Strange that sophisticates, familiar with the dark depths of the human mind uncovered by psychoanalysis, never thought of that.

Perhaps, in view of Khrushchev's revelations, Leites and Bernaut will feel a slight twinge of guilt about their speculations. If so, we think an apology is in order to the much-injured victims of the Moscow Trials.

While they are about it, they might note that the Stalinist machine itself no longer proclaims Stalinism to be the continuation of Leninism. This should be of interest to all who have peddled this thesis, for the Stalinists are the original authorities on the topic — they were the ones who invented it.

Khrushchev's revelations do not add anything essentially new to what was already known about the Moscow Trials in general. The revelations consist simply of new facts to be added to the mountain of evidence already accumulated principally by the Trotskyists. The main interest in these new facts lies in their source. They come from one of Stalin's own hand-picked lieu-

tenants, who participated on the side of the NKVD in organizing the frame-ups. Their value, so far as the trials are concerned, lies in the additional confirmation they give to Trotsky's basic analysis. They constitute the first confession by the Stalinist murder machine of the truth of its activities. This confession will be followed by others; but Khrushchev's alone is definitive. It signified the end of the Stalin cult.

Leites and Bernaut dismissed Trotsky's analysis of the Moscow Trials. For that they had to pay a severe penalty. The first confirmation from Stalinist sources of Trotsky's analysis served at the same time to guarantee dismissal of their book from serious consideration as a study of the Moscow Trials.

## ... To Our Readers

(Continued from page 74)

ing out that America had the most developed capitalism, yet the most primitive socialist movement, so far as theory is concerned, the first editorial declared:

"Socialism is but the philosophy of capitalist development and since it is an undisputed fact that American capitalism is further advanced and more



The old International Socialist Review held to one main principle — the class struggle. The cover of the issue reporting the Ludlow massacre, depicting the heroic defense of the Colorado miners against the rifles of the Rockefeller interests, exemplifies the militant spirit that inspired the magazine. The artist was John Sloan.

## ... Soviet Union

(Continued from page 101)

ready-made truths as a revelation, like the high-priests of Stalinism. We study, we discuss, we check our conclusions in the light of existence, we openly correct the admitted mistakes, and — we proceed forward. Scientific conscientiousness and personal strictness are the best traditions of Marxism and Leninism. We wish to remain true to our teachers in this respect as well.

February 1, 1935

clearly developed than that of any other nation, the American socialist may be pardoned if he believes that that should in time produce the most clear cut and developed socialism. At the very least he knows that illustrations drawn from American experience need be no less scientific and are much more effective for propaganda than those drawn from European experience.

"Under these circumstances it is felt that the time is now here when the American socialist movement needs and is able to maintain a magazine of scientific socialism and the **International Socialist Review** has been established to fill that need. It will at all times have three principal objects in view. In the first place we shall seek to counteract the sentimental Utopianism that has so long characterized the American movement and give it a dignity and accuracy worthy of the position it is destined to attain in the world wide advance toward the co-operative commonwealth. In the second place we shall endeavor to keep our readers in touch with the socialist movements in other countries, and through the very able corps of foreign socialist writers and thinkers who have kindly agreed to contribute to this end, bring together each month the work and opinions of the best thought of the world on the philosophy of socialism. Finally, but perhaps most important of all, we shall aim to secure the interpretation of American social conditions in the light of socialist philosophy by the socialists of this country."

Policy, said the editorial, "will be in accordance with the principles now universally accepted by the socialists of the world of independent political action by the laborers upon the basis of a struggle of classes with divergent material interests, with the ultimate object of securing the common ownership by such laborers of the means of production and distribution, . . ."



The problem of unemployment was a recurrent theme in this fighting magazine. The cover of the December 1914 issue, done in a striking red and black, voices the bitter protest felt among advanced workers at the kind of employment the outbreak of World War I foreshadowed.

The names of the writers in the early years of the magazine constitute a roster of the great figures in the Second International. Kautsky, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bebel, Longuet, Parvus, Jaures, Labriola, Pannekoek, and so on. An increasing number of American writers appeared, among them: Eugene V. Debs, Jack London, Gustavus Myers, Louis B. Boudin, Clarence Darrow, Carl Sandburg, David Karsner, Upton Sinclair, etc.

With the rise of the IWW movement, the magazine increased its coverage of the class struggle, at some expense it must be said, to its presentation of Marxist theory. A new galaxy of revolutionary figures appeared among its writers. William D. Haywood was listed on the editorial board. Vincent St. John became a contributor. The names of militants on the firing line began to show up — Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, C. E. Ruthenberg, Wm. Z. Foster, Thomas J. Mooney, and so on. In the Nov. 1912 issue a report on "The Seventh I.W.W. Convention" was signed by J. P. Cannon. Louis C. Fraina and John Reed were added to the list of regular contributors.

In the struggle of the left wing against opportunist tendencies in the Socialist Party, a struggle that grew sharper from 1911 to 1914, the International Socialist Review was decidedly with the left wing and against the opportunists.

The outbreak of war in 1914 confronted the whole international socialist movement with an ideological crisis of the gravest character. The leaders of the Second International, especially those in Germany who were considered the teachers, the living link with Marx and Engels, capitulated to the bourgeoisie. They supported the imperialist war.

The shock that was felt by the rank and file socialists throughout the world is only comparable to the shock experienced by rank and file members of the Communist Parties today on discovering that Stalin was really a mass murderer. How to explain it?

The International Socialist Review courageously began to probe the reasons — and began to find them in deviations from Marxist principles that had begun years before. In place of agitation, of stress on action in the class struggle, the interest of the magazine definitely shifted to theory. The change in emphasis was reflected by longer, more profound articles and new names — Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring. And the left-wing forces they represented in Germany gave the magazine new hope after the great betrayal of 1914.

The May 1916 issue hailed the Zimmerwald conference as the beginning of a new international to replace the dead Second International, but criticized the compromises that were reached there, stating that the real hope lay with the left wing at that gathering and with the program enunciated in their resolutions.

Not until January 1918 do the names of Lenin and Trotsky show up — but then they at once dominate the magazine. In the February issue the lead article is a reprint of the preface to Trotsky's "The Bolsheviki and World Peace." An editorial note reflects the enthusiasm of the magazine over the Russian solution to the great ideological crisis that had haunted the socialist movement for four years:

"Comrade Trotsky was preparing an article for the Review when the revolution came in Russia, compelling him to drop everything and return. Review readers will appreciate our disappointment and later on our joy in reading the inspiring record our comrade has made during the past few months."

And they recommend the book written by the new Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs who, only a few months before, had been a refugee in New York: "Every revolutionary socialist in America will want to read and reread his new book entitled 'The Bolsheviki and World Peace.'"

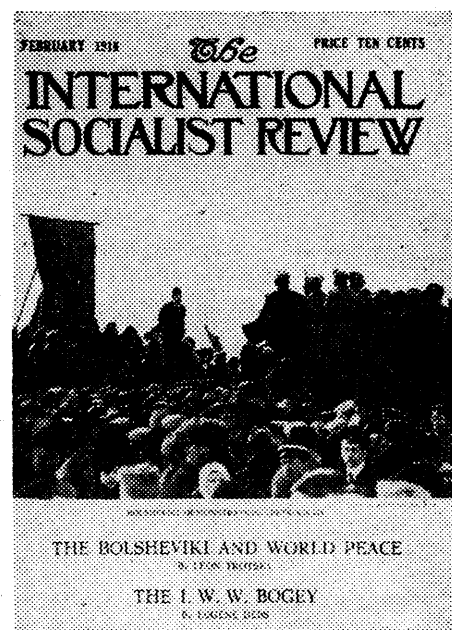
That was enough for the Woodrow Wilson administration in Washington. The postal authorities barred the maga-

zine from the mails and it was forced to cease publication.

The International Socialist Review was a colorful magazine filled with photographs of strikes, demonstrations and events of the class struggle. It carried photographs of socialists in action, from leaders like Debs and Haywood to outstanding rank and filers like Thomas J. Mooney, who first began making a name for himself selling socialist literature. If it analyzed a new development such as the appearance of automatic machinery in the auto industry or in bottle-making, it carried pictures of the fabulous new machines along with figures on the number of workers they displaced.

It made room for illustrators and cartoonists and its covers featured drawings, photographs, and colored layouts that would be outstanding on the magazine stands today.

Our limited financial resources do not permit us as yet to come near the old International Socialist Review in the use of colors, drawings or photographs or in on-the-spot reporting of the class struggle, but we do think we can continue its tradition of militancy and of concern about theory and perhaps help bring nearer the prognosis of its first issue way back in 1900 that American capitalism "should in time produce the most clear cut and developed socialism."



This is the cover of the final issue. The main article, by Leon Trotsky, explaining the opposition of the Bolsheviki to imperialist war and their program for achieving enduring peace, was answered by an official order from Washington banning the magazine from the mails.

## ... Poznan Uprising

(Continued from page 77)

In Poland the student paper **Po Prostu** scored the attitude of the regime towards the problem of unemployment. In an article that appeared one week before the Poznan uprising the paper said: "This tragic [unemployment] situation is made worse by the fact that our legislature has failed to provide benefits or medical help for the unemployed on the ground that unemployment does not exist."

Two weeks after the Poznan uprising **Po Prostu** analyses the reason for the widespread unemployment as stemming from "a disparity between the social character of production and the excessively centralized and bureaucratic system of management of the Socialist economy." That comes very close to hitting the mark!

When you take into account that these statements are made under conditions far from free, they reveal a great deal. For one thing they reveal that the sensitive layers of the youth and the intellectuals detect an inner crack-

up and demoralization of the Stalinist regime. This thought must also grow in the factories as the workers feel their way to taking advantage of the crisis of the Stalinist regimes in order to press their class demands. As they assess the experience of Poznan and build contact from factory to factory and from city to city, as the workers find ties with the best of the intellectuals and students, they will begin the work of forging a Bolshevik party once again. In this historic work, indispensable for the victory of the revolution against the bureaucracy, they will find their way to the program of Trotskyism which has prepared throughout the last 40 years the revival and continuation of the October Revolution.

## ... Early Years

(Continued from page 92)

and neither could we, that he had really oversold himself. The invocation of the authority of Moscow in the internal party elections, and the conditioning of the

party members to "vote for the Comintern," rebounded against Lovestone himself two years later, when the same supreme authority decided that it was his time to walk the plank. Then it was easily demonstrated that what the Lord had given the Lord could take away.

The "majority" he had gained in the party was not his own. The same party members whom Lovestone had incited and conditioned to "vote for the Comintern" responded with the same reflex when they were commanded by the Comintern to vote against him. By his too-successful campaign "for the Comintern" in 1927, Lovestone had simply helped to create the conditions in the party for his own disaster.

Yours truly,

*James P. Cannon*

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The reprinting of this pamphlet marks the beginning of a vigorous publications program by American revolutionary socialists aimed at making available the most important works of Marxist authorities to the American workers. Pamphlets such as this were being sought in the backshelves of bookstores as rare items and retailed at prohibitive prices. This remarkable work by Trotsky, which analyzed in advance the basic fraud of the now-exploded Moscow Trials, is a treasure-house of penetrating theoretical insight into the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. In explaining the first of Stalin's series of monstrous frame-ups, Trotsky explains Stalinism, its social roots, its political function and its effects on the world socialist movement. If the meaning of the events that are now shaking the Soviet Union to its foundations and affecting the destiny of all mankind are to be understood, this work by Trotsky is indispensable reading.

The pamphlet is now republished as No. 3 of the **Pioneer Pocket Library**, an attractive series of small-size 25c pamphlets devoted to basic Marxist literature. No. 1 in this series is **The Death Agony of Capitalism**, by Leon Trotsky; No. 2 is **The Suppressed Testament of Lenin**, with Trotsky's commentary.

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