

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

No. 9

October, 1951

CONTENTS

RESOLUTION ON THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE BUFFER STATES

Submitted by Esther Patrick, Sam Ryan, Dennis Vern,
Izzy London - Los Angeles

Published by the
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
116 University Place
New York 3, N.Y.

15¢

The following resolution submitted by several Los Angeles comrades was referred for action to the Political Committee which met in New York September 1951. The Political Committee voted to publish it in an internal bulletin as further material on the discussion which has been proceeding in the party on the question of the buffer zone in Eastern Europe.

RESOLUTION ON THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE BUFFER STATES

(Presented by the undersigned comrades to the National Committee for acceptance, amendment or rejection with the request that this resolution and a statement explaining the action of the NC be printed in the Discussion Bulletin. In the event the NC is unable to take action on this resolution we request that it be printed as soon as possible and referred to the next meeting of the NC and the next convention of the party.)

The developments in the Buffer Zone are a concrete manifestation of the abstract description made by Engels of PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION: the proletariat seizes the public power and by means of this transforms the socialized means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property.

This is the abstract description of the evolution in its entirety from an historical point of view. But it must be made concrete. In order to obtain conceptions, however, concrete enough for a given purpose, it is necessary to correlate several abstractions into one. The concrete is thus a combination of abstractions, not an arbitrary or a subjective combination, to be sure, but one that corresponds with the laws of motion of the given phenomenon or process.

The norms of Marx and Lenin, the abstractions which the leaders of Marxism distilled from human history for the guidance of the proletariat, are verified and confirmed in the buffer zone evolution. We have no need to ignore or to apologize for our teachers.

Petty-bourgeois friends-for-a-day of scientific socialism will abandon the Marxian abstraction when they appear to contradict empirical reality or run counter to subjective motivations. But Marxian revolutionists are indeed the guardians of these norms. Nothing that happens is unforseeable (though it may indeed be actually unforeseen); our task, then, is not to throw out the precious generalizations of Marxism: until a better science with better generalizations of a wider historical experience is developed we defend the science of Marxism. Our task is to find Marxism's abstractions in their concrete manifestation.

1. The present buffer zone is essentially a concrete manifestation of Stalinism. Stalinism is represented, not only and not primarily, by the Communist Parties, but by the Soviet Bureaucracy. There is, indeed, a distinction. The Stalinist parties of the world originated as instruments intended for the overthrow of imperialism. They themselves have no inherited capital; their strength (in reality their weakness) lies wholly in themselves. In Stalinist degeneration the original significance of these parties as revolutionary parties has been largely dissipated.

The Soviet Bureaucracy, however, is a selection of some five to ten million people who are, to most intents and purposes, the government of the USSR. The state power in the USSR originates as a workers state and continues to be today a weak and sick form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Soviet government is thus the instrument for the preservation of an already accomplished overturn. Where the Stalinist parties failed to achieve an extensive revolutionary significance in themselves, the Soviet Bureaucracy finds nine-tenths of its strength, not in itself as a privileged bureaucracy, but in the social, economic and political changes wrought by the October Revolution.

Stalinism could thus squander its meaning as a revolutionary international factor and yet retain a part of its progressive meaning as the gate keeper of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution.

But it is above all the Stalinist ideology which divides humanity into "progressive" and "reactionary" persons. For Marxists progress and reaction are not independent ideological considerations but are essentially class terms. That which is truly progressive is that which is, to one extent or another, proletarian, and, conversely, that which is bourgeois is that which is indeed reactionary.

The Soviet Bureaucracy still retains a progressive (proletarian) meaning in Marxist consideration because it is a defender of the USSR. In the past thirty odd years only the relatively recent period has brought the conflict between imperialism and the USSR to the stage of armed conflict. We became accustomed to viewing the Soviet Bureaucracy, not as a defender of the USSR, but as a parasite pure and simple. This naive and undialectical view failed to consider that the Soviet Bureaucracy is a special kind of parasite: a parasite which defends the material existence of the body to which it is attached.

The Bureaucracy defends the USSR. It is no longer possible to deny this. Hitler, we can assume, was no so insane as to wage the bloody and disastrous Nazi-Soviet War if his aims could be achieved in less expensive fashion. There was, indeed, from the economic point of view a solid base for Soviet-Nazi cooperation: each had what the other needed. Those negotiations which took place in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, etc. and which resulted in the surrender of those state bureaucracies to Hitler, doubtlessly had their counterpart in similar Soviet-Nazi consultations. We can be assured that the Soviet Bureaucracy was willing to concede a great deal to avoid war. However, the bureaucracies of the German satellites could surrender to the bourgeois bureaucracy of Hitler and still exist because they were indeed bourgeois; but the Soviet Bureaucracy could not capitulate to Hitler's demands and cede enough: the Nazi-Soviet War thus manifested the fact that the antagonism between the bourgeoisie (Hitler) and the proletariat (Stalin) is indeed irreconcilable.

Stalin and his bureaucrats conducted the war in a poor and traitorous fashion. But they conducted the war. The interests of the world working class required this war in opposition to Hitler's attack. The Bureaucracy organized and led this struggle. Nor was this the expression of the Bureaucracy's "free will": the interests of the Bureaucracy likewise demanded this struggle. This basic identity of interests demonstrates that there is no class difference between the Soviet Bureaucracy and the proletariat. And both the Soviet Bureaucracy and the world proletariat benefited from this war which maintained social property in the USSR. But that is the question about which the class struggle rages: in order to continue to exist the proletariat opposes to bourgeois property social property. In this decisive test the class struggle of the USSR against Nazi Germany found the proletariat and the Stalin Bureaucracy in the same camp.

This war, even as Trotsky had expected resulted in the temporary elimination of planning in the USSR. This is an indispensable first step in any restoration of capitalism. The next step could well have been the transfer of the collectivized property over to some sort of capitalist "collective cooperative" with the workers sharing profits, etc. The American bourgeois bureaucrats, received repeatedly in the Kremlin, doubtlessly whispered more than one word on this matter into the ears of Soviet Bureaucrats. If the Soviet Bureaucracy had been a bureaucracy, hostile in its very nature, to the state-owned property of the USSR, it could only have welcomed this unexampled opportunity for the

restoration of capitalism, as a junior partner, moreover, of the world's strongest capitalism and its foremost military power.

At the war's end, however, we saw the Bureaucracy, in some little struggle with its own lower strata, take the road, not of the restoration of capitalism, and the destruction of the nationalized property but of its preservation and further extension. Planning was reinstated; the social property was maintained.

For Marxists this criterion is decisive. The Bureaucracy has the same basic hostility to private property which makes the proletariat a progressive class. This hostility, in both cases, is to a certain varying and indefinite extent unconscious. Neither in the specific form of the Bureaucracy or in the general form of the proletariat, does the proletariat's hostility to private property derive originally from the ideological field; instead it is the generalization of the material nature of the proletariat and its various strata, their inescapable conditions of existence, which force them into conflict with bourgeois property; and thus create the basis from which the ideological expression can be made, fully or partially. It is not consciousness which determines being but being which determines consciousness! The Soviet Bureaucracy does not have the ideology of the proletariat----- (who, indeed, outside of Marxism, does?)----- but it has a proletarian attitude toward property, and it has this only because it is indeed part of the proletariat, "its" bureaucracy, or at least one of them.

The existence of a bureaucracy in all its forms and differences in specific weight, characterizes every class regime. The power of the bureaucracy is of a reflected character. Hitler's power lay not in his "genius" but in the German bourgeoisie. Stalin's power reflects the power of the proletariat, not directly nor immediately, but eventually and certainly. The state bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with the ruling economic class (which, we remind ourselves, in the USSR is indeed the proletariat) feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling with it.

The Soviet Bureaucracy is thus a part of the proletariat. Those who idealize the working class will doubtlessly conclude from this that we therefore hold the Stalin apparatus to be a "good" apparatus. But Marxists apply the class label, not from a subjective appraisal of the "good" or "bad" aspects of the given formation, but as an objective description of materially existing people with reference to the position of those "people" in regard to the basic productive forces, their role in production, etc. Good and bad are not ultimate terms but have meaning only in concrete applications: what is "good" in one situation may be thoroughly "bad" in another.

The rise of the working class from being simply material for capitalist exploitation to the role of grave-diggers of capitalist society is accomplished in no way other than thru the creation and destruction of countless strata within the class itself. The question of the progressive or otherwise role of a given strata at a given moment in a certain situation can not be solved simply by referring to its class character: but any kind of an accurate analysis of "reality" must necessarily begin with that designation.

Difficulties in regard to the class character of the Soviet Bureaucracy stem from failure to understand the workers state. A workers state, even the most healthy, has a dual function which it can in no way evade. A workers state, even in America, on the basis of the most advanced capitalism, could not immediately supply everybody with as much as he needs, and would therefore be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible. The duty of

stimulator in these circumstances naturally falls to the state, which in its turn cannot but resort, with various changes and mitigations, to the method of labor payment worked out by capitalism. Bourgeois law is thus inevitable in the first stages of the society transitional between capitalism and socialism. Law can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure.

The workers state thus assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character: socialistic, insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; capitalistic insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a bourgeois measure of value. This duality, of course, has nothing to do with the anti-Marxian concept of a two-class or classless state. The dual function of the state refers to its dual social role; the state remains a workers state. The dual function of the state, socialistic and capitalistic, only expresses the nature of society which is transitional only because it is between the social regimes of capitalism and socialism.

In Russia the dual function of the state, over some thirty years of isolation and backwardness, could not but affect the form of the state itself. The capitalistic function of the state proved inconsistent with genuine soviet democracy. A state of armed workers had been sufficient to defend the USSR in its inception; it was a different matter when the task was the regulation of inequalities in the sphere of consumption. Those deprived of property are not inclined to create and defend it for others. The majority cannot concern itself with the privileges of the minority. But the privileges of the minority were necessary for the maintenance of the Soviet state. This odious but unavoidable function became manifest in a privileged state bureaucracy which changed the form (but not the content) of the Soviet state, liquidating the soviets and creating the present "independent" bureaucratic regime.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is thus manifested thru the present contrist bureaucracy. As the government of the workers state the Bureaucracy defends planned economy as it also defends inequality in the distribution of the product. But the defense of inequality in consumption inevitably brought the bureaucracy into conflict with the mass, and arrayed the bureaucracy against the mass, nationally and internationally. It could not, then, henceforth defend the social property with the mass means of Marxism, but only with its own means and apart from class struggle there is only class collaboration, or a combination of the two. The bureaucracy is thus contrist because today when there is no longer a Marxist leadership and none forthcoming as yet, it defends the dictatorship of the proletariat with class collaboration and a combination of collaboration and struggle; but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy at a later stage. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the USSR has understood nothing!

We do not at all object to the Bureaucracy being paid for its labor insofar as it fulfills the necessary political, economic and cultural functions; but what is actually involved is much more than this: it is the uncontrolled appropriation by the Bureaucracy of an absolutely disproportionate part of the national income; more even than that, it is the subordination of the international interests of the proletariat, the Russian as well as the international, to this appropriation. These means of defense must therefore be replaced by the Marxist means.

But this argument, while it explains the historical necessity of the Fourth International, does not sustain the thesis that the Bureaucracy is no longer a part of the proletariat. Always and in every regime the state bureaucracy devours no small portion of the surplus value. It would not be uninteresting to compute what portion of the national income in America is devoured by all the multiple state agencies up to and including the political henchmen of the Truman administration. Tho it is probable that it was the fascist bureaucracies in Italy and Germany which raised this parasitism to its all time high. But these facts are not enough in themselves to indicate a separate class character or a classless character for the Truman or the Hitler bureaucracies. They are the hirelings of the bourgeoisie, sometimes inconvenient and greedy enough, but none-the less hirelings.

This applies equally well to the Soviet Bureaucracy. It devours, wastes and embezzles a considerable portion of the national income. Its management costs the proletariat dearly! In the USSR it occupies an extremely privileged position not only in the sense of having political and administrative prerogatives but also in the sense of possessing enormous material advantages. Still these facts are not enough to transform the Bureaucracy into an independent class. It too is the hireling of a class, but that class is the proletariat. The distribution of life's goods, incomparably more democratic in the USSR than anywhere else on earth, has nevertheless created a new differentiation of society, but it is not a class differentiation.

Vulgar, purely empirical thought, ever failing to probe the well-springs of the historic process, is helpless before such a formation as the Soviet Bureaucracy, because this "thought" fails to examine the historic origin of this phenomenon, it considers only the changes, and by no means all of the changes, which this formation has experienced in the historic crucible, and it lacks the abstract criteria which alone enable us to decide whether or not these changes are quantitative or qualitative. The Soviet Bureaucracy originated as the state apparatus of the victorious proletariat creating the workers state; in bureaucratic reaction against the mass motion of the revolution this state apparatus, in purge and totalitarianization, becomes the present Soviet Bureaucracy. But these changes were quantitative. The qualitative change which would transform the class character of this apparatus could only be its transformation into a bourgeois bureaucracy. That this has indeed failed to transpire is evidenced by the fact that the bureaucracy continues to defend, with its own methods naturally, the social property established by the revolution.

Whatever its political technique, and this will doubtlessly present a wide variation, the dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing more nor less than that regime which creates or defends social property in the means of production.

The further development of the Stalin regime can indeed lead to the inception of a new ruling class and with it a state bureaucracy with a bourgeois character; but this development can in no case be consummated organically by means simply of further degeneration; but only thru counter-revolution. Between Lenin and Stalin there is indeed an ideological counter-revolution, and we have not ignored it. But a revolution is not alone or primarily ideological. A victorious revolution is not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough; you have to overthrow it. The new political institutions set up by the Bureaucracy, in the final analysis defend the social property and thereby the social relations and the revolution. In this fact the class character of the Bureaucracy is clearly revealed.

Refuge from this fact is frequently taken in the observation that the Soviet Bureaucracy is a closed caste serving as an agency of imperialism. But to refer to it as a caste merely places it as one of the strata of a class; and the world of imperialism is full of agencies of imperialism, and many of them, the most dangerous, in fact, have a working class character. Who has forgotten that over the soviets, under the leadership of the Compromisers, functioned as an agent of imperialism? But who would have concluded from this that the Soviets were a bourgeois or a classless organization? Before our eyes the Tito Bureaucracy has become a not too carefully concealed agent of imperialism. But the class character of this bureaucracy is not determined from that fact.

The term imperialism, in this connection, should not be abstractly conceived. Imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalism, is, also, a system of social and political relations. It is not enough to reject it in the mind; you have to overthrow it! This is not the work of a moment. But until the imperialist world system is replaced, the working class, its strata and its organizations, up to and including the workers state, are forced to acquiesce, no matter if unwillingly in the continued existence of this system; more, it is even necessary to cooperate in one or another extent, in the workings of imperialism. This inevitably entails becoming, objectively considered and to various extents, the agents of imperialism.

It is thus necessary to realize that under certain conditions the support of this or that imperialism is inevitable for even the most healthy workers state. An isolated workers state cannot fail to maneuver between the hostile imperialist camps. Maneuvering means temporarily supporting one of them against the other. Supporting one against the other means temporarily to become the agent, in the objective sense, of the "friendly" imperialism. Nor is that all. Both the USSR and Yugoslavia, for example, are forced to trade on the world market. The state powers in Russia and Yugoslav arrange these transactions. However, by means of this trade, imperialism economically exploits Russian and Yugoslav workers. Arranging all this, the Tito and Stalin bureaucracies objectively function as agents of imperialism. And this objective function is duplicated downward in every trade union or organization within the working class.

It is thus meaningless merely to describe an organization, and such indeed is a bureaucracy, as an economic or political agent of imperialism. It is not the objective designation that matters, but how the role is played. The leadership of a good trade union, forced to cooperate in the organization and even, in most considerations, in the maintenance of wage labor, is thus an agent of the employer; but defending the living standard of the workers, within this context, and raising their self-confidence and their internal solidarity, the leadership is primarily an agent of the proletariat.

Maneuvering between German and Allied imperialism the Soviet Bureaucracy inevitably became the agent, at different times, of these imperialisms. We are far from blaming it for this: the isolated workers state thus continued to exist. But there is maneuvering and maneuvering: the entire foreign policy of the Kremlin, up to the end of the 2nd World War, was based in general upon a secondarily embellishment of the "friendly" imperialism and thus led to the sacrifice of fundamental interests of the world workers movement for secondary and unstable advantages. What we blame the Kremlin for is not that it was forced, by circumstances it could not be expected to control, to be an agent of Allied imperialism, but that it gloried in that role, acted not only as an objective but also as a subjective agent of imperialism in the Allied countries.

But the Soviet Bureaucracy is not primarily an agent of imperialism: it is primarily an agent of itself. Functioning as an agent of Allied imperialism it was led, by its own degeneration, to become also the enemy of the proletariat in the Allied countries. However, against German imperialism, assailing the workers state, the Bureaucracy was an enemy of imperialism and therefore an agent of the proletariat. It was not its objective role in the Allied countries but its subjective role that made the Bureaucracy reactionary; and it was not its subjective role but its objective role against German imperialism which made the Bureaucracy progressive. If empirical thought quails at the concept of a formation at once reactionary and progressive, we can only offer them our condolences---- and the dialectic.

The Soviet Bureaucracy has indeed been an agent of imperialism. This fact has not been ignored by us. But it is likewise an agent of the proletariat. That fact is frequently ignored. Between the open imperialist forces and the Marxist forces there is a wide range of organizations. To say that a given formation is an agent of one or the other is not necessarily to indicate the class character of the formation itself. But in the final analysis the class character of the given organization is the decisive fact governing its evolution.

A class is defined not by its participation in the national income alone, but by its independent role in the general structure of the economy, and by its independent roots in the economic foundation of society. Each class works out its own special forms of property. The Soviet Bureaucracy lacks all these social traits, as social traits peculiar to it alone. Though it has all the vices of the old ruling classes, in these decisive standpoints it has nothing in common with the bourgeoisie. It coincides in these basic considerations with the proletariat in a transitional society.

The Bureaucracy's independent function relates basically to political technique, to method. But that political technique is only one of the forms of class rule. In the USSR, no matter how resolutely empiricism may gainsay this, the ruling class is indeed the proletariat. From these considerations the class character of the Soviet Bureaucracy is basically revealed.

2. The proletariat (concretely manifested by the Soviet Bureaucracy) seized the public power in the Buffer Zone inaugurating the dictatorship of the proletariat. This statement revolts and repels certain noble "friends" of the revolution who, with their Kantian norms, have provided themselves with a very radiant conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and are now prostrated by the fact that the "real" dictatorship, with all its heritage of class barbarism, with all its internal contradictions, with all the mistakes and crimes of the leadership, fails entirely to resemble that sleek image which they have provided.

Where and in what books can one find a faultless prescription for the proletarian dictatorship? The dictatorship of a class does not mean by a long shot that its entire mass always participates in the management of the state. This has been demonstrated not only by the feudal nobility who ruled thru a monarchy before whom the noble stood on his knees, but also in the bourgeois regime which developed democracy even for the bourgeoisie in only a few countries and over a relatively brief period. Of recent memory is Hitler's autocracy which smashed all the traditional bourgeois parties. Nevertheless, Hitler's regime, regimenting not only the proletariat but also the bourgeoisie, was the dictatorship of the

bourgeoisie; and its victory over the USSR would have inescapably produced that same regime in the USSR.

Anticipating our argument, our opponents will hasten to assert: altho the bourgeoisie, as an exploiting minority, can preserve its rule and even extend it under the totalitarian state, the proletariat, creating a new society, must create and manage its government itself. In its general form this argument is undebatable and constitutes one of the unshakable programmatic norms of Trotskyism; but in the buffer zone development it only indicates that these dictatorships of the proletariat are weak, sick dictatorships. Their class character, however, is not nullified by these facts, and is inescapably established by the origin and development of the buffer zone evolution,

Political power is an abstraction, concretely represented by the state. The state, in its turn, is not the social organism but one of the organs comprising the social organism; the state has not existed from eternity; there have been societies which existed without it and had no notion of state power. But at a certain stage in the economic evolution of society, which necessarily involved its cleavage into classes, the state became a necessity because of this cleavage.

The state is, therefore, by no means a power imposed on society from without; just as little is it the result of humanity's previous mistaken policies. Rather it is the product of society at a particular stage of its development; it is the admission that this society has involved itself in insoluble contradiction, and is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to exercise. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, a power has become necessary to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arising out of society, but placing itself above it and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state.

The essential distinguishing characteristic of the state is the institution of a public force. This public force is needed because a self-acting armed organization of the people has become impossible owing to their division into classes. This public force consists not merely of armed men but also of material appendages, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds.

As the state arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but also arose in the thick of the fight between the classes, it is normally the state of the most powerful, economically ruling class, which by this means becomes also the politically ruling class, and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. The political power of the noble was expressed by the feudal state; the political power of the capitalists is expressed in the capitalist state; the conquest of political power by the proletariat produces the workers' state.

This abstraction of the bourgeois state was concretely expressed in the buffer countries by the Nazi puppet states existing under the Third Reich. The essential distinguishing feature of these states, the public force consisting of bodies of armed men and the repressive apparatus, was concretely expressed in the Nazi army, the SS troops, etc. The Third Reich, however, was not given the "thousand years" which Hitler promised; in the German-Soviet war the Red Army expelled the Nazi army from the buffer countries. This was more than a

more military struggle; where previously the Nazi armed formations enabled the buffer states to be indeed public powers able to impose their wills upon society, it was now the Red Army which played this role. The actual public power in the buffer zone was thus transferred from the Nazi army to the Red Army.

The social revolution thus began. Social revolution is a single abstraction combining the necessary abstractions of the transfer of political power from one class to another. Political power, we have seen, is in the final analysis military power. It is transferred by means of revolution; but this transfer is in no case accomplished by means of a transitional period in the class nature of the state, thru some "intermediate status" during which time the state has no class character. The transfer of political power proceeds instead thru the creation of a new state, of a period during which two states, the new and the old, exist in the condition of dual power and contest with each other as to which shall be the single power within society. But the essence of the state is the existence of a body of armed men. The existence of dual power, then, in its irreducible minimum, is the existence of two special bodies of armed men, representing the opposing classes in society.

Within recent times we have witnessed the revolutions in Yugoslavia and China which unfolded primarily as the struggle between the bodies of armed men with the worker-peasant character of the Partisan and Chinese Red armies against the bodies of armed men with the bourgeois character of the Nazi, Japanese, Mikhailovich and Kucmintang forces.

The essence of this process was duplicated in the buffer zone not by native formations on either side but in the military struggle between the Red Army and the Nazi army. These armed forces had opposing class characters; the Nazi army was a bourgeois army, the Red Army is the arm of a workers' state, a proletarian army. The war began as a contest between these bodies of armed men as to which should indeed be the public force in the USSR. Hitler's attack on the USSR was "counter-revolution-war"; revolutionists defended the USSR because they realized that in conquest by the Nazi army the class character of Soviet state would be changed.

But the Red Army drove the Nazi army out of the USSR. The contest as to which force would be the public force in the USSR was transformed into a contest as to which force would be the public power in the buffer countries. The Nazi-Soviet war was thus class struggle. The class struggle created dual power in the juxtaposition of the two armies, bourgeois and proletarian. Counter-revolution-war became "revolution-war" as an objective fact independent of the premises made to Anglo-American imperialism by Stalin and Molotov. Revolution-war, the war not between the nations but between the classes, transformed the class character of the buffer states as certainly as Hitler's war, victorious, would have transformed the class nature of the Soviet state.

The proletariat (Stalin bureaucracy) thus seizes (becomes the sole solid military factor) the public power. Thus it unfolded in the buffer countries. From the time of the occupation onward the designation of these states as workers states is an inescapable Marxist characterization. That elements of dual power represented by the native bourgeois formations existed for a considerable period (to a certain extent they still exist) is an indubitable fact. But these bourgeois formations had not actually held power under Hitler; they were equally unable to raise themselves, under Stalin, to the status of an actual power. The presence of bourgeois parties in the political arena or the presence of bourgeois politicians in the state apparatus, is by no means dual power, two-states, double sovereignty.

The Red Army had the political power. The presence of proletarian political parties in the political arena in England or America, or the presence of proletarian politicians in the state bureaucracies of these bourgeois states, does not represent dual-power. What is involved here is coalition or the elements of it.

The concept of dual-power, as it has previously been developed in the analysis of Trotsky and Lenin, does not presuppose---generally indeed it excludes---the possibility of a division of the power into two equal halves, or indeed any formal equilibrium of forces whatever. It is not a constitutional but a revolutionary fact. It implies that a destruction of the social equilibrium has already split the state superstructure. Dual power arises not thru the collaboration but thru the struggle of classes. It arises where the classes are already each relying upon essentially incompatible governmental organizations---the one outlived, the other in process of formation---which jostle against each other at every step in the sphere of government.

Such a condition of affairs cannot be stable. Society needs a concentration of power. The splitting of sovereignty foretells nothing less than a civil war. Civil war gives to this double sovereignty its most visible, because territorial, expression. Each of the powers, having created its own fortified drill ground, fights for possession of the rest of the territory, which often has to endure the dual-power in the form of successive invasions by the two fighting powers, until one of them decisively installs itself. From these, the basic considerations, the struggle of Mao versus Chiang or the struggle of Tito versus the Nazis and Mihailovich was indeed double sovereignty; the situation in the Buffer countries, following the withdrawal of the Nazis, was not.

The actual dual-power, present in every revolution including the one in the Buffer Zone, was originally present as that international dual power established by the October Revolution. Hitler attempted to liquidate the proletarian half of this dual power with his own bourgeois power. The workers state and the bourgeois state were thus counter-posed in a territorial, and therefore clearly visible, dual power. Veering back and forth across the USSR and the Buffer countries this international civil war has temporarily installed, since the defeat of Germany, the Red Army and the Soviet Bureaucracy as the sole, solid factors in the buffer countries. But this was the liquidation of the bourgeois half of the dual power in this territory which nevertheless continues to exist in the world at large.

The attempt of the Soviet government to screen its activities in the buffer zone from imperialism as well as from the masses resulted, then, in coalition governments in a workers state. The activity of the celebrated Prof. Oustrialov, participating in the government of the Soviet state as the representative of the Russian bourgeoisie, was the expression of a similar phenomenon. But Marxism, analyzing several hundred years of bourgeois governments, has determined, since the time of Millerand, that the presence of two different class parties or representative in a single government, is not dual-power but simply coalition, and that the function of such coalition is the screening of the state from the people. Without confidence in the masses, and without the intention of serving anything but its own interests, the Soviet Bureaucracy put the screen of the original coalition governments between itself and the world as a whole.

The theory of dual power in the buffer zone, liquidated in 1948, can thus only lead to the nullification of Marxism as a science. Because this "theory" can only lead to one of two things:- the assertion that the buffer zone evolution

is absolutely unique and that Marxism is of no use in such situations (and how many more such unique situations will then appear?); or of the generalisation of this "theory" into an entire new road to power for the proletariat. For if the coalition governments were indeed dual power, then we must establish that there has been a lot more dual power in the world than Marxism previously suspected. That this "dual power" was not hitherto liquidated by the proletariat but continued to exist for decades, can thus be attributed to the sectarian stupidity of Lenin and Trotsky who, with their devotion to "abstractions" mistook this dual-power for simple class collaboration. We can then establish that the historic struggle between reformism and Marxism finds that reformism was indeed correct, that the end of the coalition in England has indeed brought us there a "socialist state", etc. We must, therefore, reject this theory.

Likewise to be rejected is the theory that from the time of occupation these states were "destroyed as states." They were, indeed, destroyed as indigenous state powers based upon native armed formations: but this was not the work of Stalin but the work of Hitler. However, during the course of the Soviet occupation armed formations loyal to the Soviet Bureaucracy and controlled by it, have been created. The present state powers rest on these formations. They have their own jurisdiction over definite geographical areas. They print their own money, levy and collect their own taxes, maintain their own prisons and concentration camps. That they have not indeed total independence is, of course, obvious; but there are more than a few states in the world in the same condition. We have not for that reason denied them a class character.

If we should indeed decide that these states are indeed assimilated into the Soviet state and thus destroyed as states, we should also consider, in simple consistency, that the Japanese and Panamanian states are likewise assimilated and destroyed, by imperialism, in this case. It would be necessary obviously to apply this remarkable logic to all the state powers on this interdependent planet: the eventual conclusion could only be that two states only, the Russian and the American, have full sovereignty and therefore a class character of any importance to revolutionists.

We reject both these dead end roads: workers states were created in the Buffer countries at the time when the armed forces of the workers state replaced the armed forces of the bourgeois state, that is, upon occupation. It is this realization alone which restores the harmony of Marxist theory and enables it to be in fact the guide to effective action.

But the prisons and the concentration camps of these workers states overflow with the workers and working class politicians who sought to create workers states, not with Stalin's methods, but with their own methods in the long run the method of Marxism. This expresses the fact that the degeneration of the Soviet State has now been reproduced in the buffer countries; the degeneration of one age is present in a subsequent generation as a deformity. Created by Stalin's methods, employing the Soviet Bureaucracy's technique of class rule, the state powers in the buffer countries are clearly deformed workers states.

3. The proletariat seizes the public power and by means of this transforms the socialized means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property.

By means of the workers states the productive forces in the buffer zone have now become primarily public property. This development can in no sense be regarded simply as the evolution of the buffer countries. This consideration as well as the search for the class character of the buffer countries---(as deformed workers states?)---is essentially a non-Marxian posing of the problem.

A country is merely a geographical division of society. Society is an historically originated collaboration in the struggle for existence and the assurance of the maintenance of the generations. The character of society is determined by the nature of its economy. Thus in seeking the "class character" of a given country one in actuality seeks the "class character" of a specific branch of society. But in seeking the "class character" of society one must inevitably pose "the class character" of a given economy. This, it must be stated, is a consideration of small concern to Marxists.

If one should declare that a capitalist economy has a "capitalist class" character, then what kind of an economy could be regarded as having a working class character? Is the USSR a workers country? Does it have a proletarian economy? Socialism is by no means a proletarian economy because in socialism there are no classes; and the economy transitional between capitalism and socialism, by the very fact of its transitional character incorporates features of both capitalism and socialism. There is no such thing, then, as the class character of an economy. But the economy determines the nature of society of which a country is a part. If we cannot speak of the class character of an economy then we can likewise not speak of the class character of a given country.

Indeed it could be said with considerable truth that the capitalist economy has not only a "capitalist class" character but a "working class" character as well. Capitalist economy is impossible without a bourgeoisie but it is likewise impossible without a proletariat. As capitalist economy develops it renders the bourgeoisie useless and concentrates all real economic power into the hands of the proletariat. To describe a given economy as capitalist is thus not a class designation but refers merely to the fact that in this economy the means of production have the character of capital.

But the productive forces have the character of capital not only in capitalist economy but in the early stages of the transitional economy as well. To be sure this capital is now owned by the state. But this state ownership is not achieved in a moment even though that be a moment of revolution; but is consummated gradually over an extended period. In addition it should not be forgotten that the process of collectivization is inaugurated under capitalism and may even go a considerable distance under those auspices. It is accordingly impossible at a given moment to determine from the economy alone whether this economy is capitalist or transitional. But if the nature of the economy cannot thus be determined then likewise indeterminate is the nature of society. The evolution of a given country cannot in this way be at all understood.

The nature of the economy is determined by its means of productive labor. But these have achieved a truly capitalist character in only a few countries. The productive forces of China, for example, could sustain a feudal economy, a capitalist economy or an economy transitional between capitalism and socialism. Capitalism can in no way depend in such areas, upon the simple automatism of the economy; the capitalist nature of the economy can be assured only by means of the state.

In the Buffer countries means of production, agricultural and individual and also highly industrialized (socialized) exist side by side. Unevenness here also is the predominant feature. Most of these means of production could be employed in either the feudal, the capitalist or the transitional economy. The "class characters" of these economies was thus determined by the class character of the state power: so long as the bourgeois state existed, either under Hitler or earlier, so long then was the economy of these countries capitalist.

When the bourgeois state gave way to the workers state the economies of these countries became transitional. But these backward countries also cannot depend solely upon the automatism of the economy for their evolution into socialism. The evolution of the buffer countries is thus primarily the evolution of the deformed workers states; the class character of these countries, to the extent that such a term has any meaning, can only derive from the class characters of these states.

Consequently the description of these countries as bourgeois countries on the road to structural assimilation was not only wrong but insufficient. They were "bourgeois countries" only so long as they had bourgeois state powers. But the conquest of the state power by the Soviet Bureaucracy created deformed workers states. From that point onward these countries were transitional. The fact that their economy was being "assimilated" into Soviet economy by being inter-linked with it, a process by no means historically reprehensible no matter by whom undertaken, was possible only if the bourgeois state was actually destroyed. The bourgeois state, we remember, is the instrument of the bourgeoisie, its executive committee. No interest of the bourgeoisie, obviously, would be served by this "assimilation" into the transitional economy of a workers state. Facing certain death in this direction the bourgeois state would struggle, even at one to a thousand odds, in the opposite direction. Instead of this, the state powers in the buffer zone facilitated this "assimilation" thereby indicating that they were not, in fact, bourgeois states but workers states. But this means that these could not have been, then, bourgeois countries.

Equally wrong was the variation on this theme, the definition of bourgeois states on the road to structural assimilation. Unless a new definition of the term state is here intended, and this revision should at least be made openly, then we are to understand by the concept state the public force, the repressive apparatus, the superstructure of society. The structure of society is its economy. Superstructures on the road to structural assimilation! Indeed! This definition, to convey any thought whatever, would have to refer to the process which Engels called the withering away of the state. As the class and social antagonisms within society fall away under the influence of socialist advances eliminating all scarcity, then the repressive functions of the state become unnecessary and are replaced by the economic and social administration of things. As workers states organizing an economy transitional between capitalism and socialism, the Buffer states and the Soviet state are indeed upon this "road". But it is a lengthy road, bestrewn by obstructions, and the Soviet Bureaucracy can in no sense achieve this actual assimilation of the superstructure into the structure. For that other hands are necessary!

4. By means of the deformed workers states created by the Soviet Bureaucracy in the Buffer Zone the productive forces---(those already in fact made social by the bourgeoisie as well as those which must still achieve that character)--- have become public property. The decisive element in this transformation is by

no means some conscious revolutionary design on the part of Stalinism. Rather is this process marked by the inability of imperialism to intervene. Those productive forces have indeed "slipped" from the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie. They could have been retained by imperialism only thru imperialist control over the buffer zone state powers. But that required imperialist armed formations where historic development, in the long run dooming the bourgeoisie to annihilation, had placed proletarian armed formations. The Red Army could be replaced by an imperialist army only thru additional struggle for which imperialism was not yet prepared. The imperialist technique of bourgeois class rule was thus impossible.

The Marxist technique of proletarian class rule sought to express itself thru the struggle of the buffer zone proletariat toward power in the early days of the occupation. But this technique is not the technique by which that small section of the proletariat, the Soviet Bureaucracy, rules: its technique is the bureaucratic technique. The buffer zone masses, without a revolutionary party of any dimensions, led primarily by agents of the Soviet Bureaucracy, fell before the onslaught of the Stalinist apparatus. The deformed workers states are thus deformed because they express Stalin's technique and not Trotsky's. The political and cultural backwardness of the masses, expressed by the absence of the Marxist party, has again become manifest in the figure of an all-powerful ruler with a great club in his hand.

This ruler, even though he expresses one of the methods by which the class rule of the proletariat is expressed, is nevertheless a corrupt and degenerate ruler. Raised to power in the Buffer countries the Soviet Bureaucracy hardly knew what to do with its victory. Here, as in the USSR, it seeks to serve not the interests of the masses but its own interests. These interests impelled the original policy of undisguised plunder, the uprooting of entire sections of the population, the constant terror directed at the revolutionary forces and the working masses. The obvious feature of this process, and a measure of the Bureaucracy's ideological degeneration, is the fact that they indeed hoped to create bourgeois "countries" friendly to the USSR. The long development of the Stalinist ideology away from the abstract and fundamental considerations of Marxism, found material expression in the buffer zone: the state power, neither in the USSR or the Buffer countries, is not understood as a class instrument; the antagonism between imperialism and the Soviet Bureaucracy is not regarded as an irreconcilable class antagonism but as a frothy and annoying result of imperialist policies. The anti-Marxian "theory" of socialism in a single country has indeed done the work that Trotsky predicted for it!

Where Lenin and Trotsky in the early days of the USSR guided themselves in accord with the "abstract" principles of Marxism, the Stalin Bureaucracy in the Buffer Countries guided itself from practical "reality". This has an historical precedent in the USSR, and these like causes produced like results. The abandonment of the "abstract" policy of revolutionary internationalism and class struggle by Stalin and Bucharin in favor of the "practical" policies of socialism at a snail's pace, the course toward the kulak, etc. produced in the second decade of the USSR's existence the necessity of a supplementary revolution. Elements of dual power, strengthened by the course of the leadership, came to be rooted not only in the economy where they had indeed always been, but also in the state apparatus and also the Communist Party. This is not to say that the Soviet state ceased thereby to be a workers state: the task of appraisal consisted in estimating to what extent the elements of this dual power were indeed fundamentally rooted and therefore able to eventually stand forth as an actual power.

An almost identical situation existed in the buffer countries in 1946-47 and 48. The policy of the leadership, veering between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, could not but strengthen the elements of bourgeois power in every sphere of buffer zone society. This situation, acute apparently only in Czechoslovakia, did not, however, represent some intermediate or classless condition of state power. That the state was a very poor instrument of the working class does not mean that it represented two classes or no class at all. The state was a workers state but the criminal and traitorous policy of the leadership had allowed the development of the elements of dual power in the economy and the state. The appraisal of the class character of these states would have to be amplified with the extent to which this power was fundamentally rooted and able, at a later stage, to actually stand up against the workers state.

But the bureaucratic regime, in the Buffer Zone, as in the USSR previously, survived. The Bureaucracy carried thru, with its own methods naturally, the necessary saving operation, the supplementary revolution, which we have never denied that Stalinism carried thru in the USSR. The bureaucratic technique could succeed in this, the deformed and degenerated workers states in the USSR and the Buffer countries could lean upon the proletariat, launch a special type of civil war against the bourgeoisie, primarily because imperialism was unable to intervene. The special type civil war which comprised the supplementary revolution in the USSR coincided with the 1929-33 world depression which occupied the full attention and resources of the world bourgeoisie. In the buffer countries this supplementary revolution coincided with the post World War II difficulties of the bourgeoisie in England, America, Japan, etc.

The decisive element ~~is~~ the liquidation of the bourgeoisie in the Buffer countries is thus not the conscious design of a revolutionary leadership, but the unconscious reaction of a proletarian caste, raised to power by the revolutionary struggle, and given such inescapable conditions of existence that it must fight the bourgeoisie or be crushed by it. In spite of its intentions or its ideology, the Bureaucracy as an objectively proletarian formation, illustrates in its activity the Marxian abstractions which declare the proletariat to be a progressive class as a whole, not because of its ideas, but because of its material nature which compels it, on pain of death, to dig a grave for capitalist society.

What the Bolsheviks accomplished in conscious understanding of the historic process and their own role in it, the Stalinists have accomplished in an unconscious reaction to stimuli. To a tickle people react differently; to a red hot iron alike! The red hot iron of imperialist decline has thus continued the October Revolution, and its degeneration, into the Buffer Countries, not in its Bolshevik form but in its essence: THE PROLETARIAT SEIZES THE PUBLIC POWER AND BY MEANS OF THIS TRANSFERS THE SOCIALIZED MEANS OF PRODUCTION, SLIPPING FROM THE HANDS OF THE BOURGEOISIE, INTO PUBLIC PROPERTY. Engels saw far and clearly!

5. State power in the Buffer countries having passed from class to class the proletariat of the world must adopt, then, the tactic of maintaining and defending that transfer. The strategic task of the world working class is indeed world revolution, but that strategic goal is concretely represented by workers states in all countries linked into a world federation of workers states. That strategic goal can be approached in no way other than thru the defense of those workers states, in the USSR and the Buffer countries, which already exist.

The designation of the buffer zone state powers as workers states (operating a planned economy in a transitional society) thus compels the slogan of the defense of these state powers against the state power of any capitalist state. Against the bourgeois bureaucracies of the capitalist states we defend the proletarian bureaucracies of the workers states! The economy can remain planned, as the society can remain in transition, only if the state powers continue to be workers states.

But these deformed workers states are not counterposed only to the state powers of the bourgeoisie. These state powers, like the Russian, also have a dual function; these states also are compelled to defend bourgeois law in the realm of distribution. These deformed workers states are not only counterposed to imperialism; they are likewise counterposed to the workers. In this connection revolutionists can only be for the defense of the workers against the workers state. The slogan of political revolution is the objective end of this defense.

The political revolution, however, is subordinated to the defense of the already consummated social revolution. Where the social revolution transfers the power from class to class, the political revolution transfers the power from one section of a class to another section of the same class. But the class struggle remains the law of all laws in our time; the struggle between sections and strata of the working class needs must be subordinated to the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie. This class struggle has transferred the power in Russia, China, Yugoslavia and the Buffer Countries from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat; but that victory is by no means historically guaranteed. It will be decided in the course of the "Counter-Revolution-War" soon to be launched by "our very own" American imperialism.

The Stalinist and the Titoist bureaucracies will defend these states, but they will defend them only with their own methods. There is indeed a conflict between these methods and the method of revolutionary Marxism; but this conflict is not manifested objectively at every single moment in every single aspect of the class struggle. Until the revolutionary Marxist forces have attained the strength necessary to insure, or to at least make very probable, that their defense can replace the bureaucratic defense without nullifying the defense itself, then political revolution is subordinated to the defense of the already achieved social revolution.

6. Firmly rejecting any obligations to the Marxian "abstractions" the opponents of the Marxian analysis are nevertheless forced, in one respect at least, to desert their empirical devotion to "reality" and themselves launch an abstraction: that the foregoing analysis of the buffer zone involves a capitulation to Stalinism, that if we conclude that Stalinism is indeed capable of creating workers states or of performing any progressive proletarian function, then we must also foresee an epoch of "Stalinist expansion" in the future. What then, ask our critics, is the historical validity of the Fourth International?

This argument reveals all too clearly that it is not, then, the "reality" of the Buffer Countries which actually concerns these critics, but the abstractions of the historical validity of the Fourth International. It is not we but they who have approached the buffer zone reality with the determination to cram it into a theoretical abstraction, and a wrong one at that. Their error, moreover, is two-fold: not only do they approach the buffer zone with the intention of finding that Stalinism cannot ever do anything progressive, but

the historical validity of the Fourth International is never conceived as anything more than an abstraction itself.

Isn't it one of the tasks of the Fourth International to teach the workers how to distinguish between the bourgeois state and the workers state? Can this be done otherwise than by reference to those exclusively Marxian abstractions of class and state? From a more examination of "reality" how is it possible to derive, even over an individual life time, the class struggle as the driving force of history? One of the concrete functions of the Fourth International must therefore be a very "real" struggle for the defense of the Marxian "abstractions".

What unmasks the present critics of our alleged abstraction above all, however, is the fact that the original thesis that all the buffer states were workers states was opposed by them precisely from the standpoint of abstractions: "only proletarian revolution can create workers states," "buffer countries not only can but probably will return to the imperialist orbit," "the capitalist mode of production still exists," etc., etc. With those abstractions many of the present critics of our abstraction warded off the reality of the workers states in the buffer countries. With this as thesis the discussion began.

The antithesis of this original position was expressed in the conception that the Stalin Bureaucracy created regimes of dual-power, coalition governments, the state being neither bourgeois nor proletarian during this period but in an "intermediate status," and that the present workers states were born out of this nothingness only thru the "reality" of collectivization. That this contradicts every abstraction of Marxism on the state can hardly be denied, but that it is an apparently correct picture of reality is likewise indubitable. The swing of party opinion to this position, albeit without discussion, constitutes the antithesis of the original position.

The development of our own thought thus follows the dialectical pattern of thesis, antithesis and, now, synthesis. The party has nothing to be ashamed of in that fact: since all nature follows these laws it would be quite alarming if the thought of a revolutionary party did not. But the thesis of the original position maintained the abstractions, the wrong ones unfortunately, at the cost of the reality; the present unofficial position, the antithesis, devotes itself to reality at the sacrifice of Marxism as a science; the synthesis, herein recorded, restores each to its proper place with damage to neither.

But our critics are still not satisfied: does the Stalinist Bureaucracy, because of its buffer zone victories, indicate that it has a progressive character, a historical validity? The answer of Marxism can only be yes and no. Yes, it does, if we consider the development only from the standpoint of the USSR and the Buffer Countries over the recent short period. The progressive aspects of Stalinism's role in defending the USSR and creating the deformed workers states in the buffer zone cannot be denied.

No, it does not if we consider the struggle as a whole over the entire historical epoch. It must not be forgotten that the USSR's victory over Hitler was accompanied by Moscow's betrayal of the proletariats in America, England and the Allied countries. In slavish dependence upon the blood soaked bourgeoisies of England and America the Stalinist apparatus poured oceans of abuse over the German and Japanese proletariats. It obtained a free hand for itself in the Buffer Zone only by abandoning Greece to the tender mercies of imperialism and aiding in the restoration of bourgeois power in the rest of Europe. The temporary defense of the USSR and the fragile sovietization of the

buffer countries, a progressive work in itself, was thus achieved thru reactionary methods, which produced, moreover, reactionary results in the rest of the world. The destruction of the Soviet state and the buffer states is thus facilitated at a later stage. The minuses thus overwhelm the pluses! Moscow's work as a whole fully retains its reactionary character.

Human history alone has historical validity. The progressive future existence of humanity is dependent, in our time, upon the proletarian revolution. Tho the essentially unconscious victory of the proletariat as represented by the victories in the Buffer Countries, Yugoslavia and China, appears more likely than does the destruction of civilization, still the revolution does not want to be and does not have to be unconscious. The struggle itself is a powerful stimulus to consciousness. A world party of revolutionary Marxism thus has a tremendous role to play and is indispensable in order to assure the definitive triumph of socialism not in centuries but perhaps in decades. Historical validity devolves, then, upon the revolutionary Marxist party.

But there have been no end of "Marxist" parties, and many of them have done the proletariat as much or more harm than good. The task, then, is to create that party which can actually serve as the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process. This process does obey the laws of Marxism! We can understand this process; understanding, we can predict; predicting, we can act!

We achieve historical validity in no way other than thru the defense of Marxism as a science. Achieving that today our cadres will be able at a later stage to fight for and win the profound and thunderous validity of World Revolution!

Los Angeles, Calif.
August 19, 1951

Esther PATRICK
Sam RYAN
Dennis VERN
Izzy LONDON