

# INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW

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Socialist Forces in the United States

## Revolution in Poland and Hungary

An Editorial

## The Case for Socialism

Discussion from the British C. P.

## Stalin as a Theoretician

by Leon Trotsky

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*Early Years of American Communism*

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Vol. 17 No. 4

Fall 1956

Whole No. 137

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW is published quarterly by the International Socialist Review Publishing Association.

Editor: Joseph Hansen

Business Manager: Anne Chester

Managing Editor:

Duncan Ferguson

ADDRESS communications and subscriptions to 116 University Place, New York 3, New York. Telephone: ALgonquin 5-7460.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: U.S.A. and Latin America, \$1.25 a year (4 issues); single copies, 35c.; bundles, 25c. a copy for 5 copies and up. Foreign and Canada, \$1.50 a year (4 issues); single copies, 35c.; bundles, 26c. a copy for 5 copies and up.

Reentered as second class matter April 20, 1954, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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INTERNATIONAL  
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1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher International Socialist Review Publishing Ass'n, 116 University Pl., New York 3. Editor Joseph Hansen, 116 University Pl., New York 3. Managing editor Duncan Ferguson, 116 University Pl., New York

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# Revolution in Poland and Hungary

Starting with the June 28 general strike in Poznan, the Polish and Hungarian workers launched a general revolutionary uprising against the rule of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The movement of the masses rallied around the demand for complete national independence and workers democracy. In its basic character the struggle is a continuation, on a higher level, of the June 1953 uprising of the East German working class.

The revolutionary developments in Poland and Hungary must be understood as a stage in the political revolution against the Soviet bureaucratic caste. What we saw manifested at the summits of Soviet society in the Twentieth Congress was the result of the deep stirrings of the revolutionary workers. Now the subterranean movement has broken through to the surface. The political revolution is no longer a prognosis — it is no longer necessary to deduce the source of the crisis in the system of bureaucratic rule from relatively isolated symptoms. The political revolution is an actuality in Poland and Hungary.

History is settling the question of how the Soviet bureaucratic caste will be removed. The notion that the bureaucracy itself would reform Soviet society, reintroduce workers democracy, etc., has died along with thousands of revolutionary workers in Hungary.

Despite the difference in form and tempo of events in the two countries, the revolutionary outbreaks in Poland and Hungary have fundamentally the same character. In both countries the movement originated among the industrial workers expressing their bitter determination to end bureaucratic abuses, privileges and mismanagement. A parallel movement of bold revolutionary criticism against the caste rulers

sprang up among the students and intellectuals. The parallel movements fused in the uprisings. The workers, by their social weight and class discipline, were the motor force of the development. The demand for national freedom was inscribed on the workers' banners along with their demands for bread and democratic rights.

The working masses created their organizations, factory committees and councils, from one end of Poland and Hungary to the other. The workers organizations are closely associated with the student masses, who themselves are drawn from working-class and peasant families. In actual fact we see the emergence of the workers Soviet, similar to those built by the Russian workers in 1917.

The organization of the working class as the leading force in the national revolution is of enormous importance in view of the emergence of all the antagonistic class forces on the open arena. Within the all-national upsurge against Kremlin rule, representatives of bourgeois counter-revolution are undoubtedly at work. Backward strata of the workers, and particularly layers of the city and countryside petty-bourgeoisie, have come to identify communism with Kremlin and bureaucratic tyranny. Bourgeois slogans, parties and the Catholic Church are bound to make their appeal to these strata. In these circumstances the soviet organization of the industrial workers, imbued with the consciousness that the fate of the revolution depends on their leadership of all the working people, is the only road to a victorious consummation of the national liberation revolution. In this sense, the basic problem now confronting the revolution is: how can the workers come to realize that their councils must

conquer the full power in order to achieve a genuine, that is, socialist, independence and workers democracy?

It is now clear that as long as the revolutionary masses are on the arena the bureaucratic caste in Poland and Hungary cannot hope to stay in power a single day without either breaking demonstratively with the Kremlin, or accepting its services as a counter-revolutionary army of occupation.

The working masses did not fall back in the face of the first armed assistance the Kremlin gave to the tottering regime in Hungary. The workers and students fought with new courage against mechanized divisions, won over the Hungarian army, armed themselves, struck a body blow at the security police and forced the Nagy regime to break all ties with the Kremlin. In large areas of the country the workers councils took power.

At this writing the Kremlin's army is entering Budapest once again and surrounding the industrial cities where the workers hold power. The Nagy government has been arrested. A Kremlin puppet government has been appointed. Fighting is going on in the streets. The fate of the revolution hangs in the balance. The movement may be thrown back, but it cannot be killed. With capitalism in the West besieged by anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist forces, the world situation is extremely favorable for the political revolution. The whole of Eastern Europe is seething with revolutionary discontent. And the workers of the Soviet Union itself are moving into line for an attack on their own bureaucratic rulers. The Kremlin can at best postpone the day of reckoning. With the revolutionary uprising of the Russian working class the system of bureaucratic rule throughout the Soviet orbit will be smashed.



In Poland the native caste rulers gained a reprieve by quickly shifting Gomulka, who had spent four years in a Stalinist prison as a "Titoist-fascist," into power in open defiance of Kremlin orders. The Polish working class stood ready to fight to the death against the Kremlin's threat of an armed attack on their revolution. The Kremlin drew back and then attacked through Hungary. This accelerated revolutionary developments in Hungary and signaled a new wave of mass demonstrations in Poland.

The Gomulka regime in Poland, as the short-lived Nagy regime in Hungary, represents the interests of the bureaucracy which was installed in power by the Kremlin's bureaucratic-military action following World War II. The Kremlin at first tried "co-existence" with the bourgeoisie of Poland and Hungary on the basis of maintaining capitalist property. But with the opening of the cold war the Kremlin eliminated the capitalists and brought the social-economic structure of these countries into line with the nationalized and planned economy of the Soviet Union. This entire process, which excluded the social revolutionary action of the masses, left its deep imprint on the subsequent events. In the consciousness of the masses the Stalinist regimes were stamped as agencies of the Kremlin.

The working class opens its attack on the Stalinist regimes in Poland and Hungary with both countries organized, although in a bureaucratic manner, on the foundation of planned and nationalized economy. The problem of the working class is to overthrow the bureaucracy and create the workers democratic foundations for the socialized structure. All evidence indicates that this is precisely the basic tendency of the revolution in action.

The Gomulka regime, however, manifests considerably different tendencies than those of the revo-

lutionary workers. Faced by the pressure of the masses, it was forced to break with the Kremlin and seek some semblance of popular support in order to continue in power. Since the workers still lack the consciousness to bring the new-born Soviets to power, the Gomulka regime seeks to reinforce its collapsing rule by forming "people's front" alliances with elements from the remnants of the bourgeoisie, peasant party leaders, bourgeois nationalists, and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. At the same time it displays a tendency to flirt with Western diplomacy in the manner of Tito.

Without a workers revolutionary solution of the crisis, the capitalist elements could find support in the peasantry, who suffered the terrible crimes of the bureaucratic collectivizations. Thus by carrying through a political revolution the workers will be deepening the socialist revolution and aiming their most powerful blows at the threat of capitalist restoration.

But isn't it safer to entrust the safeguarding of the progressive, anti-capitalist property forms to the Kremlin armies rather than to a "problematical" workers political revolution? This is the kind of question that runs through the consciousness of many who were educated by Stalinism. No, it is not safer. The Kremlin bureaucracy is the weakest link in the defense of the Soviet Union and the fundamental conquests of the Russian Revolution. The destruction of the caste rule alone can open up the road to a forward march of socialism in the Soviet orbit and on a world scale. Conversely, the greatest blow to the defense of the Soviet Union would be the crushing of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions. World capitalism would then have the pretext and the conditions to pursue its policy of "liberation." In the face of revolutionary masses imperialism is helpless. Faced by a Kremlin-army-occupied

Eastern Europe, with the revolutionary workers crushed, with a Red Army that is sickened by its counter-revolutionary role, the imperialist threat would be far greater than it is today.

The workers vanguard cannot waver for one moment in taking sides 100 percent with the national independence aspirations of the peoples of Hungary and Poland as against the Kremlin. Revolutionary socialists will say: *We are with you in your struggle for national freedom. Remember that such freedom will never be achieved through imperialism and capitalism but only through your own revolutionary power.* Revolutionary socialists will appeal to the workers of all of Eastern Europe and above all of the Soviet Union to come to the aid of their brothers and sisters in Poland and Hungary. Revolutionary socialists will appeal to the soldiers of the Red Army to refuse to carry out the Kremlin's counter-revolutionary orders. Revolutionary socialists will call upon the workers in capitalist countries to remain vigilant against any attempt of the imperialists to take advantage of the crimes of the Stalinist counter-revolutionists in order to launch their attack on the Soviet Union.

Above all, revolutionary socialists throughout the world will do everything in their power to help the Soviet and East European workers build their revolutionary parties. Whatever the ebbs and flows of the political revolution, whatever momentary setbacks it will suffer, the workers will come to realize that they must organize their own political party, completely independent from the bureaucracy. Through organization and the building of Bolshevik parties the Soviet and Eastern European working class will coordinate its movements, harness its forces, choose the right moment, launch its general offensive, and carry the struggle for socialism forward to complete victory. Nov. 4, 1956

# The "Russian" Question and The "American" Question

## A Contribution to the Discussion Of the Regroupment of Revolutionary Socialist Forces in the United States

**O**N the thirty-ninth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the influence of this greatest upheaval in the history of humanity is still very much with us. We mean the radical movement, not the capitalist press where the question, of course, finds its perennial distorted reflection among these highly class-conscious organs of Big Business.

What has stirred up the radical movement in America is not a new wave of mass unrest in this country turning toward the Soviet Union for inspiration and leadership, but a new turn in the Soviet Union itself, a ferment among the Soviet people that has generated a crisis in the top circles of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The most dramatic evidence of this was Khrushchev's confession at the Twentieth Congress of some of the crimes and betrayals committed by the late Stalin.

That this long overdue confession should have such resounding repercussions in the American radical movement, as well as elsewhere, is a good sign, an encouraging omen on the thirty-ninth anniversary of the 1917 overturn. The discussion that has begun

marks an important turning point, it must be recognized, in the construction of the revolutionary socialist movement in America.

The Russian Revolution has dominated the thinking of radical workers in all parts of the world

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### An Editorial Statement

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for almost four decades now. How could it be otherwise? In its essence the Russian Revolution was international in character, a mighty victory of the world working class, the first of the series of successes needed to build a world-wide planned economy on the technical foundations achieved by capitalism. Consequently radical workers could not help but regard the Russian Revolution with the greatest enthusiasm; first of all as a proletarian gain to be defended from imperialist attack; secondly — and perhaps more important — as an example to be studied. The teachings of Lenin and Trotsky, the universally recognized leaders of the revolution, became textbooks that retain their value to this day.

In the years of reaction and counter-revolution when the Sta-

linist crew usurped power and murdered the generation of Lenin and Trotsky, the Russian Revolution nevertheless continued to exercise its influence on radical-minded workers; for, despite Stalin and his gang, the economic foundations laid down by the Bolsheviks following the October Revolution proved capable of converting backward Russia into the second power of the world; and this demonstration of the viability of planned economy and its potential for the future inspired new millions of workers and oppressed peoples around the world.

True enough, the cancerous growth of Stalinism turned many away from the Soviet Union; and even some who should have known better became discouraged, gave up the workers state because of its degeneration and sought to justify their change by novel theories about the Stalinist bureaucracy being a new ruling class instead of just a parasitic formation. We may hope that at least a few of these former defenders of the Soviet Union who still consider themselves revolutionary socialists will now reconsider their position in the light of the new events. Hasn't the Russian Revolution served sufficient notice that it is still alive?

To us it seems that a new stage has opened in the development of the workers state created by the revolution of 1917. This stage announced its appearance with the uprisings in East Germany, the slave-labor camps and Poznan, on the one hand, and by the crisis these events precipitated, on the other hand, in the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Twentieth Congress marked a visible turning point, for it transmitted the pressures developing within the Soviet Union into the Communist Parties abroad, and in this country especially confronted the radical

movement with the question of a regroupment of forces.

Up to now, the Shachtmanites, who were once defenders of the Soviet Union, have commented on this development but have proved incapable of intervening actively and participating in the discussion that is now going on in the American radical movement about making a fresh start. The reason for this is the refusal of the Shachtmanites to defend the Soviet Union. They thus exclude themselves at the ground level from serious consideration. Their position on the "Russian" question, as has been the case in the radical movement since 1917, determines the limits of their effectiveness in answering the "American" question.

Similarly with the Socialist Party, unreasoning opposition to the Soviet Union, without discrimination between the good and the bad, discredits what they have to say. What radical-minded worker cares to consider the opinions of Norman Thomas on this subject when you can get it straight from the State Department?

As for the Socialist Labor Party, Daniel DeLeon, prescient though he was, failed to foresee the highly complex and contradictory development of a workers state suffering degeneration and therefore left no set of rules to go by in such a situation. This cannot be held against DeLeon, for no other Marxist leader of his time foresaw it either, but it placed those who have made a cult of De Leon in an unfortunate position. In refusing to defend the Soviet Union they find themselves in the company of the class enemy and therefore in opposition to everything DeLeon fundamentally stood and fought for. Aside from this, the Socialist Labor Party—whatever else it may be accused of—cannot honestly be held guilty of displaying an interest in the regroupment of the American radical movement.

In the Communist Party the contrast between the reactions of the rank and file and the leadership to Khrushchev's revelations at the Twentieth Congress is notable. To date—three-fourths of a year later—not a single nationally known party leader has ventured to express an independent opinion about the crimes and betrayals committed under Stalin. Not one has come out with a bold demand for the whole truth and nothing but the truth, still less sought to draw a balance sheet from which radical-minded workers could draw a revolutionary lesson. Instead the entire leadership has stalled for time, awaiting further signals from the bureaucrats in Moscow, and meanwhile has utilized the Twentieth Congress for a plunge to the right, toward deeper involvement in the Democratic Party and the hunt for respectability in the infamous tradition of the Social Democracy. It would be difficult to find more convincing testimony to the corruption instilled in these functionaries by their years of training in the school of Stalinism. Unless we witness a serious break with the past among CP leaders it would be foolhardy to count on them to make any contribution to the problem of revolutionary regroupment in this country.

The rank and file of the Communist Party, on the other hand, are demonstrating a most heartening concern about drawing the correct lesson from their experience. No doubt a considerable section of the membership will suffer demoralization in the absence of a rallying center around a nationally known leader. But impressive evidence continues to pile up as to the number of genuinely communist-minded workers for whom the painful shock of Khrushchev's revelations became the starting point of a new orientation. They are making independent investigations of the real role of Stalinism both in the Soviet Union and in the United States. They want

the truth. They want it as the basis for a fresh start in building a revolutionary socialist party in America. Consequently they are examining the records of the various tendencies that avow themselves to be socialist, while at the same time they are considering once again the whole problem of the road to socialism in the United States.

From the reports of members of the Socialist Workers Party about discussions with the rank and file of the Communist Party in cities all over the country, we would say that the dominant urge of an honest communist worker coming out of the shock of the Twentieth Congress is to go "back to Lenin." In this he is not much different from the Russian worker who learned about Stalinism from first-hand experience. Secondly, we would say that the average thinking member of the Communist Party, not without some embarrassment at first, sees Trotskyism in a new light. Perhaps Trotskyism was a sectarian tendency, he thinks, but it was certainly not fascist as Stalin claimed and it turned out to be dead right about Stalin's final role. He can see no legitimate reason any longer for excluding the Socialist Workers Party from the discussion and from participation in any new formation that may shape up.

Thus the events in Russia, particularly the turn at the Twentieth Congress, have placed on the agenda of the American radical movement the question of regroupment. Since the most important problem involved here is the one of program, we would like to turn to this now.

What kind of party is needed in America? The feeling of Communist Party members that we must keep in mind the views of Lenin on this question is, we are convinced, completely correct. However, since much abuse has been made of Lenin's views, it is

necessary, we think, to spell things out as he did. Otherwise we can be misunderstood as advocating the monolithic structure developed by Stalin to maintain his personal dictatorship.

What we need is a party with complete internal democracy. Officials must be placed under the effective control of the membership through regularly held conventions and elections. Every member must be guaranteed full opportunity to present his independent views to the entire party through written and oral discussion; and, if he wishes to organize a grouping to advance a platform, that right must be guaranteed, too, for without this right party democracy is a sham. Such internal democracy must be complemented by majority rule in action so that when a discussion is finished the minority loyally abides by the majority decision and helps carry it out. In return the majority must respect the right of the minority to retain its views, pending the further test of events, and guarantee to the minority the possibility of becoming the majority in subsequent discussion. Lenin called this form of party organization "democratic centralism." You won't find it in the American Communist Party today. In fact the draft resolution prepared by the leadership for the coming convention specifically prohibits factions.\*

The opposition to Lenin's views on the question of party organization has never been inarticulate. It would be easy to find objections over the past half century and more that could serve for purposes of illustration in furthering the discussion. However, it

\* It is worth noting in passing that, aside from the question of principle involved, the prohibition of factions casts an illuminating light on the real views of these Stalinist leaders about a regroupment — they start out by gagging any organized dissident opinion in the ranks of the Communist Party; and that's after the Twentieth Congress!

will perhaps prove more fruitful to confine ourselves to some of the objections being voiced today among those in favor of regroupment in America.

In the ranks of the Communist Party a current is developing that puts in question the tenets of Leninism insofar as they might be applied to America. We are not referring here to the revisionism advocated by the leadership, but to a mood apparent in the rank and file. In the correspondence from readers published by the *Daily Worker* since the Twentieth Congress, for instance, one notes expressions of doubt about "centralism." We take this to be at bottom not a reconsideration of what Lenin advocated but rebellion over what the Stalinist leadership has been practicing in the name of Lenin; namely, bureaucratic suppression of rank and file opinion. As the discussion develops we can hope that this misinterpretation of Leninism will be ironed out along with a lot of other misconceptions about revolutionary socialism.

More important is the objection offered by the editors of the *Monthly Review*, who, we recognize, are quite interested in the regroupment of the radical movement. Huberman and Sweezy undoubtedly reflect the opinions of many who have become disillusioned with the American Communist Party but who retain their faith in the Soviet Union. In the May 1956 issue of the *Monthly Review*, in response to an appeal from Art Sharon, Campaign Manager of the Socialist Workers Party, for support to Farrell Dobbs for President, Huberman and Sweezy said:

"The SWP, he [Sharon] appears to be saying, bases itself on Leninism and the conquests of the Russian Revolution. Is this the correct and appropriate position for the American left to take? With regard to the conquests of the Russian Revolution, the answer is an unqualified affirmative. . . . Is the same true of Leninism? In our view the answer depends on what you understand

by the term. Lenin was one of the greatest men who ever lived, and much of what he accomplished in the fields of thought and action has universal validity. But Lenin was also the master strategist of a revolution that took place under unique historical and geographical conditions, and some of his most fruitful ideas and discoveries were designed to cope with the problems of the Tsarist empire in the world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How far they are applicable to other countries and times therefore depends to a very large extent on how closely conditions resemble those of pre-1917 Russia. . . .

"This is not the place to attempt to settle the question of how much of Leninism has relevance and validity for the United States at mid-century. But it is a good place to state that for our part we are certain that not all of it has, and that the kind of indiscriminating acceptance of Leninism as a whole and without qualification that has always characterized both the SWP and the CP can be, has been, and will continue to be a fatal political error. . . . One of the main purposes of the discussion which is now going on in left wing circles. . . . must be precisely to re-assess past relations and attitudes not only to Stalinism but also to Leninism. And among the points that cannot and should not be avoided are the nature of the Leninist party itself and the Leninist conception of the socialist international."

Earlier in the article, the editors assailed the SWP for its "Russian" orientation:

"At bottom, the weakness and sectarianism of the SWP has had precisely the same roots as the weakness and sectarianism of the Communist Party: Both have been dominated by Soviet developments; neither has ever succeeded in working out American solutions for American problems."

There is certainly more than a grain of truth in the contention that both the SWP and the CP have been dominated by Soviet developments. However, as we explained earlier, this has been true of all radical tendencies since the Russian Revolution, including the Huberman-Sweezy tendency. In and of itself what is bad about this? The Russian Revolution was the first great test of the theory of Marxism; and while Marxism is not specifically Russian its correctness was confirmed on Rus-



sian soil. The Russian Revolution, moreover, was a triumph for the tendency of revolutionary, orthodox Marxism as against the revisionist, reformist tendency, which, again, was not specifically Russian. Small wonder then that the whole international workers movement shaped itself around the question: For or against Bolshevism? Later, when the workers state was engulfed by Stalinist reaction, the international movement once more split into two basic camps: Stalinism versus Trotskyism.

What is decisive, it seems to us, is *how* the working-class movement was influenced by Soviet developments. We know how the Social Democracy was influenced. It lined up with the capitalist enemies of the Soviet Union and to this day functions as an agency of capitalist policy within the working class.

We know how the Communist Parties under Stalinist domination were influenced. They became agencies of the Soviet bureaucracy's foreign policy and thus were transformed from revolutionary parties into organs of class betrayal, as we see today in the case of the American Communist Party's support of the Democratic Party.

We know how the Trotskyist movement was influenced. It fought against the Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union and the corrupting of the Communist International. When the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy triumphed, the Trotskyist movement proclaimed the need for a new international, the Fourth International, and for new revolutionary parties everywhere, including the Soviet Union. The Trotskyist movement fought for the revolutionary regeneration of the Soviet Union decade after decade. What do the new events in the USSR signify if not the beginning of the achievement of that goal through the independent

class action of the Russian workers?

In the struggle against Stalinist degeneration, the Trotskyist movement sought to work out strategic and tactical solutions for the problems facing the revolutionary movement in all the major countries. When the prevailing Stalinist and reformist policies led the workers movement to defeat after defeat, the Trotskyists did their best to analyze the causes and consequences and thus help prepare the vanguard for new advances. The body of revolutionary literature created during these years deserves to be studied, it seems to us, before further judgments are offered on the capacity of the Trotskyist movement for independent thought.

Now how was the *Monthly Review* influenced by Soviet developments? It must be said frankly — how can you have a serious discussion without frankness? — that the *Monthly Review* served principally as a magazine of apology for the Kremlin bureaucracy. Isn't that so? For instance, the *Monthly Review* thought that the Moscow Trials were not frame-ups. It described the post-war purges and frame-ups in Eastern Europe as "more or less extensive personnel shakeups." It was convinced that the June 1953 general strike in East Germany was the work of Western imperialist provocateurs. It even accepted the notorious frame-up in the Soviet Union of the Jewish doctors. . .

We do not think that any purpose is served by simply raking up past errors from which nothing can be learned. However, since the *Monthly Review* has not yet disclosed what it thinks about these past positions, how are we to know that any lessons were learned by the editors? It seems to us that the regroupment of radicals in America could only be hastened and placed on a more solid basis if Huberman and Sweezy, as a contribution, would

review the special way in which they were dominated by Soviet developments. Can prestige considerations be permitted to stand in the way of drawing up a balance sheet that would help in the education of every radical in America? Surely the work of building the revolutionary socialist movement in America is austere enough to enable all of us to overlook the personal embarrassment that is involved in such questions!

The special July-August 1956 issue of the *Monthly Review* attempted to answer the question: "What goes on in the Soviet Union?" Since the entire issue was devoted to the Twentieth Congress, we hoped that it would include an analysis of the past positions held by the editors. We are frank to confess, moreover, that our curiosity had been considerably whetted by the four-months' silence of the magazine following Khrushchev's revelations. However, the editors, despite their insistence on scholarship in some other questions, did not venture to examine their own past positions. Instead they announced that they had "encountered" a total of three "theories" worthy of note in accounting for what goes on in the Soviet Union: (1) The official explanation of Khrushchev and Co., (2) the prevailing theory in Western imperialist circles, and (3) Deutscher's theory. Of the three they elect Deutscher's theory as "on the whole a good one."

Are we correct in assuming that by accepting Deutscher's theory, Huberman and Sweezy thereby discard their own past theories of what goes on in the Soviet Union? If so, that is some advance, although, in our opinion, not much. Deutscher's theory is essentially that the Soviet bureaucracy can be expected to undertake its own self-reform. (For an analysis of Deutscher's views see "Trotsky or Deutscher," by James P. Cannon, in the Winter 1954 issue of *Fourth International*.) The

Trotskyist view is that the Soviet bureaucracy can be expected to grant concessions under the pressure of mass unrest but it will finally be liquidated only by a political revolution undertaken by the Soviet working class.

Whatever one may think of Deutscher's conclusions, it must be recognized that he appreciates the struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism as a factor in Soviet politics. His main literary work in recent years has been an effort to assess Trotsky's ideas and his impact in the world. The *Monthly Review*, however, while placing the laurels on Deutscher's head does not even mention the Trotskyist analysis and record of struggle against Stalinism. They act as if they had never heard of Trotsky. This appears to us to be another lapse in their scholarship.\*

Let us return to the question of the relevance and validity of Leninism for the United States. As a contribution to the discussion, we believe that Lenin himself should be given the floor. As the *Monthly Review* acknowledges, "much of what he accomplished in the fields of thought and action has universal validity." Lenin's accomplishments in the field of party organization should be included, we think, in this fine compliment to "one of the greatest men who ever lived. . ."

\* Editors Cochran, Braverman and Geller, who have been trying to shape their American Socialist into a perfect satellite of the *Monthly Review*, also say that "Isaac Deutscher is being proven right." Taking their lead from Huberman and Sweezy, they also act — unlike Deutscher himself — as if they had never heard of Trotsky's theory of Soviet development; which is strange, since Trotsky's voluminous writings on the subject are in print and easily available to students and research workers. Do they really believe that Trotskyism can be excluded from the discussion of the regroupment of the American radical movement the way Cochran recently excluded half his own following from the American Socialist Union?

Two and a half years after the victory of the October 1917 socialist revolution in Russia, Lenin published his "*Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder: A Popular Essay in Marxian Strategy and Tactics*. In this pamphlet the founder and leader of Russian Bolshevism offered the international working-class vanguard some of the essential lessons to be drawn from the Russian Revolution. He held that these lessons had *principled* significance; that is, universal applicability for the workers revolutionary movement of all countries. He was convinced that the international significance of the October Revolution meant "the international validity or the historic inevitability of a repetition on an international scale of what has taken place here [in Russia]."

Lenin, we must recall, wrote this essay to combat the tendency of young and immature Communist parties to *ape* Russian Bolshevism instead of studying and applying its basic method to the peculiarities of their own countries. Precisely for this reason he urged the communists of other countries to accompany their greetings to the victorious Soviet power with a "*profound analysis* of the reasons *why* the Bolsheviks were able to build up the discipline of the revolutionary proletariat needs," as "one of the fundamental conditions for the victory over the bourgeoisie."

In his efforts to cure the young Communist parties of the infantile disorder that made a leftist caricature of Bolshevism, Lenin insisted they study the history of Bolshevism during the "whole period of its existence." Lenin thought the lessons of the past have meaning for the present, as in fact they do.

The 14 years from 1903 to 1917 — the years Bolshevism took shape in the struggle against the petty-bourgeois tendencies of Menshevik opportunism and So-

cial Revolutionary pseudo-radicalism — were, in Lenin's view, the heritage of the world working-class vanguard. In his opinion, the inner-party factional struggles of these years, as well as the years from 1917 to 1920, were a school of preparation and training, not merely for the Russian revolutionists, but for the working class of the world.

To the revolutionary vanguard in other countries, Lenin said: Yes, you have something to learn from our revolution — something that is fundamental and vital to the success of your own revolution — but you must study the history of our revolution and its preparation seriously and apply its lessons wisely in the light of the concrete peculiarities of your own national and cultural development.

As for the leaders of the Second International, and in particular its Kautskyan "revolutionary" wing, who rejected the Russian Revolution as a school for the strategy and tactics of the international working class, Lenin had only the sharpest condemnation. "Leaders of the Second International," he said, "such as Kautsky in Germany, and Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler in Austria, failed to understand [the international significance of the Russian Revolution] and they thereby proved to be reactionaries and advocates of the worst kind of opportunism and social treachery."

In his popular essay on Marxist strategy and tactics, Lenin stressed that Bolshevism was able to make a historic contribution to the world revolutionary movement only because it was founded on the "granite theoretical basis" of Marxism and had assimilated the best international revolutionary thought from the older movements in the West. On this score he said:

"The correctness of this — and only this — revolutionary theory [Marxism]

has been proved not only by the experience of all countries throughout the nineteenth century, but particularly by the experience of the wanderings and vacillations, the mistakes and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For nearly half a century — approximately from the 'forties to the 'nineties — advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unprecedented, savage and reactionary tsardom, eagerly sought for the correct revolutionary theory and followed each and every 'last word' in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness. Russia achieved Marxism, the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through suffering, by a half century of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, testing in practice, disappointment, verification and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the enforced emigration caused by tsardom, revolutionary Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century possessed a wealth of international connections and excellent information about world forms and theories of the revolutionary movement such as no other country in the world possessed."

Lenin thus explained how Bolshevism had "won the right" to introduce something new and vitally significant to the world movement, the concept of a combat party. The concept was based on the totality of all valid world revolutionary experience and theory up to that time. The concept was not peculiar to Russia. It was simply applied under the conditions peculiar to Russia.

Today, 39 years after the October Revolution, we believe that the American workers should give Lenin a hearing. We think that it is the duty of those who believe in socialism to present Lenin fairly and fully to the American audience. That is why we are convinced of the importance of discussing Leninism in the regroupment of the American radical movement.

We are similarly convinced that the storehouse of revolutionary experience accumulated since Lenin's death in 1924 must be considered part of the heritage of the revolutionary vanguard in America. There are the rich and

indispensable lessons provided by the evolution of the Soviet state following Lenin's death. These, we think, will prove of extraordinary interest to members of the Communist Party now that they are faced with the task of explaining to American workers how a figure like Stalin could come to power and why it can't happen in America.

There are the lessons, learned at fearful cost, of the struggle against fascism. Stalinism, by its fatal policies, helped pave the way for both Hitler and Franco. Trotsky, on the other hand, assembled everything in the arsenal of Marxist theory in the struggle against fascism. His works on this subject will prove invaluable to the American workers, in our opinion; for the defense against a fascist bid for power will loom large among the exceptionally difficult problems facing the American workers as they move toward socialism.

The struggle against imperialist war, the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and the colonial areas against imperialist domination likewise have provided rich material that should, we feel, be brought to the attention of workers who have come to realize that there is no escape from the evils of capitalism except through socialism.

The Marxist material accumulated in recent years should prove of great help, we are convinced, in providing deeper insights into the issues now under discussion in the Communist Party and its periphery — peaceful road to socialism, peaceful co-existence, multi-class coalitions, working-class independence in politics, how to avoid sectarianism, etc. These questions we leave for later discussion. In this article we wished only to emphasize the need to seriously consider the application of Leninism to the problem of building a revolutionary socialist

party in the peculiar conditions of America.

We think that a party constructed along Leninist lines would prove a great asset to the American working class, in fact is indispensable to the victory of socialism in America. We agree that it cannot be simply a Russian importation — Lenin himself, as indicated above, rejected that infantile application of his concept. We agree that the Leninist concept of the party must be "Americanized," given a specific American application.

We believe that all theories of party organization should now be put on the table for full and free consideration. In the unfolding discussion over what kind of party a regrouped radical movement should build in America, we for our part will defend the concept of Leninism.

As we indicated at the beginning, the discussion now opening up is a most important one. It does not occur, it must be emphasized, in response to a wave of radicalization among the American workers. It was touched off by the appearance of a new stage in the development of the Russian Revolution. Consequently, it can be expected that it will largely be confined to the class-conscious vanguard, those who are already convinced socialists and supporters of the Soviet Union. But the regroupment of these forces around a correct program constitutes an essential part of the preparation for the coming stage when the American working class will inevitably move in all their millions into the political arena. A thorough discussion of theoretical positions in this period of relative quiescence in America will help regroup the radical forces and build the revolutionary socialist leadership needed for success when the next wave of mass radicalization brings with it the opportunity for action on a big scale.

# The Case For Socialism

by the Editors of the "The Reasoner"

We published our first number in mid-July. It sold out in three weeks. We have now received close on three hundred letters from readers, the great majority welcoming the journal. All voice disquiet, self-questioning, the need for fresh Marxist analysis, for Socialist discussion with a new temper and direction. All have helped us, and we thank those who have written.

But the letters also raise a question. In our first number we emphasized that this is a *discussion* journal, written, in the main, by Communists and addressed in the first place to Communists. Why have so many readers written to us, but without thought of publication? Why have so few sought to address other readers, *to take up and carry forward the discussion?*

We think there are two main reasons. First the discussion is still in a primitive, a negative and partially destructive, stage. Cherished illusions have been shed. But they have not yet been replaced by new and positive affirmations. Problems are seen more clearly: but practical solutions have yet to be presented. And the first number of *The Reasoner* reflected this negative phase of the discussion.

In the second place, *The Reasoner* has almost been drowned in infancy by the waters of argument about discussion itself: what is the *place* for discussion, *how* do ideas grow and develop, how can theoretical controversies (which can never be decided, ini-

tially, by majority decisions) take place within the structure of a party of action where, rightly, the discipline of majority decisions must prevail?

The contributions in this number from Ronald Meek, Doris Lessing, and Professor Hyman Levy show the very wide implications of this controversy: indeed, the discussions around the rights of minorities, and this unofficial publication, have revealed a central place of conflict between the needs of united, disciplined action on the one hand, and the claims of honest and unrestricted discussion and inquiry on the other.

We are publishing herewith for the information of the American radical movement an extremely interesting article from a new British publication, *The Reasoner*. This publication, sub-titled "A Journal of Discussion," was launched by a group of prominent members of the British Communist Party and has thus far appeared in two issues, dated July and September. Attached to the second issue is a "Statement" by the editors, announcing that the Executive Committee of the British CP has called upon them to cease publication. We are also reprinting herewith this statement.

By publishing this article and statement we do not in any way imply either agreement on the part of *The Reasoner* editors with our point of view, or our agreement with theirs. But we do regard as notable the editors' intense interest in theoretical clarity, their insistence on a full and frank discussion, and their determination to think through all the basic questions arising from the Twentieth Congress.

In this controversy, we have been guided by one main consideration: *the discussion must continue*. And it must be more frank and searching than any at present being conducted in official Communist journals. For example, the Communist Party cannot effectively pursue its aim of unity if Communists are unwilling to enter an honest and self-critical discussion of the serious criticisms of Communist method and theory put forward by Socialists who hold the general position of Professor G. D. H. Cole. The discussion must take place across the barriers of party loyalties: for this reason, we publish among the documents in this number certain views of two non-Communists, Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, interpretative of the Soviet Union, which pose questions which Communists must consider and discuss. Further, we publish a letter from Lawrence Daly, until recently a member of the Scottish District Committee of the Communist Party, who has recently resigned his membership of the party. We regret his decision. But is it possible to consider realistically the problems of recruiting, the need for a party of 50,000, questions of unity, etc., if we are unwilling to receive and reply to the arguments of responsible Communists who have left the party on political grounds?

*The discussion must continue*: it must be honest: it must cross party barriers. *How* the discussion shall be conducted: the personal position of the editors: the continued existence of *The Reasoner* as an unofficial publication — all these are secondary questions.

It may be that discussion of the right way to discuss must be carried to some conclusion before the discussion itself can begin in earnest.

But let us be clear *what this discussion is about*. There are some Communists who are so concerned with urgent day-to-day struggles that they mistake the discussion for a distraction of energies. They are prepared to admit full discussion on certain immediate tasks and problems: and, within defined limits, discussion on certain questions of organization and verbal alterations of program. Discussion which does not have an immediate bearing on these tasks and questions they regard with impatience.

We do not agree with the view, implied by a correspondent in our first number, that individuals must cease political activity while fundamental review of theory and policy takes place. The shock of the "revelations" had this initial effect upon many of us: but this phase is now surely passing? Events such as the B.M.C. [British Motor Corp.] strike and the Suez crisis underline the fact that activity and discussion must go together and strengthen each other.

But this is no argument for any *limitation* of the discussion. Even questions of the most general theory, such as the nature of dogmatism, have the most direct bearing upon our political work: first, because they concern the very processes by which we interpret reality, decide policy, and conduct discussion: second, because they have important bearings upon the political relations of Communists with the labor movement.

Questions of general attitude, good faith, political honesty, and party history, *even when they have no obvious bearing on the immediate political line*, can be of the first importance in our political, as well as personal, relations with people. When Engels condemned the early S.D.F. it was not because of major disagreements with its political line, but as a result of the abstract, *didac-*

tic opportunism revealed in its approach to the working class: "People who pass as orthodox Marxists have turned our ideas of movement into a fixed dogma to be learnt by heart. . . and appear as pure sects." And William Morris elevated the same question of attitude to a similar level of political importance:

I sometimes have a vision of a real Socialist Party at once united and free . . . but the S.D.F. stands in the way. Although the individual members are good fellows enough. . . the society has got a sort of pedantic tone of arrogance and lack of generosity, which is disgusting and does disgust both Socialists and Non-Socialists.

The Communist Party does not share the faults of the early S.D.F., nor does it express its sectarianism in the same way or to the same degree: certain aspects of sectarianism are the inevitable result of isolation during the Cold War, and will be shed not through discussion but through breaking this isolation, through activity among the people: but discussion will hasten this process and is necessary to it.

This is not the heart of the question. The discussion, surely, is first and foremost about *Socialism*? Second, it is about the political honesty, independence, and effectiveness of the Communist Party as a party capable of leading the British people to Socialism.

British Communists have taken note of Engels' warnings against purism and abstract propagandist sects: have studied *Left-Wing Communism*, and have learnt from Lenin that Communists must carry on activities "*right in the heart of the proletarian masses*," participating in every struggle for living standards, peace, and social advance.

But in place of the clear analysis of imperialism, the agitational explanation of the Socialist alternative, which Engels and Lenin, Morris and Tom Mann, knew must be carried on alongside and in

the heart of every struggle, we have increasingly substituted, for the first, an over-simplified myth of the "two camps," and for the second, utopian propaganda about the Soviet Union as the land of Socialism-realized.

Communists have won industrial strength through the courage, militancy and intelligence of their members in day-to-day struggles: but the Communist Party has failed to emerge as a political influence corresponding to the energy and quality of its membership — despite repeated betrayals both of working-class interests and of Socialist principles by reformist Labor leaders — precisely because the British people did not believe or trust this central political message.

Into this situation there comes the speech of Khrushchev, setting out in all its grotesque barbarity the political distortions and violations of human rights which have taken place — and which we have for so long denied — in the country which, to a great degree, we have substituted in our propaganda for the explanation of Socialism in general and in British terms.

For months Communists have been seeking to disentangle many confused issues in their minds: those aspects of Soviet history which can be seen as pre-determined by conditions at the time of the Revolution, or made inevitable by the problems of holding power in the face of internal and external threat: those arising from the general problems of building Socialism in any country: those deriving from specific Russian traditions and culture: those aspects of degeneracy which arose in specific conditions of acute conflict and threat, but which outlived those conditions in certain ideological, moral, and institutional forms: those deriving from the particular qualities and failings of individual leaders: those organizational or theoretical mani-



festations of the "Stalin era" which have in their turn been reflected in the theory and practice of other Communist Parties. We have now reached a point where all agree that far more detailed knowledge, more detailed analysis, is necessary. But in all this there has run a common thread: the problem of disentangling the understanding of the essential character of Socialist society from the specific and concrete historical problems of the Soviet Union — of achieving an understanding of Socialism both enriched and chastened by the experience of the Soviet people — and of returning with fresh eyes to our own people, our own problems, our own traditions.

To suggest that we have now "had" the discussion, that this or that statement "answers" these problems, that we can forget these unpleasant matters and return to our old tasks in the old way, is to retreat from Socialist theory itself.

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### Statement by the Editors of "The Reasoner"

This number of *The Reasoner* was already printed when we received the resolution of the E.C. of the Communist Party (Sept. 9) calling on us to cease publication.

We wish to make it clear that we have at all times been willing to find a solution to the problem of our unofficial publication, provided that this gave effective guarantees that means will be found whereby minority views in the Communist Party can be fully posed, developed and sustained: and whereby full and frank discussion, of the type to be found in this number of *The Reasoner*, can continue. In our view the present facilities in the official press are quite inadequate to meet this crisis in Communist theory; and the editorial control is not such as to give confidence that minority rights can be safeguarded.

Up to this time the leadership of the Party has refused to enter into any discussion with us on the various proposals which we have made, nor have they offered any compromise on their behalf. We are confident that if the leadership will suggest means by which

No Communist Party, no party aiming at Socialism, can maintain the enthusiasm of its members if there is to be an inhibition, a "closed season," in the discussion of its very aims and reason for existence. And — while the discussion must focus more and more on British problems — this surely is why discussion of "the Stalin business" must and will go on?

But this is not only a question of the enthusiasm of Communists and Socialists — of the inner conviction which generates activity in a hundred day-to-day struggles. It is surely impossible that any can fail to see that the Khrushchev revelations — while it is true that they present problems which only the Soviet people can solve — while it is true that they do not touch the pockets or jobs of British workers — affect the whole political standing of the British Communist Party, and its relations with the British people.

full and frank discussion can continue, and minority rights be safeguarded, a solution can be found which will end the present danger of dissension. We, on our behalf, are — and always have been — willing to give way to an official discussion journal (with certain obvious safeguards), and would be glad to discuss turning *The Reasoner* outwards, to fight the intellectual battles for Socialism among the people in the manner of the old *Left Review*, with a broader and more representative editorial board.

After studying the statement of the E.C. which is to appear in *World News* we will be willing to submit further information, and answers to specific questions, to any branch or committee of the Communist Party.

Finally, we wish to make clear two points. 1) None of the contributors to this number are in any way committed to the above statement. 2) We state categorically that we are not responsible — directly or indirectly — for releasing information disclosed in a *Tribune* report of last week. — J. S. & E. P. T. 11 Sept.

A reader from Glasgow expresses this:

Two people have recently put it briefly. One lives in a Lancashire cotton town: and when asked what the neighbors were saying about 'the Stalin business,' replied angrily but honestly: "They're laughing their heads off." Another is a university lecturer in Scotland, who when asked the same question about his colleagues, replied: "They're not saying much, but they're all thinking: 'Let's see you talk yourself out of this one.'"

The primary datum of the discussion is that we are proposing to promote political and economic change among people who regard us with amusement, tolerance, and a kindly contempt. They are also quite prepared to use us, at least individually, if we can serve their ends, for example, in doing the donkey-work in Trade Unions and other organizations.

This is not an issue of sudden origin; nor is it one which will "soon blow over." It is ridiculous to say that the British workers "are not concerned with 'the Stalin business.'" The fact that they are concerned, and were concerned long before the 20th Congress, is revealed every time a Communist — often with wide respect and industrial influence — goes to the polls. So long as the British workers suspect the independence, the honesty, and the authoritarian tendencies of the Communist Party, this discrepancy between industrial and political influence is likely to remain.

The records of any T.U.C. or Labor Party Conference during the past ten years show how "the Stalin business" has been used by reformist leaders to divide the movement, and how the quarrel about human rights and liberties, in which more than once we have taken the wrong side, has become embedded in the history and even in the structure of our labor movement.

Nor have the Khrushchev revelations in any sense "rehabilitated" Communists on those questions where we have been mistaken; although they have created a situation within which, if we

ourselves draw the right lessons and take the right initiatives, we can regain our honesty and independence of judgment and action.

But "the Stalin business" is here to stay. It will not be forgotten next year nor in ten years time. At the worst, *the capitalist class will see to that*. Nor will Communists, in ten years time, be able to look with indifference upon those aspects of the history of the first Socialist revolution which destroyed — by torture, death, and slander — many of its own best sons. The "business" is part of the Socialist history: it forms a central experience to which Socialist theory must constantly return.

So long as we refuse to face these facts, honestly and publicly, we are self-defeated in our work, and the return from every political action of Communists is diminished. Fine comrades will redouble their efforts and expend their energies in day-to-day struggles: they will succeed in alleviating suffering here, and in restraining imperialism there: but few results will accrue in the deepened political consciousness of the British people and the direct *political* influence of the party. The goal of Socialism will be brought little nearer.

What is necessary?

First, we must jerk our explanation and agitation for Socialism sharply out of the old ruts of pro-Soviet propaganda: we must dissociate our propaganda of fraternal solidarity with the people of the Soviet Union, our explanation of their problems and achievements, from the old uncritical acceptance of particular leaders, particular actions, particular forms of political and social expression.

Second, we must re-create — and first of all within ourselves and our party — a much clearer understanding of the character of Socialist society, not only in its economic basis but also in its so-

cial relations and political institutions, and in relation to *contemporary* British conditions. This is not at all a question of writing certain democratic safeguards into our program. It is a question of rekindling enthusiasm and imaginative understanding, of commencing an analysis of social reality with fresh eyes and open minds.

Third, we must take our refreshed Socialist understanding, and carry the agitation for Socialism in Britain into the heart of every day-to-day struggle, raising the question of Socialism with a new bite, urgency and confidence: not as a peroration to our speeches, nor as a gleam to warm our hearts in a hopeless time: not as the ultimate target blue in the distance beyond foothills of new Labor Governments and People's Governments: but as a practical, common-sense, desirable, and (within political reason) immediate possibility.

This is *not* what we are already doing. Our Communist Party still has peculiar elements of economism in its thought and practice.

Starting from the understanding that Socialism is not won by propaganda speeches, some Communists have come to elevate the day-to-day struggles to the exclusion of the fight to win the minds of the working class. There has gradually entered the tendency to view the party as a small and disciplined elite, in possession (as Marxists) of a correct understanding of the needs, interests, and way forward for the working class. To some degree the purity of the party's doctrine has been insured by an exacting orthodoxy and a highly centralized structure, which has acted as a barrier to the growth of the party itself, and hedged round the initiatives of its members among the masses. Stalinism, and the cult both of authority and of the Party associated with it, have hardened these attitudes in Britain also.

Hence, the Communist tends to see his role as being largely that of building influence and connections with the masses and within mass organizations, for some period when economic crisis or external pressure will bring a mass following which the elite will steer to power.

Certainly, we should not slacken in any way our mass activity around industrial and social issues. Certainly, Socialism will not come by converting twenty million people to Marxism by lectures and street-corner propaganda. But we do suggest that it is urgent that we break sharply with the outlook which sees these struggles as ends in themselves, as means for building the party, as incidents within a never-ending perspective of defending living standards within a capitalist framework, alongside many years of peaceful co-existence and peaceful competition.

It is necessary now to mount a propaganda such as has not been seen in this country for many years *to win the minds of the British people for Socialism*: and it is necessary to mount it in ways that take fully into account the intelligence, experience, democratic traditions, and organizational maturity of the British working class.

It is imperative to rebuff the actions of British imperialism in Cyprus and at Suez: but at the same time to explain as never before the nature of imperialism and its general weakness.

It is necessary to resist in every way the suffering brought upon the British workers by the introduction of automation: but it is also necessary to explain in a new, sharp, and imaginative manner the general character of monopoly capitalism and the perspectives opened to a Socialist society by automation and nuclear power.

It is necessary to struggle to defend and improve existing living

(Continued on page 137)

# Feuerbach -- Philosopher Of Materialism

by John G. Wright

**L**UDWIG Andreas Feuerbach, the fourth son of a famous German lawyer, was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century, July 28, 1804. His family was bourgeois. A native of Southern Germany, fiery and passionate by temperament, a born fighter, his natural element was the hurly-burly of public life; he needed the widest possible contact with people, the broadest possible arena. This was denied him by German reaction. The authorities drove him from his university post in 1832, refused to reinstate him in 1836, barred him from the main centers of German intellectual life and kept him penned up, in virtual exile, in a provincial corner of Bavaria, until his death September 13, 1872.

Many know Feuerbach by name; not a few have read about him, mainly in Marxist literature, but nowadays hardly anybody reads his books. His writings are not readily obtainable either in translation or the original German. Yet in the history of human thought he occupies an eminent place. For a whole decade, from 1840 to 1849, he dominated the field of advanced philosophy as only Hegel did before him and Marx and Engels after him.

Among the revolutionary-minded generation of his day, Feuerbach, the materialist philosopher and avowed opponent of theology, was naturally a hero. And just as naturally he was hated and hounded by reaction, not in Germany alone. In England, for example, one pillar of the church, William Maccall, publicly called for the physical annihilation of

This article is the last one written by John G. Wright. It was accompanied by the following memo to the editor: "Joe, Here is something for your 'reserve.' There will be two more (Marx's critique of Feuerbach and Engels on Feuerbach). Usick." Although the article was planned as only the first of a trilogy — a trilogy that was never finished — we feel that our readers will agree that it stands in its own right as a stimulating contribution in the defense of Marxist theory and as an indication of what the socialist movement lost through the untimely death of Comrade Wright.

Feuerbach. "Aye, annihilate; for this is not a matter in which we pretend to one morsel of tolerance," announced this British reactionary. It is the fate of thinkers like Feuerbach to be maligned and misrepresented long after their death. All the more incumbent is it upon us to restore his true stature and to place his teachings and accomplishments as well as his limitations and failures in their true historical context.

Feuerbach started out as a Hegelian. To be sure, he never was a wholly orthodox Hegelian, any more than were Marx and Engels who likewise started out as Hegelians. But Feuerbach was nonetheless an idealist at the outset.

His evolution is the conversion of a Hegelian into a materialist. The course of the development of Marx and Engels passes from Hegel through Feuerbach to dialectical materialism. Rosa Luxemburg somewhere says that dialectical materialism, the world outlook of Marxism, was the child of bourgeois philosophy, a child that cost the mother her life. At this birth

Feuerbach may be said to have officiated as the midwife.

At the age of twenty and, ironically enough, a young theologian, Feuerbach came to Berlin to study under Hegel. After two years, he studied natural sciences at Erlangen. Philosophy became his life-work. His first book, published anonymously in 1930, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, shows that years before his definitive break with Hegel, he had already come under the influence of Spinoza, whose doctrine is materialist in its essence, despite its idealist modes of expression, as Feuerbach himself was later brilliantly to demonstrate.

In 1839 when Feuerbach published his *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie* (A Contribution to the Critique of Hegelian Philosophy) he had broken with idealism. By 1841 when his monumental book *The Essence of Christianity* appeared, he was a materialist who waged war against idealism as the last refuge of theology and against Hegelianism as the last rational prop of theology.

Karl Marx hailed Feuerbach's ideas at the time as world-historic in their importance and inaugurating a new epoch. Why? Because they represented a decisive break with idealism and a rallying to materialism. As early as the eighteenth century, particularly in France, Marx pointed out in *The Holy Family*, materialism stood for the struggle not only against all metaphysical systems, against religion and theology, but also against the existing political institutions. To put it differently, materialist ideas were revolutionary.

If the credit for driving religion out of its last refuge in history belongs to Marxism, then the credit for launching the final struggle to drive theology out of philosophy belongs to Feuerbach. In this he was indisputably the first, al-

though he did not thoroughly purge his own thought of idealist remnants.

There was nothing cut and dried about Feuerbach. With an eloquence rare in philosophic writings and with the zeal of a fighter for a correct line in philosophy — an intransigence and eloquence which captured the minds and hearts of revolutionists of his day — Feuerbach demonstrated that nothing exists save nature and mankind; that nature does not owe its existence to any power outside of itself, least of all to the power of an infinite subject, as idealists put it, or that nature is the “self-estrangement” and “other being” of the Spirit, as Hegel put it. Such claims, Feuerbach explained, are mere translations into philosophic language of the theological doctrine that God created the world.

“Our philosophers,” he wrote, “have up to now been nothing else but mediatizing theologians.” As for Hegel, “the ‘Absolute Spirit’ is the ‘departed Spirit’ of theology which wanders like a ghost in and out of Hegelian philosophy.” This “Absolute Spirit” remains as mysterious and unknowable as the God of the theologians, and Hegel actually tells as little about his “Absolute” as theologians are able to tell about their divinity. Whoever fails to break with Hegelianism simply refuses to break with theology, concluded Feuerbach.

German idealism had forged powerful weapons; Feuerbach turned these weapons against idealism itself. “Truth is concrete,” was the banner raised by German idealism, in the first instance by Hegel. “Philosophy is cognizance of whatever is,” agreed Feuerbach. “The supreme law and task of philosophy is to think about essence, about creatures and things as they really are.” He then proceeded to show how idealism violated its own fundamental premise.

Anticipating the conquests of natural science, the German philosopher Kant had introduced the

doctrine of evolution into philosophy; Hegel was later to extend evolution into history. But evolution is unthinkable outside of time and space. And so Kant recognized time and space as forms of cognizance, that is, as indispensable premises for human reason.

With this Feuerbach agreed, only immediately to add that time and space must be much more than that. Are not time and space the necessary forms of existence, as well as the necessary forms of intuition and knowledge, the in-



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dispensable premises for the existence of all creatures and things? he asked. Of course they are. Space and time, said Feuerbach, can be forms of cognizance only because I myself happen to be part of whatever exists, only because I myself am a creature living in time and space.

“Space and time,” he wrote, “are the necessary forms of existence of all essence, of all creatures and things. . . . A timeless sensation, a timeless will, a timeless thought, a timeless essence — are absurd fictions. Whatever is located outside of time, has by this token no temporal existence and cannot strive either to will or to think.”

According to Feuerbach, being could not possibly mean an existence in thought alone. Such a con-

tion is meaningless. “To prove that something exists means to prove that it exists not only in the mind,” he insisted. It must exist in the outside world.

The starting point of idealism is that mind is prior to matter. Feuerbach concentrated his heaviest fire against this.

What divides the opposing schools of human thought is precisely their starting points. Arrayed here against each other in the field of theory, just as in politics and in economic life, stand hostile social forces, class forces representing progress on the one side, retrogression on the opposing side.

This historic controversy rages as fiercely today as it did in Feuerbach’s day. Take the current crisis in science. Many modern scientists, physicists in particular, find themselves floundering, hopelessly divided over such issues as:

- (1) Is there a real outer world which exists independently of our acts of knowing?
- (2) Is the real outer world knowable or unknowable?
- (3) Is there objective lawfulness, objective causality, in nature?

These are the very same questions, it will be noted, which we are now discussing in connection with Feuerbach and to which he, as a materialist, gave affirmative answers.

Scientists today are divided into two warring camps. On the one side, a group who answer these questions in the affirmative; and on the opposing side, those who deny it.

Such denials follow consistently from the idealist standpoint that mind is prior to matter. And on this central issue Feuerbach in his day took the offensive.

Whoever maintains that mind is prior to matter is simply a theologian in disguise who seeks to deduce the objective world from some unmaterial power, or the idea. To try, said Feuerbach, to deduce the objective world from one’s idea is to show that one understands exactly nothing about

nature or about the mind. The idealistic starting point is a false one.

"*Das Sein geht dem Denken voran.*" Being comes before thinking. Thinking does not determine being; just the contrary, it is being that determines thinking. Idealists reason like those who upon seeing crowds of people walking on a sunny day, conclude that the sun shines because people are out promenading. The correct conclusion is that people are out because the sun is shining. "I do not generate the object from the thought," said Feuerbach, "but the thought from the object."

"I differ," he wrote with justifiable scorn, "*toto coelo* from those philosophers who pluck out their eyes in order that they may see better; for *my* thought I require the senses, especially sight."

The idealist doctrine of the "I," i.e., that the abstract "subject" is the sole source of reality, is merely another way of saying that mind is prior to matter. It is a false doctrine, argued Feuerbach. He reasoned approximately as follows:

I am able to see, but I am not the only one gifted with sight. I am also seen by others. The real "I" is invariably that "I" which stands opposed to the "You." The real "I" in turn becomes the "You" — that is to say, becomes the object for another "I." For itself the "I" is naturally the *subject*; for others it is, just as naturally, the *object*. Therefore "I" constitutes simultaneously both a subject and an object, or subject-object. This is not an identity, but a unity. Whoever analyzes consciousness independently of the rest of mankind does so only by ripping apart every single tie between consciousness and the outer world.

In *Capital* (page 61, Kerr edition) Marx develops and deepens the same ideas as follows: "Since he [man] comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand, nor as a Fichtean philosopher to whom 'I am I' is sufficient, man first sees and recog-

nizes himself in other men. Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by comparing himself with Paul as a being of like kind. And thereby Paul, just as he stands in his Pauline personality, becomes to Peter the type of *genus homo.*"

The outer world, said Feuerbach, is the necessary premise for consciousness. Our "I" is not at all the abstract entity with which idealist philosophers try to operate. "I" am a real being, a thing of the flesh. If you talk about my essence, please bear in mind that my body, too, belongs to this essence. What is more, it is my body, taken as a whole, that precisely constitutes my essence. It is my body that constitutes my "I." The process of thinking does not take place within some abstract being; it takes place exactly within my body, within your body. Before



HEGEL

you or I can think we must exist. "Before perceiving we breathe; we cannot exist without air, food and drink." *Das Sein geht dem Denken voran.* Being is prior to thinking. Matter is prior to thought. Being determines consciousness, and not the other way around.

Feuerbach's motto was: "Do not think as a thinker, but think as a real, living being in which capacity you are now swimming in the waters of the world ocean."

It is an excellent motto which Marxism has rendered more exact by specifying that individuals do not exist except within specific productive relations in society, i.e., as members of historically developed classes.

Opponents of materialism argue that consciousness cannot, after all, be explained by material phenomena. Thought is immaterial, spiritual, whereas material phenomena are just that — material and unspiritual. This argument (annihilating in the eyes of idealists) completely misses the mark; it does not even touch the materialist foundations of Feuerbach's doctrine. It is idealism that tries to do just the reverse; namely, to explain material phenomena by mental phenomena; in fact, to establish an identity between the two. It is wrong to do so, reasoned Feuerbach.

The domain of subjective events stands contraposed to the domain of objective events and these opposing sides can be understood only as a unity. Not an identity, but a unity. "What is for me, or subjectively, a purely spiritual, immaterial and un-sensuous act, is by itself, objectively, a material, sensuous act," explained Feuerbach. The task is to differentiate between them in order then not to sever them asunder, nor falsely to identify them, but to relate them correctly as two sides of one and the same unified whole.

He carefully differentiated not only between consciousness and material phenomena but also between things as they really exist and things as they appear to us, things as we understand them. He differentiated in order to relate them correctly. Through our senses we obtain mental images of the objective world. These images are likewise products of nature but they are distinct from the actual objects of mental representation. In philosophic language, the thing-in-itself is distinct from the thing-for-us. The second, that is, the mental image, is only a reaction to the first, that is, it is an



image of objective reality, just as man himself is only a fragment of the world of nature which is mirrored in his mind.

"My taste-nerve," explained Feuerbach, "is just as much a product of nature as salt is; but from this it does not at all follow that the taste of salt as such would immediately be an objective property of salt; it by no means follows that the salt such as it appears only as an object of sensation would exactly be that in-and-for-itself; that the sensation of salt on the tongue would also be the property of salt, as we think of it without sensation."

Sensation or sense perception is the result of the objective action upon our sense organs of a thing-in-itself which exists independently of us. Such is the materialist theory of Feuerbach; such is the theory of Marxism as well. Sensation is the subjective image of an objective world, a world which is simultaneously in-and-for-itself.

Idealists make quite a to-do about the theory of knowledge, gnosiology or epistemology as academicians call it. Is the thing-in-itself, that is, the outer world, really knowable? If so how do we know it? How can we prove it? Many modern scientists profess to be nonplussed by these questions.

In doing so they unwittingly follow in the footsteps of theologians who try to reduce logic to a mere instrument of proof. Actually, logic, even formal logic, is much more than that. It is one of the methods of proceeding from the known to the unknown, as was demonstrated by Bacon, the founder of modern materialism, with his method of induction as far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The argument that it is not possible to prove by "a priori arguments" that things are knowable has little weight in the progress of human knowledge, as all the advances of modern industry and technology have shown. It is a scholastic argument. The whole point is that the capacity of man to know reality can be, and has

been, proved by other means. This problem of "knowability," declared unsolvable by Kant, was, as a matter of record, resolved by Hegel who pointed out that as we learn more and more about the qualities of a thing, we get to know more and more about it. In other words, knowledge is derived from observation, from experience, from industry, technology, science, in brief, from the practical activity of man. As Marx pointed out, the problem of "knowability" is not a theoretical question at all but a practical one. And any scientist who, when he philosophizes, turns his back on such proof demonstrates thereby that his "reason" is no better than the more or less diluted, more or less rarified "reason" of the theologians.

We get to know things as we learn about their qualities, Feuerbach agreed with Hegel.

It is well worth pausing here to consider briefly how Feuerbach used Hegel's own arguments (against Kant) to demonstrate the inner inconsistency of the Hegelian system. Whatever lacks qualities, said Feuerbach, "has no effect upon me, has no existence for me... To deny all the qualities of a being is tantamount to denying the being itself." But this is precisely what Hegel does with regard to the category of "pure being" with which his system starts.

"Pure being," as Hegel defines it in his *Science of Logic*, is "without difference and without any characteristics." It is "pure indeterminateness," it is "totally empty," otherwise, Hegel insists, "its purity would be violated."

"Pure being" is therefore without any real being, concluded Feuerbach. There is no being other than determinate being. What exists in space and time are particular species and individuals, solar bodies, stars, animals, plants, rocks and so forth. "Space and time," said Feuerbach, "are not simple forms of phenomena but essential conditions of existence." Hegel's "pure being" lies outside

of time and space; it is without any characteristics; it is indeed, as Hegel himself put it, an "empty abstraction." It is a typical theological abstraction. Under the guise of "pure being" Hegel simply smuggles in his "Absolute Spirit." Thus there is no evolutionary process in Hegel's logic at all; in reality, his reasoning is circular. He starts with the Absolute and ends with the self-same Absolute.

Feuerbach demonstrated without difficulty that other key categories of Hegel are likewise infinite and absolute in character, as for example the categories of *Wesen* (or Essence) and of *Begriff* (usually translated as Notion, this category figures in Hegel's system now as Spirit and now as Self-Consciousness). Because of this inner inconsistency Feuerbach discarded the dialectic altogether. He mistook the idealist form of the dialectic for the dialectic generally, a blunder which Marxism alone was able to rectify. In addition, by considering "man" not as an abstraction transcending society but as a concrete expression of given societies, themselves in evolution, Marx and Engels transcended the idealist vestiges in Feuerbach's philosophy.

This brings us to the question of objective causality in nature. As Lenin pointed out, this question is of special importance in determining the philosophic line of any given system of ideas. Feuerbach expounded his views with exceptional clarity in his answer to a critic, Rudolf Haym. It is a rather lengthy quotation, but one well worth studying. Feuerbach wrote:

"For Feuerbach 'nature and human reason,' says Haym, 'differ completely, and between them there opens an abyss which it is impossible to span either from one side or from the other.' Haym grounds this reproach on paragraph 48 of my *Essence of Religion*, where it is stated that 'nature may be understood only through nature itself; that nature's necessity is neither human nor logical, neither metaphysical nor mathematical;

(Continued on page 136)

# Early Years Of the American Communist Movement

by James P. Cannon

Notes and Sidelights on the Year 1927

July 26, 1955

Dear Sir:

In his sorry memoir called *I Confess*, Gitlow reports that my original discussions with Weinstone in 1926-1927 concerned a division of party offices — with me as Chairman, Weinstone as General Secretary and Foster as head of the trade union department (page 405). This is merely a sample of Gitlow's method of reporting his own suspicions for facts. Weinstone and I never discussed party offices at all before the death of Ruthenberg, and then only the post of General Secretary, which had become suddenly vacant. Our dealings with Foster then concerned only the single question of the secretaryship, which we assumed had to be decided right away. The office of Chairman had been abolished, if I remember correctly, when the Ruthenberg faction was installed as a majority by the Comintern cable and the vote of P. Green, Comintern representative, after the 1925 Convention.

Gitlow was conditioned by his association with Lovestone to assume, as a matter of course, that whenever two or more people got their heads together something was being cooked up for their personal advantage. His whole account is studded with such reports of his suppositions as facts.

\* \* \*

Gitlow's report that, after Ruth-

enberg's death, Weinstone wobbled over to Lovestone's side, on the promise of the secretaryship, does not correspond to my recollection. I was in close communication with Weinstone during all that period. He reported to me all his discussions with the Lovestoneites. As far as I know, he never wavered at all on the basic position we had

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.

agreed upon — to oppose the domination of the party by either of the other factions — until after the 1927 Convention. I do not believe that he was primarily interested in office at that time; or that it was ever his principal motivation, as Gitlow surmises.

Weinstone's importance in the situation in that period derived from his personal popularity in New York, his strategic position as Secretary of the New York District, and the unquestionable sincerity of the non-factional position he had arrived at. The fact that Stachel also went along with Weinstone at first, was particularly disturbing to the Lovestoneites. Weinstone also had some support among the youth; Sam Don, who

later became an editor of the *Daily Worker*, was with him all the way in that period. Weinstone also had the support of a group in the South Slavic Federation.

I suppose this is the only place in the whole printed record you have examined, where you will find a good word by anybody, however qualified, for Stachel. But the truth is that in 1926-1927, Stachel, who was Organizational Secretary of the New York District in Weinstone's administration, was actually won over to Weinstone's non-factional policy and carried it out in practice until some time after the death of Ruthenberg. I recall Krumbein, New York leader of the Fosterites, telling me that he had "never seen such a change come over a man," and that his changed demeanor had greatly moderated the factional situation in the New York District.

Stachel participated in many of the early discussions that I had with Weinstone and expressed full agreement with our program. At one time he proposed that I come to New York as District Secretary, to carry through the program in New York if Weinstone went into the National Office. After several months of persistent effort Lovestone finally got Stachel back into line. But there was one brief period in the life of this man, which seemed to be otherwise devoted exclusively to vicious factionalism, when he responded to higher considerations of party interests.

As for Wolfe, neither Weinstone nor I had any confidence in him nor in his professions of sympathy for Weinstone's program. I remember Weinstone telling me that Wolfe was Lovestone's agent all the time; that he had come along in pretended sympathy for a short time only to keep hold of Stachel and hold him back and to use Stachel to hold Weinstone back. Such a complicated Machiavellian maneuver would be right in character for Lovestone. But I still do

not believe that Stachel was a conscious party to it, although Wolfe almost certainly was.

\* \* \*

Ballam came along with Weinstein at that time and remained with us in the opposition bloc all the way through the 1927 Convention. That was a twist in the situation that I will admit I never understood. Ballam was one of a number of people in the party at that time who just lacked something of the qualities of leadership, and who made a political living, so to speak, by factionalism — not as leaders, but rather as henchmen of one faction or another. Since a way back I had regarded him as a cynic, and I think everybody else did too.

He had been the “English” mouthpiece of the Russian Federation faction, after they split with Ruthenberg in 1920 and lost all their more capable and influential “English-speakers.” He held that position with the Federation leftists all through the fight over party legalization, up until their debacle in 1922-1923. Then he was rehabilitated and legitimized by Pepper and became his factional henchman, continuing with the Pepper - Ruthenberg - Lovestone line-up for four years until he broke loose and took his stand with Weinstein in 1927.

Ballam had a bad reputation in the party, and very little, if any, personal influence. Our people felt a bit uneasy when they heard that he was coming along with Weinstein in the new grouping. But he seemed to accept our whole program and we had no ground to exclude him. I was frankly puzzled by Ballam's stand at that time. I could easily imagine him in any kind of a faction except a faction to end factionalism. But in intimate discussions at that time he expressed the same sentiments as ours, to the effect that the factional fight had brought us all into a blind alley and that we would have to find a new way for a while.

I remember asking him at one time how he thought things would

turn out, and he said: “I have absolute faith in the Communist International.” Nevertheless, he went along with us after the Comintern decision — up to the Convention. After that he seized the first opportunity to slip back into the Lovestone caucus.

\* \* \*

Weinstein did the same thing, but the motivations of the two should by no means be equated. I think Weinstein came to the conclusion that the Comintern decision and the Lovestone victory based on it, had destroyed the possibility of unifying the party along the lines we had projected and that the “hegemony” of the Lovestone group would have to be accepted. But he never became a “Lovestoneite” in the sense that most of the others in the faction did. As soon as Lovestone got into trouble with the Comintern in 1929 Weinstein was one of the first to break with him and support the new line of the Comintern.

\* \* \*

*The United Opposition Bloc.* As I recall, the bloc was formed when we were in Moscow in 1927, not before. Previously there had been merely a touch-me-not agreement on the support of Weinstein as General Secretary. The new combination was demonstratively called a “bloc” to signify that there was no fusion into a single faction, as Foster would have preferred. Neither Weinstein nor I had any sympathy for the idea of Foster dominating the party, nor of getting into a single faction with him where we might possibly be controlled by a majority vote. Everything that was decided in the course of our relations during that period had to be done by agreement each time, rather than by majority vote.

The essence of the situation, as we saw it, was that none of the factions had a recognizable difference of political position on questions of capital importance at that time. That was the “political basis” for our contention that the

old factions should be dissolved. But the other factions demanded of us what they did not demand of themselves. Since we did not bring forward a new political platform we were accused of having “no political program.” When we formed the bloc with Foster, the Lovestoneites raised the same hue and cry against the bloc. This throws an interesting sidelight on the prevailing psychology of the old factions in those days. The two old factions, the Fosterites and the Lovestoneites, were taken for granted, having a right to separate existence as established institutions. But a third group, or a new “bloc,” was required to have a new “political basis.” Factionalism carried out too long after the original “political basis” has been outlived can produce some queer thinking.

The bloc was formed to try to prevent the Lovestoneites from dominating the party with a clear majority. We didn't doubt that Foster had ideas of dominating the party himself, but also we knew he couldn't do it without our support. That we never intended to give him. Foster had more rank-and-file backing than we had. But we had the majority of the more capable cadres, and Foster was compelled to agree to a 50-50 basis in all agreements we made regarding representation, up to and including the representation of the bloc as a minority in the new CEC, elected at the 1927 Convention. Of the 13 minority representatives on the new committee, we got 6 and the Foster group got 7, giving them the odd one.

The opposition bloc seemed to grow out of the logic of the situation as it developed in Moscow in 1927. But I believe it would be fair to say that Foster pressed hardest for it and made the most concessions. It did not signify that Weinstein had become a Fosterite in any sense whatever or that our 1925 split with Foster had been healed. It was more of a marriage of convenience.

*The Eighth Plenum of the Comintern, Summer of 1927.* Weinstein and I travelled to Moscow together and arrived on the last day of the Plenum. We had no part in any of its proceedings or in the voting, as I recall, as this right was reserved to members of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. We were in Moscow not as delegates to the Plenum but only on a special mission on the American question.

The German Ewart (Braun) was in charge of the American Commission. Ewart impressed me as an honest, straightforward communist, a former worker who was one of the second and third-line men who eventually were brought into the leadership of the German party after the Comintern demolished, first, the traditional leadership of Brandler-Thalheimer, and then that of the leftists — Fischer-Maslow — who succeeded them. I don't know how he happened to get chosen for the job of heading the American Commission. I think he was close to Bukharin and carried out Bukharin's wishes in the matter.

I do not remember that Weinstein and I saw any of the top leaders of the Russian party on that occasion. In general Lovestone was far ahead of us in playing the Moscow game in that period. To begin with he had the help of Pepper, who was ensconced in the apparatus of the Comintern, and knew all the angles and prevailing winds and whom to see and whom to keep away from.

Here I might as well frankly state that I never was worth a damn on a Mission to Moscow after my first trip in 1922. Then everything was open and above-board. A clearcut political issue was presented by both sides in open debate and it was settled straightforwardly, on a political basis, without discrimination or favoritism to the factions involved, and without undisclosed reasons, arising from internal Russian questions, motivating the decision and determining the attitude to-

ward the leaders of the contending factions. That was the Lenin-Trotsky Comintern, and I did all right there. But after 1924 everything was different in the Comintern, and I never seemed to be able to find my way around.

I detested the business of going around to see one person after another like a petitioner, and sort of groping in the dark without knowing what was going to be decided by others without our participation. The only time I ever felt at ease in Moscow was in the Commission meetings where the representatives of different factions could confront each other in open debate. But by the time the Commission meetings got underway they were mere formalities. Everything had been settled behind the scenes; the word had been passed and all the secondary leaders and functionaries in the Comintern were falling into line.

I felt, with considerable reason, that I was no good in that whole business. I left Moscow each time with a feeling of futility, and my resistance to going again increased steadily until in 1928 I at first flatly refused to go. It was only the insistent urging and pressure of factional associates that finally induced me to give it one more try in 1928. I was then already deeply troubled by the developments in the Russian party, but did not expect that anything would be done to change anything at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. I had no idea that I would be propelled into the fight and come out of it a convinced Trotskyist, breaking all previous relations and connections on that issue.

\* \* \*

I think the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group gained their initial advantage in Moscow by jumping earlier and more enthusiastically into the fight against Trotskyism, away back in 1924, and that this was always in the minds of the

Russian leaders in the subsequent years. Foster and Bittleman did everything they could to make up for the earlier sluggishness of the Foster-Cannon faction on the Trotsky question, but I never did anything but go along silently. This may have been noted in Moscow and may account in part for my disfavor there, but I am not sure about that.

You are right in your "impression that there was literally no one in the American party in 1927 who might be considered a 'Trotskyite' or even a sympathizer of Trotsky's position." I know of no one who openly took such a position in the party prior to my return from the Sixth Congress in 1928. I personally had been deeply disturbed and dissatisfied by the expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev, but I could not have been called a "Trotskyite" or even a sympathizer, at that time. And the atmosphere in the party was such that it was not wise to express such sentiments or disgruntlements unless one intended to do something about it. By that time the issue of Trotskyism posed the immediate threat of expulsion in all parties of the Comintern.

After our expulsion we did discover a small group of expelled Hungarian communists, headed by Louis Basky, who had previously adopted the platform of the Russian Opposition on their own account. But they had come to this position after their expulsion, which had taken place on some other grounds, trumped up in the course of the Lovestoneites' campaign to cinch up their factional control in the Hungarian Federation. The Hungarian comrades were a great comfort and strength to us in the difficult and stormy pioneer days of our movement under the Trotskyist banner.

Lore was never a Trotskyist in the political sense and never cooperated with our group after we were expelled. The first American Trotskyist was undoubtedly Max Eastman, but he had never been formally a member of the party.

On his own responsibility as an individual he published a book called *The Real Situation in Russia*, by Leon Trotsky, in 1928. But this came out about the time we were in Moscow at the Sixth Congress and I did not see it until our return. It contained the Platform of the Left Opposition in the Russian party and a number of other documents of the Left Opposition. Eastman cooperated with us and gave us quite a bit of help in the first days of our existence as an expelled group publishing *The Militant*.

\* \* \*

The Comintern decision in 1927 did not specifically provide that the Lovestoneites should have a majority in the next CEC. All the successive decisions and cables were slanted to aid that result but did not specifically provide for it. What Lovestone got from the Comintern on this occasion was the help he needed to secure a majority but not enough to enable him to exterminate or exclude the minority. Moreover, the slanted support he got was accompanied by a provision that the party must be united and peace established.

That's the sense in which Ewart, the Comintern representative, acted during his stay in this country at that time. After the Convention — and of course within the framework of its decisions — he seemed to work always for peace and moderation, and we never found any reason to complain that he was unfair. It may be assumed that he was working according to instructions but such conduct would have been natural for him. He was undoubtedly a sincere communist; my memory of him is not unfriendly.

I believe it would be correct to say that Lovestone was given conditional support from Moscow in 1927; that he was put on trial, so to speak; and that provisions were made to conserve the minority, in case the experiment did not work out to the satisfaction of Moscow. As previously stated, the American question was not decided at

the Comintern Plenum at that time at all. Everything was done afterward — formally through the American Commission, but actually in behind-the-scenes arrangements among the Russian leaders.

\* \* \*

### A Note on Zinoviev

I have long been thinking and promising to write an appreciation of Zinoviev in the form of a condensed political biography. A comrade who is thoroughly familiar with the Russian language and the history of the Russian movement has promised to collaborate with me in preparing the material.\* But I don't know when, if ever, we will get around to it. It is too big and serious an undertaking to sandwich in between other tasks.

I was greatly influenced by Zinoviev in the early days of the Comintern, as were all communists throughout the world. I have never forgotten that he was Lenin's closest collaborator in the years of reaction and during the First World War; that he was the foremost orator of the revolution, according to the testimony of Trotsky; and that he was the Chairman of the Comintern in the Lenin-Trotsky time.

It was Zinoviev's bloc with Trotsky and his expulsion, along with Trotsky, that first really shook me up and started the doubts and discontents which eventually led me to Trotskyism. I have always been outraged by the impudent pretensions of so many little people to deprecate Zinoviev, and I feel that he deserves justification before history.

I have no doubt whatever that in all his big actions, including his most terrible errors, he was motivated fundamentally by devotion to the higher interests of the working class of the whole world — to the communist future of humanity. I believe that his greatest fault as a politician was his reliance on maneuverism when principled issues were joined in such

\* This refers to John G. Wright, who had begun work on this project before his recent untimely death.

a way as to exclude the efficacy of maneuver.

I do not think Zinoviev capitulated to Stalin either out of conviction or for personal reasons, but primarily because he thought he could serve the cause by such a stratagem. He wanted himself and the other opposition leaders to live and be on hand when a change in the situation would create a new opportunity for the overthrow of Stalin and the restoration of a revolutionary leadership of the Russian party and the Comintern. In the exigencies of the political struggle it has not been convenient for the Trotskyist movement to make a full and objective evaluation of this man's life; and others have shown no interest in it. But historical justice cries out for it and it will be done sometime by somebody. In spite of all, Zinoviev deserves restoration as one of the great hero-martyrs of the revolution.

As far as I know, Zinoviev did not have any special favorites in the American party. The lasting personal memory I have of him is of his patient and friendly efforts in 1925 to convince both factions of the necessity of party peace and cooperation, summed up in his words to Foster which I have mentioned before: "Frieden ist besser." ("Peace is better.")

Yours truly,

James P. Cannon

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# Stalin

## As a Theoretician

by Leon Trotsky

### The Peasant's Balance Sheet Of the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions

"... the appearance of comrade Stalin at the conference of the Marxist agronomists — was epochal in the history of the Communist Academy. As a consequence of what Stalin said, we had to review all our plans and revise them in the direction of what Stalin said. The appearance of comrade Stalin gave a tremendous impetus to our work."

— (Pokrovsky, at the Sixteenth Party Congress)

**I**N HIS programmatic report to the conference of the Marxist agronomists (December 27, 1929), Stalin spoke at length about the "Trotsky-Zinoviev Opposition" considering "that the October revolution, as a matter of fact, did not give anything to the peasantry." It is probable that even to the respectful auditors, this invention seemed too crude. For the sake of clarity, however, we should quote these words more fully: "I have in mind," said Stalin, "the theory that the October revolution gave the peasantry *less* (?) than the February revolution, that the October revolution, as a matter of fact, gave nothing to the peasantry." The invention of this "theory" is attributed by Stalin to one of the Soviet statistical economists, Groman, a known former Menshevik, after which he adds: "But this theory was seized by the Trotsky-Zinoviev Opposition and utilized against the Party." Groman's theory regarding the February and October revolutions is quite unknown to us. But Groman is of no ac-

count here altogether. He is dragged in merely to cover up the traces.

In what way could the February revolution give the peasantry more

In his speech at the Twentieth Congress denouncing Stalin, Khrushchev, to prove Stalin's ignorance and misleadership, cited as an outstanding example the late dictator's role in agriculture. "All those who interested themselves even a little in the national situation," said Khrushchev, "saw the difficult situation in agriculture, but Stalin never even noted it. Did we tell Stalin about this? Yes, we told him, but he did not support us. Why? Because Stalin never traveled anywhere, did not meet city and collective farm workers; he did not know the actual situation in the provinces."

Nevertheless Khrushchev continued to insist on the "correctness" of Stalin's course in the 1924-1934 period when the bureaucracy was consolidating its position as a parasitic formation in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev particularly praised Stalin for his struggle against Leon Trotsky.

The following article by Trotsky, written in March 1930, is therefore of timely interest in straightening out the record cited by Khrushchev, for it was Trotsky who really "told" Stalin about "the difficult situation in agriculture," while the Khrushchevs to a man were backing Stalin in his ignorance and misleadership.

The section of Trotsky's article published in this issue of the *International Socialist Review* first appeared in English in *The Militant* of Sept. 15 and Oct. 1, 1930. The article will be concluded in our next issue.

than the October? What did the February revolution give the peasant in general, with the exception of the superficial and therefore absolutely uncertain liquidation of the monarchy? The bureaucratic apparatus remained what it was. The land was not given to the peasant by the February revolution. But it did give him a continuation of the war and the certainty of a continued growth of inflation. Perhaps Stalin knows of some other gifts of the February revolution to the peasant? To us, they are unknown. The reason why the February revolution had to give way to the October is because it completely deceived the peasant.

The alleged theory of the Opposition on the advantages of the February revolution over the October is connected by Stalin with the theory "regarding the so-called scissors." By this he completely betrays the sources and aims of his chicanery. Stalin polemicalizes, as I will soon show, against me. Only for the convenience of his operations, for camouflaging his cruder distortions, he hides behind Groman and the anonymous "Trotsky-Zinoviev Opposition" in general.

The real essence of the question lies in the following. At the 12th Congress of the Party (in the spring of 1923) I demonstrated for the first time the threatening gap between industrial and agricultural prices. In my report, this phenomenon was for the first time called the "price scissors." I warned that the continual lagging of industry would spread apart this scissors and that they might sever the threads connecting the proletariat and the peasantry.

In February, 1927, at the Plenum of the Central Committee, while considering the question of the policy on prices, I attempted for the one thousand and first time to prove that general phrases like "the face to the village" merely avoided the essence of the

matter, and that from the standpoint of the "smytchka" (alliance) with the peasant, the problem can be solved fundamentally by correlating the prices of agricultural and industrial products. The trouble with the peasant is that it is difficult for him to see far ahead. But he sees very well what is under his feet, he distinctly remembers the yesterdays, and he can draw the balance under his exchange of products with the city, which, at any given moment, is the balance sheet of the revolution to him.

### The Pluses and Minuses

The expropriation of the landowners liberated the peasant from the payment of a sum amounting to from five to six hundred million rubles (about \$275,000,000 — Ed.). This is a clear and irrefutable gain for the peasantry through the October — and not the February — revolution.

But alongside of this tremendous plus, the peasant distinctly discerns the minus which this same October revolution has brought him. This minus consists of the excessive rise in prices of industrial products as compared with those prevailing before the war. It is understood that if in Russia capitalism had maintained itself the price scissors would undoubtedly have existed — this is an international phenomenon. But in the first place, the peasant does not know this. And in the second, nowhere did this scissors spread to the extent that it did in the Soviet Union. The great losses of the peasantry due to prices are of a temporary nature, reflecting the period of "primitive accumulation" of state industry. It is as though the proletarian state borrows from the peasantry in order to repay him a hundredfold later on.

But all this relates to the sphere of theoretical considerations and historical predictions. The thoughts of the peasant, however, are empirical and based on facts as they appear at the moment. "The October revolution

liberated me from the payment of half a billion rubles in land rents," reflects the peasant. "I am thankful to the *Bolsheviks*. But state industry takes away from me much more than the capitalists took. Here is where there is something wrong with the *Communists*." In other words, the peasant draws the balance sheet of the October revolution through combining its two fundamental stages: the agrarian-democratic ("Bolshevik") and the industrial-socialist ("Communist"). According to the first, a distinct and incontestable plus; according to the second, so far still a distinct minus, and *to date* a minus considerably greater than the plus. The passive balance of the October revolution, which is the basis of all the misunderstandings between the peasant and the Soviet power, is in turn most intimately bound up with the isolated position of the Soviet Union in world economy.

Almost three years after the old disputes, Stalin, to his misfortune, returns to the question. Because he is fated to repeat what others have left behind them, and at the same time to be anxious about his own "independence," he is *compelled* to look back apprehensively at the yesterday of the "Trotskyist Opposition" and... cover up the traces. At the time the "scissors" between the city and the village was first spoken of, Stalin completely failed to understand it; for five years (1923-28) he saw the danger in industry going too far ahead instead of lagging behind; in order to cover it up somehow, he mumbles something incoherent in his report about "bourgeois prejudices (!!!) regarding the so-called scissors." Why is this a prejudice? Wherein is it bourgeois? But Stalin is under no obligation to answer these questions, for there is nobody who would dare ask them.

If the February revolution had given land to the peasantry, the October revolution with its price scissors could not have maintained itself for two years. To put

it more correctly: the October revolution could not have taken place if the February revolution had been capable of solving the basic, agrarian-democratic problems by liquidating private ownership of land.

We indirectly recalled above that in the first years after the October revolution the peasant obstinately endeavored to contrast the Communists to the Bolsheviks. The latter he approved of — precisely because they made the land revolution with a determination never before known. But the same peasant was dissatisfied with the Communists, who, having taken into their own hands the factories and mills, supplied commodities at high prices. In other words, the peasant very resolutely approved of the agrarian revolution of the Bolsheviks but manifested alarm, doubt, and sometimes even open hostility towards the first steps of the socialist revolution. Very soon, however, the peasant had to understand that Bolshevik and Communist are one and the same Party.

### The 1927 Debate

In February, 1927, this question was raised by me at the Plenum of the Central Committee in the following manner:

The liquidation of the landowners opened up large credits for us with the peasants, political as well as economic. But these credits are not permanent and are not inexhaustible. The question is decided by the correlation of prices. Only the acceleration of industrialization on the one hand, and the collectivization of peasant economy on the other, can produce a more favorable correlation of prices for the village. Should the contrary be the case, the advantages of the agrarian revolution will be entirely concentrated in the hands of the Kulak, and the scissors will hurt the peasant poor most painfully. The differentiation in the middle peasantry will be accelerated. There can be but one result. The crumbling of the

dictatorship of the proletariat. "This year," I said, "only eight billion rubles worth of commodities (in retail prices) will be released for the domestic market. . . the village will pay for its smaller half of the commodities about four billion rubles. Let us accept the retail industrial index as twice the pre-war prices figure, as Mikoyan has reported. . . . The balance (drawn by the peasant): 'The agrarian - democratic revolution brought me, aside from everything else, five hundred million rubles a year (the liquidation of rents and the lowering of taxes). The socialist revolution has more than covered this profit by a two billion ruble deficit. It is clear, that the balance is reduced to a deficit of one and a half billion.'"

Nobody objected by as much as a word at this session, but Yakovlev, the present People's Commissar of Agriculture, though at that time only a clerk for special statistical assignments, was given the job of upsetting my calculations at all costs. Yakovlev did all he could. With all the legitimate and illegitimate corrections and qualifications, Yakovlev was compelled the following day to admit that the balance sheet of the October revolution for the village is, on the whole, still reduced to a minus. Let us once more produce an actual quotation:

" . . . The gain from a reduction of direct taxes compared with the pre-war days is equal to approximately 630,000,000 rubles. . . . In the last year the peasantry lost around a billion rubles as a consequence of its purchase of manufactured commodities not according to the index of the peasant income but according to the retail index of these commodities. The unfavorable balance is equal to about 400,000,000 rubles."

It is clear that Yakovlev's calculations essentially confirmed my opinion: The peasant realized a big profit through the democratic revolution made by the Bolsheviks but *so far* he suffers a loss which far exceeds the profit. I estimated

the passive balance at a billion and a half. Yakovlev—at less than a half billion. I still consider that my figure, which made no pretension to precision, was closer to reality than Yakovlev's. The difference between the two figures is in itself very considerable. But it does not change my basic conclusion. The acuteness of the grain collecting difficulties was a confirmation of my calculations as the more disquieting ones. It is really absurd to think that the grain strike of the upper layers of the villages was caused by purely political motives, that is, by the hostility of the Kulak towards the Soviet power. The Kulak is incapable of such "idealism." If he did not furnish the grain for sale, it was because the exchange became disadvantageous as a result of the price scissors. That is why the Kulak succeeded in bringing into the orbit of his influence the middle peasant as well.

These calculations have a rough, so to speak inclusive, character. The component parts of the balance sheet can and should be separated in relation to the three basic sections of the peasantry: the Kulaks, the middle peasants and the poor peasants. However, in that period—the beginning of 1927—the official statistics, inspired by Yakovlev, ignored or deliberately minimized the differentiation in the village, and the policy of Stalin-Rykov-Bukharin was directed towards protecting the "powerful" peasant and fighting against the "shiftless" poor peasant. In this way, the passive balance was especially onerous upon the lower sections of the peasantry in the village.

### The Two Revolutions

Nevertheless, where did Stalin get his contrasting of the February and October revolutions, the reader will ask. It is a legitimate question. The contrast I made between the agrarian-democratic and industrial-socialist revolutions, Stalin, who is absolutely incapable of theoretical, that is, of

abstract thought, vaguely understood in his own fashion: He simply decided that the democratic revolution—means the February revolution.

Here we must pause, because Stalin's and his colleagues' old, traditional failure to understand the mutual relations between the democratic and socialist revolutions, which lies at the basis of their whole struggle against the theory of the permanent revolution, has already succeeded in doing great damage, particularly in China and India, and remains a source of fatal errors to this day. The February 1917 revolution was greeted by Stalin essentially as a Left democrat, and not as a revolutionary proletarian internationalist. He showed this vividly by his whole conduct up to the time Lenin arrived. The February revolution to Stalin was and, as we see, still remains a "democratic" revolution par excellence. He stood for the support of the first Provisional Government which was headed by the national liberal landowner, Prince Lvov, had as its War Minister the national conservative manufacturer, Gutchkov, and the liberal, Miliukov, as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Formulating the necessity of supporting the bourgeois landowning Provisional Government, at a Party conference, March 29, 1917, Stalin declared: "The power has been divided between two organs, not one of which has the complete mastery. The roles *have been divided*. The Soviet has actually taken the *initiative* in revolutionary transformations; the Soviet—is the revolutionary leader of the rebellious people, the organ which *builds up* the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government has actually taken the role of the *consolidator* of the conquests of the revolutionary people. . . . Insofar as the Provisional Government consolidates the advances of the revolution—to that extent we should support it."

The "February" bourgeois, landowning and thoroughly counter-

revolutionary government was for Stalin not a class enemy but a collaborator with whom a division of labor had to be established. The workers and peasants would make the "conquests," the bourgeoisie would "consolidate" them. All of them together would make up the "democratic revolution." The formula of the Mensheviks was at the same time also the formula of Stalin. All this was spoken of by Stalin a month after the February revolution when the character of the Provisional Government should have been clear even to a blind man, no longer on the basis of Marxist foresight but on the basis of political experience.

As the whole further course of events demonstrated, Lenin in 1917 did not really convince Stalin but elbowed him aside. The whole future struggle of Stalin against the permanent revolution was constructed upon the mechanical separation of the democratic revolution and socialist construction. Stalin has not yet understood that the *October revolution was first a democratic revolution*, and that only because of this was it able to realize the dictatorship of the proletariat. The balance between the democratic and socialist conquests of the October revolution which I drew was simply adapted by Stalin to his own conception. After this, he puts the question: "Is it true that the peasants did not get anything out of the October revolution?" And after saying that "thanks to the October revolution the peasants were liberated from the oppression of the landowners" (this was never heard of before, you see!) Stalin concludes that: "How can it be said after this that the October revolution did not give anything to the peasants?"

How can it be said after this — we ask — that this "theoretician" has even a grain of theoretical consciousness?

The above-mentioned unfavorable balance of the October revolution for the village is, of course,

temporary and transitory. The principal significance of the October revolution for the peasant lies in the fact that it created the pre-conditions for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture. But this—is a matter of the future. In 1927, collectivization was still completely tabooed. So far as "complete" collectivization is concerned, nobody even thought of it. Stalin, however, includes it in his considerations after the fact. "Now, after the intensified development of the collectivization movement" — our theoretician transplants into the past what lies ahead in the future — "the peasants are able ... to produce a lot more than before with the same expenditure of labor." And after this, once more: "How can one say, after all this (!) that the October revolution did not bring any gain to the peasant? Is it not clear that people saying such nonsense are obviously telling lies about the Party and the Soviet power?" The reference to "nonsense" and "lies" is quite in place here, as may be seen. Yes, some people "are obviously telling lies about the nology and common sense.

Stalin, as we see, makes his "nonsense" more profound by depicting matters as if the Opposition not only exaggerated the February revolution at the expense of the October, but even for the future refused the latter the capacity for improving the conditions of the peasant. For what fools, may we ask, is this intended? We beg the pardon of the honorable professor Pokrovsky!...

### The Aim of the Opposition

Incessantly advancing, since 1923, the problem of the economic scissors of the city and village, the Opposition pursued a quite definite aim, *now* incontestable by anyone: To compel the bureaucracy to understand that the struggle against the danger of disunity can be conducted not with sugary slogans like "Face to the village," etc., but through: (a) faster tempo

of industrial development; and (b) energetic collectivization of peasant economy. In other words, the problem of the scissors, as well as the problem of the peasants' balance of the October revolution, was advanced by us not in order to "discredit" the October revolution — what is the very "terminology" worth! — but in order to compel the self-contented and conservative bureaucracy by the whip of the Opposition to utilize those immeasurable economic possibilities which the October revolution opened up to the country.

To the official Kulak-bureaucratic course of 1923-1928, which had its expression in the everyday legislative and administrative work, in the new theory, and above all, in the persecution of the Opposition, the latter opposed, from 1923 on, a course towards an accelerated industrialization, and from 1927 on, after the first successes of industry, the mechanization and collectivization of agriculture.

Let us once more recall that the Opposition platform which Stalin conceals, but from which he fetches in bits all of his wisdom, declares: "The growth of private proprietorship in the village must be offset by a more rapid development of collective farming. It is necessary systematically and from year to year to subsidize the efforts of the poor peasants to organize in collectives." (*Real Situation in Russia*, p. 68.) "A much larger sum ought to be appropriated for the creation of Soviet and collective farms. Maximum indulgences must be accorded to the newly organized collective farms and other forms of collectivization. People deprived of elective rights cannot be members of the collective estates. The whole work of the cooperatives ought to be penetrated with a sense of the problem of transforming small-scale production into large-scale collective production. The work of land distribution must be carried on wholly at the expense of the state, and the first thing to be

taken care of must be the collective farms and the farms of the poor, with a maximum protection of their interests." (Ibid, p. 71.)

If the bureaucracy had not vacillated under the pressure of the petty bourgeoisie, but had executed the program of the Opposition since 1923, not only the proletarian but also the peasant balance of the revolution would be of an infinitely more favorable nature.

### The Problem of the "Scissors"

The problem of the "smytchka" (alliance) is the problem of the mutual relations between city and village. It is composed of two parts, or, more correctly, can be regarded from two angles: (a) the mutual relationship between industry and agriculture; (b) the mutual relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry. On the basis of the market, these relations, assuming the form of commodity exchange, find their expression in the price movement. The harmony between the prices of bread, cotton, beets and so forth on the one hand and calico, kerosene, plows and so forth on the other hand, is the *decisive index* for evaluating the mutual relations between the city and the village, of industry and agriculture, between workers and peasants. The problem of the "scissors" of industrial and agricultural prices therefore remains, for the present period as well, the most important economic and social problem of the whole Soviet system. Now how did the price scissors change between the last two Congresses, that is, in the last two and a half years? Did they close, or, on the contrary, did they widen?

We look in vain for a reply to this central question in the ten-hour report of Stalin to the Congress. Presenting piles of departmental figures, making a bureaucratic reference book out of the principal report, Stalin did not even attempt a Marxist generalization of the isolated and, by him, thoroughly undigested data given to him by the commissariats, secretariats and other offices.

Are the scissors of industrial and agricultural prices closing? In other words, is the balance of the socialist revolution, as yet passive for the peasant, being reduced? In the market conditions — and we have not yet liberated ourselves from them, and will not for a long time to come — the closing or widening of the scissors is of decisive significance for an evaluation of the successes accomplished and for checking up on the correctness or incorrectness of economic plans and methods. That there is not a word about it in Stalin's report is of itself an extremely alarming fact. Were the scissors closing, there would be plenty of specialists in Mikoyan's department who would, without difficulty, give this process statistical and graphic expression. Stalin would only have to demonstrate the diagram, that is, show the Congress a scissors which would prove that the blades are closing. The whole economic section of the report would find its axis, but unfortunately this axis is not there. Stalin avoided the problem of the scissors.

The domestic scissors is not the final index. There is another, a "higher" one: the scissors of domestic and international prices. They measure the productivity of labor in Soviet economy with the productivity of labor in the world capitalist market. We received from the past, in this sphere as well as in others, an enormous heritage of backwardness. In practice, the task for the next few years is not immediately to "catch up with and outstrip" — we are unfortunately still very far from this! — but planfully to close the scissors between domestic and world prices, which can be accomplished only through systematically approximating the labor productivity in the USSR to the labor productivity in the advanced capitalist countries. This in turn requires not statistically minimum but economically favorable plans. The oftener the bureaucrats repeat the bold formula "to catch up with

and outstrip," the more stubbornly they ignore exact comparative coefficients of socialist and capitalist industry or, in other words, the problem of the scissors of domestic and world prices. And on this question also not a word is to be found in Stalin's report. The problem of the domestic scissors could have been considered liquidated only under the conditions of the actual liquidation of the market. The problem of the foreign scissors — with the liquidation of world capitalism. Stalin, as we know, was preparing, at the time of his agricultural report, to send the NEP "to the devil." But he changed his mind within the six months that elapsed. As is always the case with him, his unaccomplished intention to liquidate the NEP is attributed by him in his report to the Congress to the "Trotskyists." The white and yellow threads of this operation are so indiscreetly exposed that the report of this part of the speech does not dare to record the slightest applause.

What happened to Stalin with regard to the market and the NEP is what usually happens to empiricists. The sharp turn that took place in his own mind under the influence of external pressure, he took for a radical change in the whole situation. Once the bureaucracy decided to enter into a final conflict with the market and the Kulak instead of its passive adaptation to them, then statistics and economy could consider them non-existent. Empiricism is most frequently the pre-condition for subjectivism, and if it is bureaucratic empiricism, it inevitably becomes the pre-condition for periodic "turns." The art of the "general" leadership consists in this case of converting the turns into smaller turns and distributing them equally among the helots called executors. If, at the end, the general turn is attributed to "Trotskyism," then the problem is settled. But this is not the point. The essence of the NEP, regardless of the sharp change in the



"essence" of Stalin's thoughts about it, lies as before in the determination by the market of the economic inter-relationships between the city and village. If the NEP remains, then the scissors of agricultural and industrial prices remain the most important criterion of the whole economic policy.

### A "Bourgeois Prejudice"

However, half a year before the Congress we heard Stalin call the theory of the scissors a "bourgeois prejudice." This is the simplest way out of the situation. If you tell a village quack that the temperature curve is one of the most important indices to the health or illness of an organism, he will hardly believe you. But if he grasps some sage words and, to make matters worse, learns to present his quackery as "proletarian medicine," he will most certainly say that a thermometer is a bourgeois prejudice. If this quack has power in his hands he will, to avoid a scandal, smash the thermometer over a stone or, what is still worse, over somebody's head.

In 1925, the differentiation

within the Soviet peasantry was declared to be a prejudice of panic-mongers. Yakovlev was sent to the central statistical department, from which he took away all the Marxist thermometers to be destroyed. But, unfortunately, the changes in temperature do not cease when there are no thermometers. But for that, the appearance of hidden organic processes takes the healers and those being healed unawares. This is what happened in the grain strike of the Kulak, who unexpectedly appeared as the leading figure in the village and compelled Stalin, on February 15, 1928 (see *Pravda* of that date), to make a turn of 180 degrees. The price thermometer is of no less significance than the thermometer of differentiation within the peasantry.

After the Twelfth Party Congress, where the term "scissors" was first used and explained, everybody began to understand its significance. In the three years that followed, the scissors were invariably demonstrated at the Plenums of the Central Committee, at Conferences and Congresses, as precisely the basic curve of the

economic temperature of the country. But afterwards, they gradually began to disappear from usage, and finally, at the end of 1929, Stalin declared them to be . . . "a bourgeois prejudice." Because the thermometer was smashed in time, Stalin had no reason to present the Sixteenth Congress of the Party with the curve of economic temperature.

Marxist theory is the weapon of thought serving to clarify what has been, what is becoming, and what lies ahead, and for the determination of what is to be done. Stalin's theory is the servant of the bureaucracy. It serves to justify zigzags after the event, to conceal yesterday's mistakes and consequently to prepare tomorrow's. The silence over the scissors occupies the central place in Stalin's report. This may appear paradoxical, because silence is an empty place. But it is nevertheless a fact: in the center of Stalin's report is a hole, consciously and premeditatedly bored.

Awaken, so that no harm shall come to the dictatorship out of this hole!

(To be continued)

## ... Feuerbach

(Continued from page 126)

that nature alone is that kind of being to which it is impossible to apply any human measure. Although we do compare natural events with similar human events, although we apply to nature human expressions and concepts such as "order," "purpose," "law," and are compelled to apply such expressions to nature because of our language, we do so only to make nature comprehensible to us.

"What does this mean? Do I mean to say by this that in nature there is no order, to say, for example, that after fall summer may follow, after spring, winter, after winter, fall? Or that there is no purpose in nature, to say that between the lungs and air, for example, or between light and the eye, between sound and the ear there is no concordance? Or that there is no regularity in nature, to say, for example, that the earth may move now in an ellipse, now in a circle, and move around the sun, at one period in a year, at another — in a quarter of an hour? What an absurdity! What then did I intend to con-

vey in this passage? Nothing more than to draw a distinction between that which belongs to nature and that which belongs to man.

"In this passage I do not say that there is nothing in nature which actually corresponds to our words and representations concerning order, purpose and law; all that is denied in this passage is the identity between thought and being; it is denied that order and so forth allegedly exist in nature exactly as they do in the head or sensations of man. Order, purpose, law are no more than words by means of which man translates nature's doings into his own language, so that he may understand them; these words are not devoid of sense or objective content, but it is nonetheless necessary to differentiate the original from the translation. In the human sense, order, purpose, law express something arbitrary. From the contingency of order, purpose and law in nature, theism directly infers their arbitrary origin; it infers the existence of a being, different from nature, a being which brings order, purpose and law into nature, nature which is itself chaotic and without any determination. The 'reason' of

theists. . . is a reason which stands in contradiction to nature and is absolutely devoid of an understanding of the essence of nature. The reason of theists splits nature into two beings — the one, material; the other — formal or spiritual." (Quoted by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, pages 124-25.)

Feuerbach thus recognized objective causality in nature which is mirrored only with approximate accuracy by the human representations of order, law and so forth. Human representations of nature are relative, but on the basis of these relative representations mankind gains knowledge of the objective lawfulness in nature. This recognition of objective causality is with Feuerbach inseparably connected with the recognition of the objective existence of the outer world of objects, bodies and things which human consciousness mirrors. His views on this question, as Lenin pointed

out, are thus consistently materialist.

Frederick Engels wrote: "One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book (Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*) to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."

What liberated the young Marx and the young Engels? What made them so enthusiastic? They knew, as was said long ago, that without revolutionary theory there cannot be revolutionary practice. Marx and Engels were at the time trying to draw revolutionary conclu-

sions from the Hegelian system and found themselves floundering in the self-contradiction of idealism. Feuerbach, as Engels put it, "pulverized this contradiction at one blow" and enthroned materialism again in philosophy. This paved the way, as we shall see in our next article, for the elaboration of a correct line in sociology, in politics and economics. It enabled our great teachers to go beyond Feuerbach and to elaborate the scientific doctrine for socialism.

Today, when the fate of mankind sways in the balance, it is clearer than ever before that sal-

vation for the workers lies only in revolutionary practice, in the struggle for socialism. For this, revolutionary theory is indispensable as the guide for action.

This struggle proceeds on three fronts — the economic, political and theoretical. Not three separate arenas, walled off from one another, but three interrelated fronts of one and the same struggle. The correct line is of supreme importance in all three. In the main, Feuerbach laid down the correct line in philosophy. Therein lies his historic achievement. Therein, too, lies our indebtedness to him.

## ... Case for Socialism

(Continued from page 122)

standards: but it is necessary to generate anew — and especially among our youth — the understanding that Socialism is not to be measured in living standards alone, but in new social relations, new values and opportunities, a new, more generous, more just, and less selfish way of life. We should recall more often the words of Maxim Gorky:

It is well known that a characteristic and inherent peculiarity of bourgeois society lies in the fact that the overwhelming majority of its members must expend all their energy in obtaining the most primitive necessities of life. People have become used to this accursed and humiliating "peculiarity" of their existence and although it drives them to concentrate on themselves and think only of themselves, only a very few understand the monstrous nature of such a social order.

It has been this clear conception of a new society which has given inspiration and staying-power to Socialists and Communists in earlier years. It is the violation of important aspects of this vision which — half-suspected, half-understood — has blurred the vigor of our imaginative appeal in recent years: and which, now fully known but still imperfectly explained, has caused some Communists to stop dead in their tracks.

We have no ready-made solutions to this problem which events have forced upon us. We claim only that the problem must be faced: and there must be discussion. The result of this discussion, we hope, will be the liberation of great political energies, the re-emergence of Socialist principle with a new vigor in Britain.

A reader from Colchester gives us encouragement:

As for "unity," is there no one sufficiently Marxist to ask "Unity for what?" Unity for unity's sake seems as uninspiring a slogan as it is sterile. I think the unity of conscious and informed purpose in the struggle for socialism and communism is the only unity worth having, and that can only be promoted by such important and basic debate as I see in *The Reasoner*.

We think he is right. Clearly, he — and all readers — know the urgent need for common unity in action of all possible sections in immediate struggles against the Tory Government, around Suez, in the coming industrial battles.

But this is not the same as questions of organizational and political unity of Socialists. This can come only through open discussion, in good faith. It will not come by slurring over past or present disagreements.

The crisis of British imperialism is real enough now, and laid open before all eyes: its repercussions upon British industry may

soon provoke a rapid sharpening of political consciousness among the British working class: the abatement of the Cold War has given us a brief breathing-space. The seriousness of immediate, and impending, political and industrial issues makes it *more*, and not less, urgent that we get the equipment of our Socialist theory sharp and into good order. The gathering threat to British living standards makes it *more*, rather than less, urgent that we should contest all propaganda which seeks to fool the British people into the belief that there is any long-term solution to their problems, within the framework of monopoly capitalism. If the mock battles of Gaitskell on the one hand, and "the Stalin business" on the other, have brought the ideals of Socialism into discredit with sections of our working people, it becomes our first duty to reassert them in their full truth and power.

The unity required is that of the gathering of Socialist forces, the renewal of Socialist understanding, for the final assault upon British imperialism itself. Such an assault can only be carried by those who, like Cromwell's soldiers, "know what they fight for, and love what they know." It is our hope that *The Reasoner* will strengthen their number.



# An Old China Hand Tells His Story

By John Liang

Behind the Bamboo Curtain, by A. M. Dunlap, M.D. Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C. 1956. \$3.75.

The author of this collection of letters, written from Shanghai between April 1949 and October 1952, and published with fill-in notes, is one of that vanishing tribe known as Old China Hands. These were men who went out to China in their youth and spent the best years of their lives building their personal fortunes. Those who failed to get out in time, or, having gotten out, failed to stay out, had the disconcerting experience of seeing their life's accumulations consumed in the flames of revolution.

History has attested more than once that a social revolution is highly discommoding to the propertied classes that find themselves dethroned. The Old China Hands may properly be considered a part of the old Chinese ruling classes — the capitalists, the comprador-bankers, the landlords — whose supremacy was ended by the revolution. They lived in a close community of interests with their Chinese class partners, engaging with them in a common system of exploitation, under the monarchy as under the republic.

It is perhaps natural, then, that Dr. Dunlap's letters should alternate in their tone between pained protest and animosity against the revolution. For the good doctor had been living well in Shanghai, though surrounded by a sea of native misery. He had also acquired some fine pieces of real estate in the "best" residential area of the city. The revolution not only disrupted his personal life. It made of his property a financial burden where formerly it had

been very profitable. Finally, he had to abandon it when he returned to this country for good.

Dr. Dunlap was born in Savoy, Illinois, in 1884 and went to China in 1911 to head the department of eye, ear, nose and throat diseases at the Harvard Medical School of China in Shanghai. He continued in that post until 1916 and in 1918 was made head of the ear, nose and throat department of Peking Union Medical College, an institution financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. He remained there until 1931 and then returned to Shanghai to enter private practice and to head the ear, nose and throat department at the medical school of St. John's University, an American missionary institution. Caught in Shanghai by the Pacific war, Dr. Dunlap was repatriated to this country in 1943. When the war was over, he returned to Shanghai to resume his practice and do some medical teaching.

The Old China Hands who flocked back to Shanghai at the war's end figured that, with the Japanese army out, the good old days would return. They were going back, they thought or hoped, to enjoy for the rest of their days their nice homes, their servants, the club life, the night spots, the cocktail and bridge parties. For a brief three years they did enjoy the good life again, despite the runaway inflation that marked the death agony of the Kuomintang regime. Then the towering wave of the revolution, rolling down from the north, engulfed them. The war proved to be more than just an unpleasant interlude. As so often in history, it was the precursor of a gigantic social overturn.

With his world collapsing around him, Dr. Dunlap seems to have displayed a quite remarkable equanimity. As the Red Army was occupying Shanghai in May 1949, he wrote his friends over here: "My one concern is, will it (the weather) clear sufficiently to permit golf out at St. John's tomorrow."

But the stern visage of the revolution is now on the scene and the next day the good doctor reports that "some two thousand Communist soldiers were in the dormitories of the University, but behaving themselves." (The lower orders, you see, are not expected to "behave" themselves.) China's leading city fell to the revolution, not in the classic manner, through an uprising of the population against the old regime, but through military occupation. Chiang's reluctant troops simply fled and the Red soldiers took over. There was a little desultory gunfire but no fighting and consequently no destruction.

Because of this, at the beginning the foreigners experienced little disturbance of their lives and, with their Chinese friends, lived hopefully. They

seemed to nurse the strange belief that when the dust of revolution settled, life would flow back into the normal, familiar channels. For this illusion they are hardly to be blamed. Hadn't Mao Tse-tung proclaimed a "new capitalism" and protection of private property as the program of the revolution? Really, it would have been nice to just get rid of the old, inept and corrupt regime of Chiang Kai-shek and stop there. However, the Chinese masses didn't destroy the old regime just to accommodate Dr. Dunlap and his friends. They took the road of revolution in order to effect a drastic transformation of class relations, in order to remold society for the benefit of the millions.

Trotsky remarked on the magnanimity shown by the proletarian revolution toward its class enemies. The Chinese revolution repeated, at least in Shanghai, the Russian October. On September 21, 1951, more than two years after the turnover of the city, Dr. Dunlap was able to write: "While there is always the possibility of dire things happening, I think with very few exceptions every foreigner here lives a fairly normal life. There seems to be a consciousness of some restraining hand which will prevent things from going too far."

From the general context, it appears that the restraining hand to which the doctor refers was being exercised over the workers and the local authorities by the central power in Peking. The Shanghai workers were a factor of which the doctor seems to have been very much aware from the beginning of the revolutionary events, but his occasional and fragmentary references give us only hints as to the activity of the Shanghai proletariat during the early period of the new regime.

It is July 8, 1949, two months after the overturn and the good doctor writes: "It is not that labor is starving, but they are all out to get all they can during the turnover." Next day's letter contains a complaint of "growing demands by labor." The day after that he reports: "It is felt that few effective measures are being instituted to bring labor under control and that anything can happen." All of this indicates a great stirring of the Shanghai workers, but Dr. Dunlap vouchsafes us no detailed information and we hear nothing more on the subject until he relates his dealings with a labor union and the labor bureau when closing out his Shanghai office in 1952, preparatory to his departure for the United States.

Long before that, the physiognomy of the new order was beginning to take shape. Thus, in a letter dated December 29, 1951, Dr. Dunlap writes: "A German business man was just in as a patient and when I asked him how

his business was, he said that they were doing nothing and he saw no possibility for the future. Government-owned organizations including wholesale and retail establishments are driving all others from the field. It is probable that this period will see many shops closing. A most unhappy people!"

In a following note, the writer quotes "one who was familiar with the Communists' schedule for reorganizing all China" as saying that the "attack on private enterprise was not supposed to come until at least ten years after they had gained control of the country. It was his belief that the schedule had been revised due to the Government's need for solid money to prosecute the war in Korea." More probably, the main factor hastening the squeeze on capitalist enterprise was pressure from below by the masses who couldn't possibly be satisfied by Mao's anemic program of reform. The needs created by the Korean war and the imperialist blockade were doubtless added and important factors determining the tempo of development under the new regime.

In the good old days, as this reviewer can testify from personal recollection, about the only praise of the Chinese you could get out of an Old China Hand was that they made excellent servants. Alas, under the new conditions these excellent servitors became quite uppity and talked back to their lordly foreign masters with a representative of their union (something unknown in the halcyon days of the Kuomintang) at their elbow. What hurt Dr. Dunlap most was the "ingratitude" of his employes, to whom, for long years, he had extended the privilege of working for him for the most miserly wages. Now, suddenly, the employes feel themselves to be the top dogs. Gone is the old servility. Dr. Dunlap relates the sad experience of Sir Robert Calder-Marshall, wealthy British businessman and chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce: "Sir R. has just been in to say good-bye, expecting to leave by boat on Saturday or Sunday. It has been most difficult closing out his affairs and it has come finally to his virtually giving his firm over to his former staff. In fact, they consider that it belongs to them."

If anyone at this late date is still inclined to doubt that what occurred in China was a social revolution, a class overturn, let him consider these additional mournful passages from Dr. Dunlap's letters.

May 8, 1952: "Our big job[he is referring to the closing out of his office] will be to satisfy the people of the staff who have become too big for their pants. If you try, I don't think you can realize how much pres-

sure the so-called laborer can put on one, especially if he is a foreigner."

June 5, 1952: "One has to see and hear at first hand this sort of thing before one can believe it. One can understand how and why one's staff will hang on for dear life when there is nothing ahead, but disloyalty of those one has employed for years is hard to take." (Disloyalty seems to have been insistence on ample severance pay.)

July 1, 1952: "One does not enjoy being asked by his office boy if he is 'keeping the law.'"

July 14, 1952: "The ignominy of sitting on a hard bench (in the Labor Bureau) and being interrogated by one who probably at one time was someone's houseboy is sometimes hard to take but it must be taken with a calm exterior, otherwise one gets nowhere."

Grudgingly, Dr. Dunlap concedes that the new regime began tackling social problems for which no attempt at a solution had ever been made by the Chiang Kai-shek gang or their foreign imperialist partners. Thus "the authorities went all out not only to provide medical care for the people but public health matters were pushed as well. Perhaps never in the history of the city were the inhabitants so completely immunized against smallpox, cholera, diphtheria and typhoid. In addition, the health authorities attempted to wipe out prostitution. Almost immediately after 'liberation' the long lines of amahs, who frequented certain areas, each with her gaily dressed and painted prostitute by her side, virtually disappeared overnight. All prostitutes were finally to be given jobs in factories."

The Dunlap book, limited as it is by a narrow subjectivism, has an obvious value, for we can learn about a revolution from its opponents as well as from its partisans. Dr. Dunlap is an opponent of social change, an enemy of the Chinese revolution. But, refracted through his animosities and discontents, we can get some significant glimpses of the greatest revolution since the Russian October and of the New China which it brought to birth.

## Militarism And Civil Liberties

by David Miller

The Civilian and the Military, by Arthur A. Ekirch. Oxford University Press, New York. 1956. 339 pp. \$6.50.

It is Mr. Ekirch's thesis that, contrary to the traditional conception of the evolution of American democracy, we have actually been witnessing, since 1776, a gradual but steady deterioration of personal liberty in the United States.

And this is true, in his view, despite the unquestioned broadening of formal political democracy during the same period.

The present volume is a documentation of this thesis by way of a thorough, even elaborate, history of militarism and anti-militarism in the U.S.

From the very start of our history there was no fooling the American citizen about the true nature of this debate. In the persistent struggle around "standing army vs. militia," Madison argued bitterly against a standing army and the inevitable officer caste as precursors of despotism! The widespread hostility to the reactionary Society of Cincinnati was grounded in a sophistication born of revolutionary experience.

Similarly, with the utmost care Ekirch reveals how clearly American democrats have always recognized the sham use of "preparedness" and other defensive slogans as excuses to press for military appropriations in preparation for aggressive war. The huge "defense" expenditures urged upon Congress by Alexander Hamilton, who hoped for a war against the French Revolution in the 1790's, find their direct successors today in "defense appropriations" aimed against modern revolutions. Similar cries for defensive armament were raised by the War Hawks prior to the aggressive War of 1812; in 1848, before the war against Mexico; and again just prior to the Spanish-American War.

After World War I, Wilson and his Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, leaders of the interventionist wing of U.S. capitalism, pushed naval construction to a point greater than that of Japan and England combined — and this in a period when Japan alone tripled her naval forces. In 1935 Roosevelt, in the name of "defense," again instituted a naval program greater than that of Japan and England combined.

It was the ingrained American hostility to and suspicion of a standing army that was responsible for the constitutional provision guaranteeing the right to bear arms, just as it sparked the ardent, long-successful emphasis on a voluntary state militia as the democratic alternative to a standing army. In fact it was not until 1903 that the federal government gained substantial control over the state militias. Until World War I, all wars, including the Civil War, were fought for the most part by individual volunteers and members of state militias. (States could and did withhold troops if they were ill-disposed to the military operation, as was the case in 1812 and 1848.)

Nor was awareness lacking among our ancestors of that primary use of armies — intervention in the domestic

class struggle. In fact, this was probably the most important single source of opposition to a standing army in the early days, bearing in mind the popular Shay's and Whiskey rebellions. That both the poor farmers and the urban-planter coalition were conscious of the class character of the army is more than amply documented.

Ekirch also demonstrates that from their earliest manifestations, in 1828, the political and economic labor move-

ments were vigorous and articulate opponents of militarist proposals for the draft or other service, and opposed defense budgets, state or federal. Not until 1916 did they surrender their hitherto implacable opposition, when Gompers came out for Wilson's "preparedness."

Today, in the author's view, the decline in individual liberty due to the mounting role of the army in society (to mention only one area), is proceeding at a vastly accelerated tempo.

The new role of the United States as aspirant to total world power, the permanent war economy, the consequent increase in persecution of radicals and antimilitarists, are all of a piece to him.

Ekirch's scrupulous scholarship, his determined effort to view American history within the framework of a meaningful, naturalistic pattern, command attention in a period such as ours, so rich, above all else, in pure apologetics.

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