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May, 1941

# Fourth International

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**Stalin's Gift to Imperialism**

*The Soviet-Japanese Pact*

*By The Editors*

*By Natalia Trotsky*

**How It Happened**

THE ASSASSINATION OF LEON TROTSKY

Labor on the March: 1941 . . . . . The Editors  
American Labor: 1929-1940 . . . . . W. F. Warde  
Capitalist Development . . . . . Leon Trotsky  
Dictatorship in the South . . . . . Albert Parker  
Soviet Industry . . . . . Vladimir Ivlev  
The Permanent Revolution . . . . . Jack Weber

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Twenty Cents

## Manager's Column

Because of technical difficulties resulting in the loss of a few days in the publication of **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** for this year, we regret to have found it necessary to skip one issue of the magazine. This issue therefore appears under the dateline of May and follows in volume and number the issue of March, 1941. We hope that the time thus gained in our publication date will make unnecessary any future measures of this kind.

\* \* \*

With this issue we can announce the results of the spectacular subscription campaign conducted jointly by **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** and the weekly newspaper, **THE MILITANT**. In the course of a two-month drive, conducted with a degree of energy and enthusiasm which is phenomenal in the recent history of labor organizations, more than 800 subscriptions for **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** swelled our circulation. The total of subscriptions brought in to both publications reached the astonishing level of 922, involving an income of \$958.

The twin cities of Minnesota set a pace early in the campaign which was never matched by their closest competitors. Among the cities of the next category, Chicago took the lead with Boston coming in close upon the heels of the comrades of the windy city.

The staff of **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** here extends its congratulations and thanks to all those loyal workers in the interest of socialism who toiled incessantly for two months, visiting trade unionists, going from door to door, soliciting subscriptions to our press among the best elements of the American working class.

\* \* \*

The attention paid to the securing of subscriptions during the drive just completed has resulted in an extension of the sales of the magazine and naturally of our income. In the first and most important category of places deserving our attention can be found the following centers: Allentown, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas, Montana, Minneapolis, Newark, New Haven, Quakertown, Read-

# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Published by the Fourth International Publishing Association

Volume II                      May 1941                      No. 4 (Whole No. 11)

116 University Place, New York, N. Y. Telephone: ALgonquin 4-8547.  
Subscription rates: \$2.00 per year; bundles, 14c for 5 copies and up.  
Canada and Foreign: \$2.50 per year; bundles 16c for 5 copies and up.  
Entered as second-class matter May 20, 1940, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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ing, Rochester, St. Louis, St. Paul and Toledo.

Two of these places—Toledo and Quakertown—are so serious about the state of their account with the business office that they usually manage to have a credit on our books.

Cleveland and Boston have resolved upon heroic measures to begin a gradual and permanent liquidation of old debts which have appeared upon the accounts of these places for many, many months. In the face of the beautiful job Chicago did when it came to a similar resolve, we can expect highly gratifying results from its two emulators.

To the comrades in Los Angeles we owe an apology for our sour tone in the last issue. Unhappily for many of our statements, an embarrassingly long time elapses between the writing of copy for this column and its appearance on the printed page of the magazine. A substantial check from Los Angeles came into our office the very day after our copy went to the printshop and cast the lie upon our accusations concerning the laxness of that city. We believe we feel worse about the matter than Los Angeles herself.

Speaking of the West Coast

turns our attention to another bright spot in California: Fresno, which in one bold gesture nearly cleaned up its full debt to the magazine. The first step toward stability in the income of the **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** must always be the cleaning up of the incubus of old debts.

Several cities, however, are treading the danger line, and if they are not more watchful of the course they are taking, will one day wake up with an awful financial headache. Among them are Flint, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, San Diego, San Francisco and Youngstown.

\* \* \*

It is with a great deal of joy that we hear from our co-thinkers in other parts of the world and this month again we have had repeated evidence of the importance which our magazine has for revolutionaries in places which must rely upon us for keeping them in touch with the progress of our movement.

The following has come to us from Argentine: "Two days ago we wrote informing you of our failure to receive the **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**. To our great joy we did yesterday receive the January issue of the magazine as well as the Socialist Appeal of February 8.

"We have already read all of the first number of the **MILITANT**. By it we see the great strides that our movement has experienced in the United States. We are conscious of the enormous importance which the great growth of your section has for the immediate and distant future of the Fourth International."

From London, among a number of news communications, publications and letters containing bits of information on developments among the workers in England, comes the following:

"Thanks very much for your nice letter which arrived from the censor today. From time to time I get the paper and magazine which keep us informed of events on your side of the Atlantic. So please continue to send them, though the magazine does not come so regularly.

"I see where Lovestone has closed down his firm. Well, war always brings bankruptcy in our line of business. It has also given a knockout to many people here; even the largest have gone on the rocks. We have weathered the storm well but our branches in many colonies have suffered from the Blitz....

"By the way, could you do me a little personal favor. Send me 100 halibut liver oil capsules. I have not eaten an orange or banana for over three months and don't expect to until after the war. No fruit is being imported; no ships. So we are all trying to make up for lack of proper food by taking halibut oil. The U. S. is exporting large quantities here for the factory workers and army. A hundred will last me for a month or two. I shall appreciate it."

So here we are, in a position where people in the rest of the world rely upon us not only for mental but for physical sustenance!

If the number on your wrapper reads:

**N 52, or F 11**

your subscription expires with this issue. In order to avoid missing a single issue of **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**, be sure to send in your renewal order immediately. \$2.00 for one year, \$3.00 for one year in combination with the **Militant**.

# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME 2

MAY 1941

NUMBER 4

## Stalin's Gift to Imperialism

By THE EDITORS

In addition to still secret commitments from Hitler and Mussolini, Foreign Minister Matsuoka returned to Tokyo with a gift from Stalin bearing the ironic label: "Treaty of Neutrality." In the crooked atmosphere which envelopes such diplomatic doings, nothing appears as it really is, and the most important matters often appear as their opposites. Thus, when *Izvestia* declares that the pact "promises to yield good fruits," we need only indicate the immediate consequences to see how rotten to the core these fruits really are.

The mere announcement of the agreement struck a terrible blow at the Chinese people and their prolonged struggle against the Japanese invaders. Just as he tossed in the lives and liberties of the Poles and Ukrainians as part of his deal with Hitler, so Stalin has sold out the Chinese to the Japanese brigands.

According to *Izvestia*, the pact was concluded in accordance with the Stalinist "policy of peace." Far from assuring peace, this new pact is more likely to pave the way for an extension of the inter-imperialist conflict in the Pacific, just as the pact with Hitler precipitated the war in Europe. By clearing away their biggest obstruction in the rear, the pact enables the Japanese militarists to drive further southward and thereby hastens their impending clash with American imperialism.

Despite the *Daily Worker's* statement that the pact is a boon to the Chinese people, not the slightest credence can be given to the official Stalinist assurances that there will be no changes in the attitude toward the Chungking regime. We can only guess what secret clauses form part of this treaty. Agreements of this kind are like icebergs: what appears in full view is far less dangerous than what remains hidden below the surface.

Neither Stalin's virtual recognition of Manchukuo as part of the Japanese empire nor additional commercial agreements exhaust the content of the pact. What about the rest of China? Are there provisions for the partition of its remaining territory, as in the pact with Hitler? What agreement has been reached regarding the division of territory and allotment of spheres of influence elsewhere in Asia, provided the British Empire crumbles under Hitler's assaults? The answers to these, and other equally important questions, await the unfolding of the consequences of the pact in the coming months.

Imperialism has no better servant than Stalin; the workers have no more perfidious enemy. The Japanese conquerors command virtually no popular support. Stalin's move serves to prop up this grotesque juggernaut just when it begins to exhibit signs of internal disintegration. Stalin not only strengthens Japanese imperialism: he divides the forces which alone can overthrow it. His pact has erected a wall between

the Chinese and the Russian people and between the Chinese people and the Japanese masses.

All this has been done in the name of defending the USSR and hailed by the Stalinist press as another victory for the peace policy of Stalin. In reality, the pact grew out of the internal weakness of the Stalinist regime and its helplessness in the face of its enemy-allies, and has already resulted in a further weakening of the position of the Soviet Union.

### Stalin's Dependence on Hitler

If we should believe *Izvestia's* explanation, "The USSR pursues her own policy and never will permit anybody to impose their alien will on her." It is more than likely, however, that Stalin signed the pact at Hitler's instigation and insistence, as part payment to Japan for signing the Three-Power Pact and cooperating against the Anglo-American bloc. Fearing Hitler and fearing to be drawn into the war, Stalin hoped by this stroke to placate Hitler. At the same time Stalin moves with an eye to the prospective menace of an attack from Hitler in the West. He needs no warnings from Churchill to know that Hitler has not forgotten, but simply postponed, his long-cherished plan of taking European Russia.

Stalin's subservience to Hitler was underlined by the editorial in *Pravda* declaring that the pact was directed not against Germany but against London and Washington politicians who were conspiring to hurl the USSR against Germany and Japan. As usual, Stalin's mouthpieces unmask the intrigues of the one imperialist bloc, the better to cover up the equally vicious plans of the other with whom he is in league.

Why ask a host of journalists in the Anglo-American camp, does not Stalin turn toward Great Britain and the United States? The Kremlin autocrat has as low an opinion of the power of the democratic imperialists as he has an extremely exaggerated regard for the strength of the Fascist war-machine. Having long since banished the use of the revolutionary proletarian power and program, Stalin, weakened within and without, sees no alternative but to lean upon the apparently stronger of the contending imperialist orders. But all his maneuvers, compromises and double-dealings will not suffice to save his regime from involvement in the war nor himself from destruction.

This is the ultimate crime of the pact: the fact that it further alienates the good-will of the working masses toward the workers' state. Not only the Chinese people but the masses everywhere feel keenly the reactionary nature of the pact and its consequences. It has further shaken their confidence in the USSR and their desire and ability to rally to its defense in case of imperialist attack.

Stalin's new pact demonstrates once more that the defense of the USSR demands, above all, that the workers overthrow Stalin and his degenerate clique.

# How It Happened

By NATALIA TROTSKY

(Tuesday, August 20, 1940; 7 o'clock in the morning).

"You know, I feel fine today, at all events, this morning; it's a long time since I felt so well... Last night I took a double dose of the sleeping drug. I noticed that it does me good."

"Yes. I recall that we observed this in Norway when you used to feel run-down much more often... But it isn't the drug itself that does you good, it's sound sleep, complete rest."

"Why yes, of course."

As he opened in the morning or closed at night the massive steel shutters built in our bedroom by our friends after the attack of May 24 on our home, L. D. would occasionally remark: "Well, now no Siqueiros can get at us." And upon awakening he would greet me and himself by saying, "You see, they didn't kill us last night after all, and yet you are still dissatisfied." I defended myself as best I could... Once, after such a "greeting," he added pensively: "Yes, Natasha, we received a reprieve."

As far back as 1928, when we were being exiled to Alma-Ata, where the unknown awaited us, we had a talk one night in the compartment of the train which was taking us into exile... We could not sleep, after the tumult of the last weeks, and especially the last days, in Moscow. In spite of our extreme fatigue, the nervous excitement persisted. I recall that Lev Davidovich said to me then: "It's better this way (exile). I am not in favor of dying in a bed in the Kremlin."

But this morning he was far from all such thoughts. Physical well-being made him look forward eagerly to a "really good" day's work.

Vigorously he walked out into the patio to feed his rabbits, after performing swiftly his morning toilet and dressing just as quickly. When his health was poor, the feeding of the rabbits was a strain on him; but he couldn't give it up, as he pitied the little animals. It was difficult to do it as he wanted to, as was his custom—thoroughly. Besides, he had to be on guard; his strength had to be conserved for another, different kind of work—*work at his desk*. Taking care of the animals, cleaning their cages, etc., provided him, on the one hand, with relaxation and a distraction, but, on the other hand, it fatigued him physically; and this, in turn, reflected on his general ability to work. He became completely absorbed in everything he did, regardless of the task.

I recall that in 1933 we departed from Prinkipo for France, where we lived in a lonely villa not far from Royan, by the shores of the Atlantic. Our son together with our friends had arranged for this villa which was called "Sea-Spray." The waves of the turbulent ocean came into our garden, and salt spray would fly in through the open windows. Surrounded by our friends, we lived under semi-legal conditions. We would have on occasion as many as twenty people. Eight or nine lived on the premises. In view of our position, it was out of the question to call in a housekeeper or someone to help in the kitchen. The whole burden fell on Jeanne, my son's wife, and on Vera Molinier, and I also helped. The young comrades washed the dishes. Lev Davidovich, too, wanted to help with the housework and began washing dishes. But our friends protested: "He should rest after dinner. We can manage ourselves." Besides, my son Leva told me: "Papa insists on using a *scientific method* of dish-washing, and this eats up too much of our time." In the end, L. D. had to retire from this occupation.

The middle way, the lackadaisical attitude, the semi-indifferent manner, these he knew not. That is why nothing tired him so much as casual or semi-indifferent conversations. But with what enthusiasm did he go to pick cacti with a view to transplanting them in our garden. He was in a frenzy, being the first on the job and the last to leave. Not one of the young people surrounding him on our walks into the country and working with him outdoors could keep pace with him; they tired more quickly, and fell behind one after the other. But he was indefatigable. Looking at him, I often marveled. Whence did he draw his energy, his physical endurance? Neither the unbearably hot sun, the mountains nor descents with cacti heavy as iron bothered him. He was hypnotized by the *consummation* of the task at hand. He found relaxation in changing his tasks. This also provided him with a respite from the blows which mercilessly fell upon him. The more crushing the blow the more ardently he forgot himself in work.

Our walks, which were really war-expeditions for cacti, became more and more rare because of "circumstances beyond our control." However, every now and then, having had his fill of the monotony of his daily routine, Lev Davidovich would say to me: "This week we ought to take a whole day off for a walk, don't you think so?"

"You mean a day for penal labor?" I would twit him. "All right, let's go, to be sure."

"It would be best to get an early start. Shouldn't we leave around six in the morning?"

"Six is all right with me, but won't you get too tired?"

"No, it will only refresh me, and I promise not to overdo it."

Usually Lev Davidovich fed his fondly-watched rabbits and chickens, from a quarter past seven (sometimes 7:20) till nine o'clock in the morning. Sometimes he would interrupt this work to dictate into the dictaphone some order or some idea which occurred to him. That day he worked in the patio without interruption. After breakfast he assured me that he felt fine and spoke of his desire to begin dictating an article on conscription in the United States. And he actually did start to dictate.

At one o'clock Rigault, our attorney in the case of the May 24th attack, came to see us. After his departure, Lev Davidovich looked into my room to tell me, not without regret, that he would have to postpone work on the article and to resume preparing the material for the trial in connection with the attack upon us. He and his attorney had decided that it was necessary to answer *El Popular* in view of the fact that L. D. had been accused of defamation at a banquet given by that publication.

"And I will take the offensive and will charge them with brazen slander," he said defiantly.

"Too bad, you won't be able to write about conscription."

"Yes, it can't be helped. I have to postpone it for two or three days. I have already asked for all the available materials to be placed on my desk. After dinner, I shall start going over them. I feel fine," he once again assured me.

After a brief siesta, I saw him sitting at his desk, which was already covered with items relating to the *El Popular* case. He continued to be in good spirits. And it made me feel more cheerful. Lev Davidovich had of late been complaining of enervation to which he succumbed occasionally. He

knew that it was a passing condition, but lately he seemed to be in greater doubt about it than ever before; today seemed to us to mark the beginning of improvement in his physical condition. He looked well too. Every now and then I opened the door to his room just a trifle, so as not to disturb him, and saw him in his usual position, bent over his desk, pen in hand. I recalled the line, "One more and final story and my scroll is at an end." Thus speaks the ancient monk-scribe Pimen in Pushkin's drama "Boris Godounov," as he recorded the evil deeds of Czar Boris.

Lev Davidovich led a life close in semblance to that of a prisoner or a hermit, with this difference that in his solitude he not only kept a chronological record of events but waged an indomitably passionate struggle against his ideological enemies.

Brief as that day was, Lev Davidovich had until five in the afternoon dictated into the dictaphone several fragments of his contemplated article on conscription in the United States and about fifty short pages of his exposure of *El Popular*, i.e. of Stalin's machinations. It was a day of physical and spiritual equanimity for him.

### Jacson Appears

At five, the two of us had tea, as usual. At twenty minutes past five, perhaps at half past, I stepped out on the balcony and saw L. D. in the patio near an open rabbit hutch. He was feeding the animals. Beside him was an unfamiliar figure. Only when he removed his hat and started to approach the balcony did I recognize him. It was "Jacson."

"He's here again," it flashed through my mind. "Why has he begun to come so often?" I asked myself.

"I'm frightfully thirsty, may I have a glass of water?" he asked, upon greeting me.

"Perhaps you would like a cup of tea?"

"No, no, I dined too late and feel that the food is up here," he answered, pointing at his throat. "It's choking me." The color of his face was gray-green. His general appearance was that of a very nervous man.

"Why are you wearing your hat and topcoat?" (His topcoat was hanging over his left arm, pressed against his body.) "It's so sunny today."

"Yes, but you know it won't last long, it might rain."

I wanted to argue that "today it won't rain" and of his always boasting that he never wore a hat or coat, even in the worst weather, but somehow I became depressed and let the subject drop. Instead I asked:

"And how is Sylvia feeling?"

*He did not appear to understand me.* I had upset him by my previous question about his topcoat and hat. And he was completely lost in his own thoughts, and very nervous. Finally, as if rousing himself from a deep sleep, he answered me:

"Sylvia?... Sylvia?..." And catching himself, he added casually: "She's always well."

He began to retrace his steps towards Lev Davidovich and the rabbit hutches: I asked him as he walked away: "Is your article ready?"

"Yes, it's ready."

"Is it typed?"

With an awkward movement of his hand, while he continued to press against his body his topcoat in the lining of which were sewn in, as it was later revealed, a pickaxe and a dagger, he produced several typewritten pages to show me.

"It's good that your manuscript is not written by hand. Lev Davidovich dislikes illegible manuscripts."

Two days earlier he had called on us, also wearing a topcoat and a hat. I did not see him then as, unfortunately, I

was not at home. But Lev Davidovich told me that "Jacson" had called and had somewhat surprised him by his conduct. Lev Davidovich mentioned it in a way which indicated that he had no desire to elaborate upon the matter, but at the same time he felt that he had to mention it to me, sensing some new feature about the man.

"He brought an outline of his article, in reality a few phrases—muddled stuff. I made some suggestions to him. We shall see." And Lev Davidovich added, "Yesterday he did not resemble a Frenchman at all. Suddenly he sat down on my desk and kept his hat on all the while."

"Yes, it's strange" I said in wonderment. "He never wears a hat."

"This time he wore a hat," answered Lev Davidovich and pursued this subject no further. He spoke casually. But I was taken aback: it seemed to me that on this occasion he had perceived something new about "Jacson" but had not yet reached, or rather was in no hurry to draw conclusions. This brief conversation of ours occurred on the eve of the crime.

Wearing a hat... topcoat on his arm... sat himself down on the table—wasn't this a rehearsal on his part? This was done so that he would be more certain and precise in his movements on the morrow.

Who could have suspected it then? It stirred us to embarrassment, nothing more. Who could have foretold that the day of August 20, so ordinary, would be so fateful? Nothing bespoke its ominousness. From dawn the sun was shining, as always here, the whole day brightly. Flowers were blooming, and grass seemed polished with lacquer... We went about our tasks each in his own way, all of us trying in whatever we did to facilitate Lev Davidovich's work. How many times in the course of that day did he mount the little steps of this same balcony, and walk into this, his room, and sit down on this very same chair beside the desk... All this used to be so ordinary and is now by its very ordinariness so terrible and tragic. No one, none among us, not he himself was able to sense the impending disaster. And in this inability a kind of abyss yawns. On the contrary, the whole day was one of the most tranquil. When L. D. stepped out at noon into the patio and I perceived him standing there bareheaded beneath the scorching sun, I hastened to bring him his white cap to protect his head against the merciless hot rays. *To protect from the sun... but even at that very moment he was already threatened with a terrible death.* At that hour we did not sense his doom, an outburst of despair did not convulse our hearts.

I recall that when the alarm system in the house, the garden and the patio was being installed by our friends and guard posts were being assigned, I drew L. D.'s attention to the fact that a guard should also be posted at his window. This seemed to me at the time so *palpably* indispensable. But L. D. objected that to do so it would be necessary to expand the guard, increase it to ten which was beyond our resources both in point of money and of available people at the disposal of our organization. A guard outside the window could not have saved him in this particular instance. But the absence of one worried me. L. D. was likewise very touched by a present given him by our American friends after the attack of May 24. It was a bullet proof vest, something like an ancient shirt of mail. As I examined it one day, I happened to remark that it would be good to get something for the head. L. D. insisted that the comrade assigned to the most responsible post wear the vest each time. After the failure suffered by our enemies in the May 24 attack, we were absolutely certain that Stalin would not halt, and we were making preparations. We also knew that a different form of attack

would be used by the G.P.U. Nor did we exclude a blow on the part of a "solitary individual" sent secretly and paid by the G.P.U. But neither the bullet-proof vest nor a helmet could have served as safeguards. To apply these methods of defense from day to day was impossible. It was impossible to convert one's life solely into self-defense—for in that case life loses all its value.

## The Assassination

As "Jacson" and I approached Lev Davidovich the latter addressed me in Russian, "You know, he is expecting Sylvia to call on us. They are leaving tomorrow." It was a suggestion on his part that I should invite them to tea, if not supper.

"I didn't know that you intend leaving tomorrow and are expecting Sylvia here."

"Yes...yes... I forgot to mention it to you."

"It's too bad that I didn't know, I might have sent a few things to New York."

"I could call tomorrow at one."

"No, no, thank you. It would inconvenience both of us."

And turning to Lev Davidovich, I explained in Russian that I had already asked "Jacson" to tea but that he refused, complaining about not feeling well, being terribly thirsty and asked me only for a glass of water. Lev Davidovich glanced at him attentively, and said in a tone of light reproach, "Your health is poor again, you look ill... That's not good."

There was a pause. Lev Davidovich was loath to tear himself away from the rabbits and in no mood to listen to an article. However, he controlled himself and said, "Well, what do you say, shall we go over your article?"

He fastened the hitches methodically, and removed his working gloves. He took good care of his hands, or rather his fingers inasmuch as the slightest scratch irritated him, interfered with his writing. He always kept his pen like his fingers in order. He brushed off his blue blouse and slowly, silently started walking towards the house accompanied by "Jacson" and myself. I came with them to the door of Lev Davidovich's study; the door closed, and I walked into the adjoining room....

Not more than three or four minutes had elapsed when I heard a terrible, soul-shaking cry and without so much as realizing *who it was that uttered this cry*, I rushed in the direction from which it came. Between the dining room and the balcony, on the threshold, beside the door post and leaning against it stood... Lev Davidovich. His face was covered with blood, his eyes, without glasses, were sharp blue, his hands were hanging.

"What happened? What happened?"

I flung my arms about him, but he did not immediately answer. It flashed through my mind: Perhaps something had fallen from the ceiling—some repair work was being done there—but *why was he here?*

And he said to me calmly, without any indignation, bitterness or irritation, "Jacson." L.D. said it as if he wished to say, "It has happened." We took a few steps and Lev Davidovich, with my help, slumped to the floor on the little carpet there.

"Natasha, I love you." He said this so unexpectedly, so gravely, almost severely that, weak from inner shock, I swayed toward him.

"O...O... no one, no one must be allowed to see you without being searched."

Carefully placing a pillow under his broken head, I held a piece of ice to his wound and wiped the blood from his face with cotton...

"Seva must be taken away from all this..."

He spoke with difficulty, unclearly, but was—so it seemed to me—unaware of it.

"You know, in *there*—" his eyes moved towards the door of his room—"I sensed... understood what *he wanted to do*... He wanted to strike me... once more... but I didn't let him," he spoke calmly, quietly, his voice breaking.

"But I didn't let him." There was a note of satisfaction in these words. At the same time Lev Davidovich turned to Joe, and spoke to him in English. Joe was kneeling on the floor as I was, on the other side, just opposite me. I strained to catch the words, but couldn't make them out. At that moment I saw Charlie, his face chalk-white, revolver in hand, rush into Lev Davidovich's room.

"What about *that one*?" I asked Lev Davidovich. "They will kill him."

"No... impermissible to kill, he must be *forced to talk*," Lev Davidovich replied, still uttering the words with difficulty, slowly.

A kind of pathetic whining suddenly broke upon our ears. I glanced in a quandary at Lev Davidovich. With a barely noticeable movement of his eyes, he indicated the door of his room and said condescendingly, "It's he"... "Has the doctor arrived yet?"

"He'll be here any minute now... Charlie has gone in a car to fetch him."

The doctor arrived, examined the wound and agitatedly stated that it was "not dangerous." Lev Davidovich accepted this calmly, almost indifferently as though one could not expect any other pronouncement from a physician in such a situation. But, turning to Joe and indicating his heart, he said in English, "I feel it here... This time they have succeeded." He was sparing me.

## The Last Hours

Through the roaring city, through its vain tumult and human din, through its garish evening lights, the emergency ambulance sped, weaving through traffic, passing cars, with the siren incessantly wailing, with the cordon of police motorcycles shrilly whistling. We were bearing the wounded man—unbearable anguish in our hearts, and with an alarm that increased with every passing minute. He was conscious. One hand remained quietly extended along the body. It was paralyzed.

Dr. Dutren told me this after the examination at home, in the dining room, on the floor. For the other hand, the right, he couldn't find a place, describing circles with it all the time, touching me, as if seeking a comfortable place for it. He found it more and more difficult to talk. Bending very low I asked him how he felt.

"Better now," answered Lev Davidovich.

"Better now." This quickened the heart with keen hopes. The ear-splitting tumult, the whistles and the siren continued to wail but the heart pulsed with hope. "Better now."

The ambulance pulled up at the hospital. It stopped. A crowd milled around us. "There may be enemies," it flashed through my mind, as was always the case in similar situations. "Where are our friends? They must surround the stretcher..."

Now he was lying on the cot. Silently the doctors examined the wound. On their instructions, a "sister" began shaving his hair. I stood at the head of the cot. Smiling imperceptibly, Lev Davidovich said to me, "See, we found a barber too..."

He was still sparing me. That day we had talked about the necessity of calling a barber to give him a hair-cut, but did not get around to it. He was now reminding me of it.

Lev Davidovich called Joe, who was standing right there,

a few feet away from me and asked him, as I learned later, to jot down his farewell to life. When I inquired what Lev Davidovich had said to him, Joe replied, "He wanted me to make a note about French statistics." I was greatly surprised that it was something related to French statistics at such a time. It seemed strange. Unless perhaps his condition was beginning to improve...

I remained standing at the head of the cot, holding a piece of ice to the wound and listening attentively. They began to undress him. So as not to disturb him, his working blouse was cut with scissors; the doctor politely exchanged glances with the "sister" as if to encourage her; next came the knitted vest, then the shirt. The watch was unstrapped from his wrist. They then began to remove the remaining garments without cutting them, and he said to me then, "I don't want them to undress me... I want you to do it." He said this quite distinctly, only very sadly and gravely.

These were the last words he spoke to me. When I finished I bent over him and touched his lips with mine. He answered me. Again... And again he answered. And once again. It was our final farewell. But we were not aware of it.

The patient fell into a state of coma. The operation did not bring him out of this condition. Without removing my eyes, I watched over him all that night, waiting for the "awakening." The eyes were closed, but the breathing, now heavy, now even and calm, inspired hope. The following day passed the same way. By noon, *according to the judgment of the doctors*, there was an improvement. But toward the end of

the day, a sharp change in the sick man's breathing suddenly took place. It became rapid, more and more rapid, instilling mortal fear. The physicians, the hospital staff surrounded the cot of the sick man. They were obviously agitated. Losing my self-control, I asked what this meant, but only one among them, a more cautious man answered. "It would pass," he said. The others remained silent. I understood how false was all consolation and how hopeless everything really was.

They lifted him up. His head slumped on one shoulder. The hands dangled like those in Titian's crucifixion: "The Removal from the Cross." Instead of a crown of thorns, the dying man wore a bandage. The features of his countenance retained their purity and pride. It seemed as if at any moment now he would straighten up and take charge himself. But the wound had penetrated the brain too deeply. The awakening so passionately awaited never came. His voice was also stilled. Everything was ended. He is no longer among the living.

Retribution will come to the vile murderers. Throughout his entire heroic and beautiful life, Lev Davidovich believed in the emancipated mankind of the future. During the last years of his life his faith did not falter, but on the contrary became only more mature, more firm than ever.

Future mankind, emancipated from all oppression will triumph over coercion of all sorts. He taught me to believe in this too.

November, 1940  
Coyoacan, Mexico

## Labor on the March: 1941

By THE EDITORS

We can celebrate May Day this year with renewed faith in the inexhaustible militancy of the American working class. With what physical courage and steadfastness of purpose have the workers stormed the Bastilles of Ford and Bethlehem Steel! How firmly they stood up against the Knox-Knudsen order to return to work at Allis-Chalmers! The coal miners have given their toll of bi-yearly martyred dead without flinching. But we have learned over more than sixty years of union miners to expect that of them; whereas not veterans but men and women completely new to unionism have in these last weeks fearlessly faced company thugs and government riot sticks and gas at International Harvester, Lackawanna, Bethlehem, Johnstown, Dearborn. Yes, we certainly can celebrate this May Day: once again it has been demonstrated that there is no militancy on earth superior to that of the American working class.

We are quite aware of the present limitations of that militancy. It is still directed at achieving immediate objectives and not revolutionary objectives. It is a militancy which must not be confused with class consciousness. In their minds most of the workers involved in these class battles fight without conceiving of themselves as a class confronting the ruling class and its state. They think of themselves as fighting this particular boss, or the bosses in this particular industry; and they do not as a rule yet add up the numerous instances of government strikebreaking into a comprehensive generalization of the class nature of the capitalist state.

But there is small comfort in this for the ruling class. Activity generally *precedes* consciousness. "In the beginning was the deed." The medieval peasant burned the lord's manor long before he had a glimmer of the conception of class against

class. It was in the course of its *activity* on behalf of its immediate needs—land, bread, peace—that the Russian people finally took the revolutionary road to fill those needs. To the many-millioned masses in any country the proletarian revolution can never be a body of theory learned in advance; they find their way to it, with the help of a small vanguard, because it is the only way to solve their problems. And so it will be in America.

We can predict with certainty, even limiting ourselves to the proofs of the last few weeks of strike battles, that as their political consciousness develops out of their needs and struggles, the American workers will go far indeed. European observers, both bourgeois and proletarian, have long noted with amazement the fighting spirit of the American working class and the atmosphere of violence which envelopes all our economic struggles. Except in periods of the full tide of revolution, such militancy and physical clashes have been extremely rare in Europe. Since the European bourgeoisie has been no less provocative of violence than the American ruling class, it is fair to assume that the American proletariat's militancy is, at least in large part, the explanation for the strike battles here which have so startled European observers. When this fighting spirit is harnessed to revolutionary objectives, nothing will stop it!

### What the Workers Are Fighting For

The present objectives of the workers are on the economic and not on the political level. They seek to take advantage of the boom in industry, created by the war, to make new gains. To get better wages and working conditions, particularly seniority and grievance machinery. To strengthen their unions against the day when, with the end of the war boom, the em-

ployers will seek to cut down wages and worsen conditions of labor. To organize the unorganized, both in their own industry and also in hitherto unorganized industries, so that the trade union movement will be that much strengthened. The rising cost of living constantly spurs them on to further wage demands upon the employers. This, in sum, is what the workers conceive themselves to be fighting for at this point.

Does some reader sigh at the limitedness of these objectives? Understand, then, that the workers are fighting for *security*: for an assured job without fear of dismissal, for a decent living for their families. Yes, in fighting for these, the workers are fighting for a better world. Victory will not give them a better world, because the objectives they are fighting for are insufficient? Of course. But then the workers, bringing with them what they have learned in their previous battles, will go on to fight for other demands which at that point seem to represent security. But they will fight, of that we can be certain. And they will learn in each fight. And in the end it will become plain to them that security will be theirs only through the conquest of power. And they will conquer it, with the same courage and steadfastness of purpose with which they shut down Ford and Bethlehem Steel.

A further assurance for the revolutionary future is provided by the fact that the militancy of the workers is still more remarkable in the face of the war preparations and the "national defense" ballyhoo. The mass of workers have not yet freed themselves of basic illusions about the nature of the state. They are patriots. Seeing as yet no other way out of this bloody morass, they accept Roosevelt's war policy. And yet! And yet! Unmoved by the propaganda of Roosevelt and his lieutenants both in and out of the labor movement, the workers have brushed aside the "national defense" buncombe and pursued their objectives. They have refused to be befuddled out of their gains. The spectacle of the war profiteering of the employers has hardened the masses in their resolve to have *their* way. Their illusions about Roosevelt and the capitalist state continue to exist in their consciousness side by side with their contempt for the "national defense" attacks against the strikes. But the historian of the future will undoubtedly record the workers' refusal to capitulate to the patriotic propaganda as the beginning of a new stage in the political consciousness of the American workers. That is the *new and growing* element in their consciousness; the rest is inherited from the past.

### Contrast Between Workers and Leaders

The workers deserve all the more credit for their victories because they won those battles with very little assistance from the official trade union leadership. This fact deserves the utmost attention. The growing gap between the rank and file unionists and the officials is a harbinger of the future, when the gap between masses and leaders will be closed by ousting the present leadership and replacing it with leaders akin in spirit to the workers at their best. With this as our perspective, the behavior of the trade union officialdom should be minutely examined.

The role of the dominant group in the AFL Executive Council in the strike wave can be summed up in a word: strikebreaking. To Ford, to International Harvester, to Allis-Chalmers, the Council lent the AFL label as a fig-leaf for company thugs. The President of the AFL appeared in the press purely as a denouncer of "defense strikes." Matthew Woll has, if that is possible, outdone Green and, for that matter, outdone even most of the poll-tax Congressmen: "Mr. Woll recalled the fact that Hitler in 'Mein Kampf' said he would nullify America's war efforts by inciting strikes." (AFL

Weekly News Service, April 8.) Apart from their strikebreaking efforts, Green, Woll, Hutcheson and their kind have been making "gains for labor" not by organizing workers but by coming to agreements with employers and the government. The closed shop in constructing the new army camps is an example. The worker is "organized" purely by the compulsion of his need for the job; the unions of the AFL appear to him as an alien force, backed by government and employers.

The reactionary role of the AFL bureaucracy grows more starkly apparent every day. That means, however, that the bureaucracy loses more and more ground under its feet. Yesterday it derived its strength from the most privileged sections of the workers, especially the building trades workers. But those workers, their ranks swelled by the new elements draagooned into the crafts on the army construction jobs, are today storing up deep wells of social hatred against the bureaucracy which now does nothing for them and much against them. Under the pressure of the workers a new division is beginning to form within the bureaucracy itself. Tobin of the Teamsters, Flore of the Hotel & Restaurant Workers, do not speak up against their colleagues on the Executive Council, but the unions they represent do not follow the Council's policy. The Teamsters are now the biggest and most powerful AFL affiliate; developing as a semi-industrial union, based on the genuinely proletarian over-the-road driver and the warehouseman. The food workers now have a membership of 200,000, growing wherever the basic trade unions grow. In short, the only real growth in the AFL is in those unions friendly to the CIO. Thus the Green-Woll-Hutcheson leadership of the AFL Executive Council is losing ground precisely because of its reactionary policy.

### John L. Lewis' Boys

If the contribution of the AFL bureaucracy to the recent strike wave was chiefly strikebreaking, what was the role of the CIO top leadership? Certain facts in the recent strikes stand out and cannot be explained away. The old United Mine Workers bureaucracy—Philip Murray, John L. Lewis, Van Bittner, Widman, John Owens, etc.—and its newer lieutenants in steel and auto gave little help to the workers in conducting their strikes. That is glaringly apparent in the Ford shutdown, where the workers in the plant confronted the top officials with the accomplished fact of a sit-down strike and the officials had to call the workers out of the plant and declare an official strike; likewise the auto barricades which kept the plant closed were the workers' creation, not the officials'. Less glaring, the same thing happened in Lackawanna and Bethlehem, where the picket lines were left to shift for themselves while the officials thought only of pulling wires in Washington. The whole business is symbolized by the spectacle of Philip Murray's trip to Detroit. He did not address the Ford strikers, nor even the direct representatives of the strikers. He found time only for dickering with Harry Bennett. That the way to get Bennett to yield was to heighten the fighting spirit of the strikers—that is a way alien to Murray and his kind. More akin to him is the role of a mediator standing between strikers and employers.

A crucial problem in the Ford and Bethlehem strikes was the winning of the Negro workers. What was needed here was an authoritative stand by the CIO, pledging its full support to the Negro's fight for jobs in the war industries. That pledge was not forthcoming. Murray stood pat on the position that the CIO did not discriminate against Negro members. He and the other CIO tops would go no further: because to launch a fight for equality of the races in the war industries has political ramifications of the broadest character: the fight

against Jim Crow in the army and government civil service, etc. The refusal of the CIO leadership to broaden its support of the Negro could have had dangerous consequences. Fortunately the sheer sweep of the Ford strike drew the Negro workers in as union members. In Lackawanna, the Negro workers at Bethlehem assumed the most militant and decisive role in winning the strike.

No less than the AFL leaders, the CIO leaders are but-tressing the government strikebreaking machinery. They sit in the Office of Production Management and the National Mediation Board. Grottesque contradictions accumulate: Murray challenges the Knox-Knudsen order to the Allis-Chalmers strikers to return to work, but says nothing about the ruling of the National Mediation Board requiring all strikers to return to work while their grievances are still unsettled. John L. Lewis bitingly indicts this ruling of the Mediation Board; but it is plain that his chief lieutenants, Murray and Kennedy, joined the Board with his consent. Privately and not so privately, Hillman is considered a traitor to labor in CIO circles; yet publicly the CIO leaders honor him as a great "labor statesman." One leg in the labor movement, the other in the government, i.e., in the camp of the bourgeoisie—that is the ungainly position of the CIO leadership.

The extent to which they have capitulated to the pressure of the enemy class is apparent in the Ford and Bethlehem settlements. Unlike the 1937 settlements with Chrysler and General Motors, the present settlements did not include written contracts, wage and seniority clauses, etc. Why not? The trade unions are stronger today than in 1937. The Bethlehem and Ford strikes were at least as powerful in effectiveness as those in Chrysler and General Motors. The difference is that the pressure of the government today was so much stronger than in 1937. But the workers were ready and able to resist that pressure. It was the leadership that caved in.

### The Present Tasks of the Workers

Fortunately for the future of the American working class, the CIO top leadership has an extremely precarious grip on the new industrial unions in steel, auto, rubber, aircraft, aluminum, packinghouse. Lewis and Murray's lieutenants in these unions perch uneasily in their seats, as was indicated in the recent elections in the UAW locals, where many of them lost their posts or just skinned through. It took many decades of capitalist stability for the United Mine Workers bureaucracy to get its hold; the present epoch of capitalist crisis and war, of vast changes in the psychology of the workers, are not conducive to bureaucratization. More accurately, events drive the CIO leadership to the most undemocratic forms of rule—they did not dare permit the Ford workers to have a strike committee of their own!—but without assurance of success. The instability of the Murray-Lewis control over the new CIO unions is one of the most important factors for an understanding of the recent strike battles and the coming struggles.

Unquestionably the government and the employers were under the impression that the CIO leadership had a more assured control of the unions, and did not expect that the demands of the workers would result in great strikes. In this sense the government and the employers were caught off

guard. Now they know better; if the workers learned much from the recent battles, so did the enemy. The "cooling off" and return-to-work rulings of the National Mediation Board are but the first fruits of the reorientation of the capitalists.

It must be said plainly, therefore, that in the next strike wave the workers will not surmount so easily the obstacles placed in their way. They must not go into battle this time dragging their leaders behind them. As the enemy is reorienting, so must the workers.

These, it appears to us, are the present tasks of the workers:

1. An end must be put to union fig-leaves on government strikebreaking. Every militant must demand that trade union officials resign from all posts in the government, including the OPM and the National Mediation Board.

2. An end, too, to preoccupation with mediators and government "help" in settling strikes. The place to win strikes is on the picket line. Organize the picket lines for all-out militant defense against the thuggery of company hoodlums and government cops.

3. In addition to the mass picket lines, there is need of a more permanent and specialized organization: Union Defense Guards to protect picket lines, union halls and meetings, against "law and order" committees and all other anti-labor bands.

4. Acts of hostility between the AFL and CIO which serve the employers must be halted. The CIO can facilitate this by ceasing such acts as providing at Wright Field a CIO "union" cover for four electricians working for a building trades employer who would not sign a contract with the regular AFL electricians' union. AFL officials referred to this CIO act as justification for the AFL's providing charters to the company unions in the International Harvester plants.

5. In the face of increasing government hostility, a new need arises for the unification of the AFL and CIO on the basis of preserving and extending the industrial form of organization.

6. The building of an Independent Labor Party must be the workers' answer to government strikebreaking. But that does not mean waiting for a national election. The workers have had bitter experiences with the role of mayors and other local officials in the recent strikes. Every election henceforth must be contested by labor's own candidates.

7. The government demands an end to strikes? It says it wants uninterrupted production? Then let it expropriate the war industries and let the workers manage and control them. An end to private profits based on war and the death of America's young manpower.

We formulate these tasks of the trade unions for the coming period in no arbitrary spirit. These tasks are only those most obviously indicated by the actual situation. The workers are already groping toward formulating these tasks and carrying them out. If we can speed the process, we shall have done our work. That, indeed, is the task of the revolutionary party: To help the workers march faster and without faltering toward the goal of supreme power and social security along the road of class struggle they are travelling today.

## American Intervention in China

*(Resolution Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Fourth International)*

### I

The task of China's emancipation from the yoke of imperialism rests with the Chinese proletariat, supported by the

peasant masses. Just as the national bourgeoisie is unable to pull the country out of stagnation, so it cannot conduct a successful struggle against a single imperialist power (Japan),

much less make a consistent fight for China's liberation from foreign domination. Its struggle against one imperialist power only leads it into the orbit of another.

For a number of years the national bourgeoisie, personified in Chiang Kai-shek, employed the policy of "non-resistance" in face of Japan's banditry, preferring to turn its forces against the Chinese workers and peasants. Having embarked on war against Japan when no other possibility remained open, Chiang Kai-shek has never forgotten the struggle against the Chinese people (opposition to even the most modest social reforms, the crushing of every independent movement of the masses). Chiang's recent attacks on the New Fourth and Eighth Route armies show that his reactionary policy cannot tolerate even the timid democratic reforms introduced by these Stalinist-controlled forces.

If, in spite of this policy of social reaction, the Japanese advance could be halted and the war brought to a stalemate, it can be said with assurance that Japanese imperialism would long ago have been forced to abandon the scorching earth of China if only the agrarian revolution had set the country aflame. The fact that today Chiang Kai-shek is forced more and more to turn toward American (and British) imperialism, thus preparing a new oppression for China, is the direct consequence of the fear of the national bourgeoisie before its own people and the impossibility for it to mobilize the revolutionary forces of the nation against the Japanese invaders.

## II

American imperialism, pursuing its "manifest destiny," is preparing to take over British Empire positions in the Far East, including China, and to bring about the defeat of its Japanese rival in the Pacific. Washington plans to subdue Japan in war, to expel the Japanese imperialists from China, and to assume the overlordship of the Chinese people. Preparatory steps in this direction are the military, naval and aerial moves in the Pacific and the increased "aid" given to Chiang Kai-shek in the form of loans and war supplies.

The revolutionists, while recognizing the necessity for China to accept American material aid in the war against Japan, cannot ignore the dangers hidden behind it. They must combat all suggestions that American imperialism is actuated by benevolence toward China and explain to the broad masses the real motive of this aid—the preparation of a new slavery for tomorrow.

If the "friendly" imperialists demand payment for their aid with preferential economic rights, concessions, military bases, etc., the revolutionists must oppose such transactions, which in the end would mean the displacement in China of one imperialism by another, the change being paid for in the blood of the Chinese masses.

Should the Chinese bourgeoisie make any such bargains, revolutionists must denounce them as a betrayal of China's struggle for emancipation. But they will not "punish" Chiang Kai-shek by declaring themselves "defeatists" in China's war against Japan. They will continue to stand for the defense of China in spite of, and against, the Chinese bourgeoisie.

## III

Imperialist rivalries in the Pacific are leading directly to an armed clash. When, and possibly before, the United States makes war upon Japan, a military alliance between Washington (and London) and Chungking will be on the order of the day. However, the fact that the war between Japanese and American imperialism (in which Chiang Kai-shek will be a subordinate ally of the latter) will possess a purely imperialist character, does not wipe out the problems of China's struggle to expel the Japanese invaders.

Revolutionists must explain to the Chinese masses that the alliance of their national bourgeoisie with American imperialism is the inevitable consequence of Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary conduct of the war against Japan; that the crushing of every independent move for social reforms, and later the alliance with Washington, are two sides of a single policy; that this policy is neither able to assure the emancipation of the country nor to push forward the social liberation of the Chinese people. Countering official enthusiasm for the American imperialist "liberators" and their mission, the revolutionists must expose the real aims of dollar imperialism and show the great danger that is in store for China, the danger of a new enslavement. To the reactionary policy of Chiang Kai-shek, they will oppose the program of a revolutionary war based on drastic social changes (land to the peasants, workers' control of production, etc.).

This, however, will not prevent the revolutionists from continuing to stand for the victory of the Chinese armies over the Japanese invaders. The Washington-Chungking alliance and the flood of American material assistance to the Chiang Kai-shek regime will not erase the task of driving the Japanese imperialists from Chinese soil. But alongside this task it becomes increasingly important to explain to the Chinese masses the real character of American intervention and to show them that the eventual outcome of the war against Japan will depend upon the means by which victory is gained. Victory obtained by selling to another imperialist power the riches of the country can only prepare new forms of oppression for the Chinese people.

The growing collaboration between Chiang Kai-shek and the American imperialists has already had repercussions in the attacks by Chiang Kai-shek on the Stalinist-controlled peasant armies. While condemning the class-collaborationist policy of the Chinese Stalinist leaders which facilitated these attacks, the revolutionists proclaim their solidarity with the brave peasant fighters under Stalinist leadership and their readiness to join with them in resisting the counter-revolutionary moves of Chiang Kai-shek.

## IV

Washington's alliance with Chungking for war against Japan will afford the American imperialists the opportunity of covering their enterprise in China with democratic and liberationist phrases. But the American workers cannot entrust to their exploiters—the most powerful imperialists in the world—the task of liberating China from the clutches of imperialist Japan. The "defense" of China by American imperialism is in reality the preparation of a new slavery for that country. A "sacred union" of the American proletariat with its bourgeoisie in the name of China's defense, and the abandonment of the proletarian struggle for power, would mean that tomorrow China would be plundered by Wall Street. American imperialism would be strengthened at the expense of the Chinese masses and the American working class. The surest guarantee of China's independence, of her emancipation from social backwardness, and of her development toward socialism, is the Soviet United States of America. To prepare for this, the class struggle cannot be halted for a single minute.

## V

If even with greatly increased American material aid the Chinese armies should prove unable speedily to expel the Japanese invaders, the American imperialists will seek to land their own troops in China and to take over China's struggle against Japan through the creation of a single command under their own control. It will be the duty of the Chinese revolutionists to oppose the subordination of Chinese military

operations to the strategy and war aims of American imperialism. China, moreover, is in no need of additional manpower to expel the Japanese invaders. The landing of American armed forces in China must therefore be condemned by the Chinese revolutionists as a purely imperialist enterprise and they must mobilize the Chinese masses in opposition thereto. In this they must receive the support of the revolutionists in the United States, who must oppose with the greatest vigor the sending of American armed forces to China and demand the withdrawal of those already in the country. If American forces are sent to China, the revolutionists must strive to unite the Chinese and American soldiers against the reactionary imperialists and their Chinese bourgeois allies.

#### VI

The tendency for increased American control over China's struggle is bound to be accompanied by an intensification of all the political and social antagonisms inside the Chinese armies as well as throughout the country. Centers of anti-imperialist resistance, in the armies and among the workers and peasants, will spring up to confront Chiang Kai-shek

and his gang, who have led the war against Japan in order to sell themselves to Wall Street on more advantageous terms. In these conditions, the revolutionary program of defense for China—workers' and peasants' militias based on serious social reforms in town and village—will become more and more a reality.

#### VII

Any major military defeat which Japan suffers as a consequence of American intervention in the Far East will create revolutionary movements of the masses in Japan and the Japanese colonies of Manchukuo, Korea and Formosa, and will stimulate a revolutionary revival in China. The American imperialists, confronted with this spreading revolutionary upsurge, will grow less concerned about the struggle against Japan than with crushing the independent movement of the masses which will threaten their entire position. Just as the war against Japan has led Chiang Kai-shek to become a tool of American imperialism, so the masses of China, in alliance with their class brothers in the Japanese Empire, will be led to the social revolution.

*March 31, 1941*

# The Mobilization of American Labor: 1929-1940

By WILLIAM F. WARDE

Of all the cataclysmic changes in American life from 1929 to 1939, none was more momentous than the growth in the stature of the working class. During this decade the most decisive and dynamic sections of the industrial proletariat became organized and began to exercise an ever-increasing influence upon national and world affairs.

## The End of the Golden Age

This epoch was preceded by the Golden Age of American plutocracy, when the super-profits extorted by our monopolists from their exploitation of the planet had produced an appearance of limitless prosperity and progress, momentarily exorcising the spectres emanating from the aftermath of the first World War. At the peak of that boom American labor had attained the greatest material heights of any proletariat in history. The craft aristocracy had received a small but satisfactory share of imperialist super-profit; their leaders, like other Babbitts, regarded the Big Business regime in the "good old U.S.A." as the best of all possible worlds.

To be sure, the bulk of the proletariat in the basic industries had remained unorganized and over-exploited. But this did not trouble the self-satisfied AFL officialdom so long as their own social problem was solved and they could afford Havana cigars, Cadillacs, two-dollar dinners and three-month vacations. They could turn their backs upon the mass production workers, just as the labor bureaucrats in England ignored the very existence of the colonial slaves whose exploitation and oppression formed the basis of their own power and income.

All good things, however, come to an end, and this Golden Age vanished with the world crisis of 1929, never to return.

For the next four years the AFL slid down from its eminence, dragging the bureaucracy along with it, haunch, paunch, and jowl. Years of famine followed the years of plenty; the American aristocrats of world labor became pauperized, un-

employed, impotent. The petty-bourgeois leaders of the AFL proved as helpless as the bourgeois leaders of the U.S.A. to halt the degradation of their institutions. The precipitous economic decline, the blows of the bourgeoisie, and the incapacity of the AFL leaders had the most catastrophic consequences for the working class. By the end of 1932 the American trade union movement was completely prostrated.

This same paralysis had seized the entire nation from top to bottom. The bourgeoisie, under Hoover, floundered helplessly, powerless to check the decline of their system. The petty-bourgeoisie scattered in all directions, seeking a program and a leadership to save them from the consequences of the crisis. The collapse of capitalism, predicted by the Marxists, had become a reality in the most powerful capitalist country the world had ever known. This collapse became complete when the banks closed on March 4, 1933 and the economic life of the country came to a stand-still.

Had the labor movement of the U.S. been sufficiently well-organized, had its vanguard been sufficiently class-conscious and under the influence of a revolutionary Bolshevik party, the struggle for proletarian power against the plutocracy might then and there have taken place.

But history ordained otherwise. These subjective factors did not exist; the revolutionary situation passed; and the crisis of American capitalism was resolved in another manner. Roosevelt came forward on behalf of the bourgeoisie to assume the leadership of the petty-bourgeois and proletarian masses. His New Deal program for the salvation of the U.S.A. by way of reform temporarily overcame the social and political crisis of American capitalism. The attending international industrial upturn served to reverse the downward trend of capitalist economy. In the ensuing four years, national and world conditions enabled Roosevelt's administration to effect a partial stabilization of the economic and political sit-

uation. Thus, through the agency of the Democratic Party, the preceding revolutionary crisis was exploited solely for the political benefit of the American bourgeoisie.

### The New Stage for Labor

The four years of crisis, from 1929 to 1933, had its positive as well as its negative side. In addition to demoralizing and disorganizing the old labor movement, it destroyed many of the obstacles that had retarded the advancement of the working class, thereby creating the pre-conditions for the labor movement to spurt forward and elevate itself to a higher economic and political plane. The catastrophe had swept the ground from under the AFL bureaucracy, weakened their positions within the unions and irretrievably impaired their prestige among the working masses.

During the boom days before 1929 it was a dogma in official, liberal and even certain radical circles, that nothing could break the monopoly of the AFL bureaucracy over the existing labor movement. Since these AFL leaders would not and could not organize the workers in the mass production industries, they would not and could not be organized. The degeneration of the I.W.W., the failure of the Stalinist unions of the T.U.U.L. to acquire a mass character, and finally, the paralysis of the industrial workers during the depression, appeared for a time to confirm this appraisal.

The Marxists alone were not deceived by appearances. In opposition to the fashionable view that the AFL monopoly of labor leadership was eternal and unchangeable, the Marxists explained the social and economic conditions of competitive capitalism that had given rise to this monopoly. They pointed out that these conditions were disappearing through the integration of industry and the concentration of capital under monopolistic control. These profound alterations in the social organization of production necessarily entailed correspondingly new forms of proletarian economic and political organization. Sooner or later, they concluded—against those who systematically underestimated the objective economic necessity and inherent strength of this tendency—the industrial workers would, as they must, smash through all barriers and create for themselves the new forms of proletarian organization demanded by the changed structure of American industry.

These same factors indicated the falsity of the Stalinist dual union policy of 1928-1934—a policy based on the assumption that only under the leadership of the Communist Party would the unorganized be organized. The “radical” Stalinist policy, in reality, underestimated the progressive forces in the working class.

Events confirmed the confidence of the Marxists in the ability of the industrial proletariat to understand its needs and to fulfill them. The paralysis turned out to be but a passing phase in the life of American labor, a transition to an epoch of greater energy than it had ever before displayed. The crisis had changed not only the conditions but also the psychology of the proletarian masses. A widespread demand arose among the workers in the key industries for their organization into industrial unions. Hitherto this demand had existed amongst the workers in an inchoate form, and had been clearly expressed and unwaveringly promoted only by the most advanced political labor parties. Once the workers felt the need, it required only a series of external stimuli to push them forward. The economic impetus was provided by the industrial upturn which began in 1933; the political stimulation by Section 7-A of the N.R.A.

After four years of retreat, the proletarian masses shook off their passivity and initiated an offensive against their capitalist masters. The revival of the mass labor movement

brought with it an irresistible urge for industrial organization.

While the bourgeois press rejoiced at the economic recovery of American capitalism and saw in this the most significant characteristic of the next two years, far more important was the recovery of American labor. Inspired with fresh confidence by the reanimation of industry and goaded by their economic needs, the workers surged forward in one industry after another to achieve their demands. Seeking an agency for realizing their aims, the newly awakened workers turned toward the existing trade union organization. They streamed into the AFL by the hundreds of thousands; a mighty expansion not simply of the old craft, but of the new industrial unions, occurred within the precincts of the old mass organization. The two antagonistic tendencies of craft versus industrial unionism competed for mastery in the AFL, completely altering its inner life.

These two years witnessed the formation of new unions and the extension of the old in many important branches of industry—mining, rubber, maritime, teamsters, clothing workers, textiles, auto, etc. This provided a radically new and substantial foundation for the further development of the labor movement. These gains were achieved by means of intense struggles, such as the Minneapolis teamsters strikes, the first auto workers battles, the textile struggles, the San Francisco General Strike. Labor was on the march and, although here and there this or that detachment might be pushed back by the bosses, the army as a whole moved forward to occupy new entrenchments in their struggle against capitalist exploitation.

### 1935-1937: Establishment of the CIO

On the right wing of the AFL stood the old-line bureaucrats, rooted in the past, fearful of their privileges, hostile toward the virile new proletarian forces around them, and determined to keep them subordinate even, if necessary, to dismember them. At the opposite pole were the industrial workers, determined to organize themselves, to maintain their organizations, and increase their strength. A life-and-death struggle took place between these two tendencies—the past and the future, the old and the new.

The mass of newly organized workers kept pounding against the narrow banks of the AFL like a mighty torrent, finally overflowing its boundaries and digging a new channel for themselves when the old could no longer contain them.

The period from 1935 to 1937 saw the birth, growth and expansion of the industrial union movement to the status of a major factor in American life. In two years the CIO attained a significance comparable to that which the AFL had attained only after many decades. This is an index to the speed with which the workers can act, once they get moving in the proper direction.

The industrial union movement won its independence through the most violent struggles, against enemies within the labor movement and outside of it. This young giant challenged the most powerful corporations, the most solidly entrenched industrial barons. The power, the militancy and the creative spirit exhibited by the American proletariat during these titanic struggles should never be forgotten; they are the pledge of its future. Consider how many attempts to organize industrial unions had proved abortive, not only before 1929, but as late as 1934. Consider the entrenched positions of the craft-union bureaucrats, the antiquated structure of the AFL, the weight of its traditions. Consider the power of the industrial overlords.

None of these obstacles or enemies deterred the mass of workers. They were driven by social necessity to find a form

of organization suited to their economic lives and struggles and, after many experiments and defeats, they finally found it in the CIO. So strong was the mass pressure for industrial unionism that it pulled along a significant section of the AFL bureaucracy itself. Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky and others helped organize and lead the industrial union movement within the AFL. When that movement threatened to be strangled and dismembered by more conservative bureaucrats, the struggle between the progressive and reactionary factions came to a head. The shell of the old unionism was cracked and the CIO stepped forth upon its independent career.

The CIO then organized for the first time the workers in the auto, steel, rubber, aluminum, electrical and other basic industries. The militancy and indomitable spirit of the industrial proletariat was exhibited at its best in the auto industry. Although the auto workers suffered betrayals from a dozen different sources, extending from their own leaders to President Roosevelt, they nevertheless succeeded in establishing and maintaining their union against all assaults.

The CIO set a new high mark in aggressive class action with the sit-down strikes, which effected the unionization of the auto industry and which were the real pressure for the signing of the contract with Big Steel without a fight. The real significance of the sit-down strikes of 1936-1937 must be clearly understood. The sit-down strike is a *revolutionary* weapon for the economic organization and struggle of the proletariat. By taking physical possession of the factories, the workers thereby deny the absolute legal and social right of the capitalist to control and operate his material means of production. The workers assault and abridge the privileges of private property ownership. For the duration of the sit-down strikes, the workers impose their control over capitalist property and set their class will against that of their bosses.

No capitalist class or government can tolerate the continuance of such revolutionary acts of defiance toward capitalist property rights. Chrysler was correct when, in full-page advertisements published during the sit-down strikes in his plant, he stated that the auto workers' action was revolutionary and confiscatory. But it was so mainly by implication. The workers themselves were not conscious of the revolutionary significance of their behavior. They had only the most limited economic aims in mind when they seized the factories and remained in them.

But this does not lessen the objective significance of their action. The sit-down strikes demonstrated that the vanguard of the American proletariat is fully capable of revolutionary action against the capitalist system, even though they were not then, and are not yet, completely aware of the underlying implications of their class conduct.

The sit-down strike is the seed of which workers' control of production on a national scale can be the flower. The workers need only to say, after taking over the plant—"Here we are, here we remain, nothing will drive us out," and then to extend this anti-capitalist attitude to the bourgeois state, for the proletarian revolution to become a fact.

During this period, the CIO definitely established itself not only as an important factor in American industry but also in American politics. Roosevelt's re-election in 1936 was due in no small measure to his support by the CIO.

### 1937-1939: Trade Unionism Consolidates Its New Basis

The sharp drop in industrial production toward the end of 1937 slowed down the expansion of the trade union move-

ment. The main problem for the labor movement during the next two years was the maintenance of the newly-won positions and the defense of the gains against capitalist assault. When the recession set in, the employers endeavored to cut wages and make the workers bear the full burden of the slackening in production, as they had done after 1929. But the capitalists had to deal with an entirely different working class in 1938 and 1939.

This time the workers had sufficient organizational strength to fight on more equal terms. Instead of routing the trade unions and beating them down to the ground, the bosses were compelled to act extremely cautiously, to moderate their demands, and to effect all kinds of compromises with the organized workers. The mighty power lodged within the working class as a result of previous organization and struggle manifested itself at this point in its ability to withstand the attacks of the employing class.

The AFL and CIO dug into their entrenched positions and refused to yield ground to the employers without struggle. This period tested the stability and resisting powers of the new labor movement. The trade union movement proved that it had consolidated itself upon the twin basis of the AFL and CIO.

The economic recession manifested itself in a corresponding recession in the militancy of the workers and in a general trend toward reaction on the part of the trade union leadership. This expressed itself in the attempts of the Hutchesons and Wolls to tomahawk the CIO; in the return of the I.L.G.W.U. and the typographers to the AFL, and in the more cautious and conservative policy pursued by the CIO leaders themselves. Nevertheless this reaction did not proceed very far, and it was reversed when the ebbing strength of the CIO became renewed by the war boom.

### Achievements of American Labor: 1934-1940

What did American labor accomplish by its struggles from 1934 to 1940?

1. *The decisive section of the proletariat in the mass production industries owned and controlled by monopoly capitalism has been unionized.* Today over 10 million workers belong to the CIO, AFL and Railroad Brotherhoods, constituting the strongest labor movement in the whole capitalist world.

This is a material social factor of the utmost importance. For the first time the vanguard of the American proletariat has been economically organized as a *class*. It has been unified along industrial lines on a continental scale. This trade union movement forms the basis and provides the arena for the work of the revolutionary party. It is the chief stronghold of the working class. Its existence and independence must be guarded against every attempt to abridge or undermine it.

American industry has the most highly integrated character of any in the world. Its compact, centralized structure is reflected in the character of proletarian organization and determines the general nature of its activity. Owing to this highly organized character, all impulses, tendencies and ideas are transmitted with tremendous speed throughout the proletarian movement. A tie-up in auto production immediately affects rubber, glass, steel, coal, and many other key industries. The working class is thus bound together and tends to function more and more as a single organism. This fact must immeasurably facilitate the rapid spread of revolutionary ideas and programs once our party has established itself in the nerve centers of the trade union movement.

2. *The craft leaders of the Woll and Hutcheson school*

are losing ground within the AFL itself. The AFL numbers more members today than ever before. But the significant additions in membership have come in unions which have adapted themselves to the CIO, living in relative amity with it. The Teamsters International, now the largest, most powerful and rapidly growing unit of the AFL, best exemplifies this process.

While recognizing the decisive significance of the CIO, it would be a tremendous mistake to make a fetish of the CIO and view the AFL as a dead or dying organization. One should rather penetrate beneath the formal appearance of division within the labor movement and base one's trade union policy upon the strong bonds which unite the workers in both organizations and pull them towards unity—not only in separate strike struggles, but also on an all-inclusive organizational basis. The division between the two branches of the labor movement is perpetuated not by the workers themselves but by their leaders; and above all by the treacherous AFL die-hards.

3. *The years of struggle have left an indelible mark upon the consciousness of the American workers.* Hundreds of thousands, millions, of workers in the mass production industries have had to fight prolonged and fierce battles to win recognition of their unions and to maintain them. They have been compelled to use the strike weapon time and again. They have fought against company police, spies, stool-pigeons, local police, state troops, the snares of arbitration boards, the President and his crew of strike-stranglers, and the conservatism of their own leaders. Despite all these strike-breaking agencies and class collaborationist institutions, they have come out of these tremendous battles as victors. They have tested and tempered their forces and developed leaders in their ranks who will become the officers of the revolutionary army.

The actual class struggle is the greatest school of education for the working class. There is no substitute for such experience. Only their activities in the class struggle can arouse the masses and train them for the revolution. This is triply true in our own epoch and our own country. Every strike discloses beneath its surface the hydra-head of the proletarian revolution, which the capitalist usually discerns far more quickly than the workers themselves. The general and sit-down strikes were rehearsals for bigger battles ahead. More than anything else they disclose the dynamism latent within the American working class and its revolutionary capabilities.

4. *Unlike their European brothers, the American workers have not known a debilitating or enduring defeat.* They stand today at the height of their power. On the threshold of war, the workers are pushing forward on all economic fronts, extending their gains. The American workers can find little evidence in their own recent experiences that they cannot get what they want, provided they fight hard enough for it.

5. Although the changes in this sphere are not yet so sharply outlined and perfected as in the economic field, the *organized labor movement is also beginning to play a new and different role in the political life of the country.* The AFL officialdom continues its old policy of bargaining with capitalist party machines, according to the maxim of "reward your friends and punish your enemies," which means in reality, reward the capitalists and punish the workers. They yield, on principle, the commanding role in politics to the organizations of the capitalist class and allot a subordinate role to the working class.

The CIO, on the other hand, owes its existence to the direct and independent mass action of the industrial workers. This social factor has already manifested itself in the political form—still embryonic—of a growing demand for independent class action in politics. The CIO leaders bowdlerized this de-

mand in forming the American Labor Party in New York and Labor's Non-Partisan League in the 1936 election. These moves have been in large measure mere formal concessions to the rank and file clamor for independent labor political action, since the policies of these organizations have consisted for the main part in supporting capitalist party candidates and programs. They nevertheless represent dwarfed and distorted expressions of the underlying urge toward the creation of a national labor party based upon the trade unions. Just as the trend toward industrial unionism broke through the barriers of the old craft unionism, so the irresistible trend toward proletarian politics will sooner or later burst the confines of its present framework and result in the formation of a mass labor political organization.

The workers helped re-elect Roosevelt both in 1936 and 1940, voting as a unit when they did so. They have succeeded in extorting from the capitalist government and a conservative Congress valuable concessions: wage and hours laws, social security, Wagner Labor Act, WPA, PWA, etc. If organized labor, without independent political organization, has so strongly impressed its influence upon the nation's politics surely this influence will be a thousand-fold more forcible and formidable once it achieves independent organization.

### The Titanic Power of American Labor

Between 1934 and 1940 the titanic power of American labor manifested itself in three different forms and stages: first in an aggressive advance and victorious assault against the ununionized sectors of American industry, then in a stubborn and solid resistance against the counter-attack of the bourgeoisie. With the large-scale preparations for war during 1941, the situation took another turn. This same power again assumed an aggressive form but on a higher level of development.

This titanic power will enable the American proletariat to tear up the existing society by its roots and to construct a new one. It is upon this material power, and not upon any mystical faith in the mission of the proletariat as a "chosen people," that the revolutionary party of Marxism bases its perspective of proletarian revolution.

The renegades, the radicals for a day, and all the camp followers of the big and little bourgeoisie neither feel, see, nor understand the significance of this mighty historical force. They have no faith in the ability of the proletariat to solve its own problems and therewith the major problems of the American people. They must therefore place their faith in some other class force. Under the conditions of our epoch this can mean, in the last analysis, only the decadent, reactionary bourgeoisie.

But the American workers have already given the lie to these stupid and short-sighted petty-bourgeois falterers. In six years the American workers, by their own unaided efforts, organized themselves as an economic unit from the Atlantic to the Pacific; they created the most vital trade union organization in the world today—the CIO.

Two simultaneous and opposing processes of mobilization, training and conscription have been going on in this country. On one side the capitalist government is conscripting its armies for the imperialist conquest of the globe. On the other side, the American proletariat has been summoning, mobilizing, and training its class forces for another kind of war: the war against capitalist exploitation and social slavery.

If one should ask, who will win that war? the American proletariat has already indicated its answer. We, the workers, will win! To help prepare the conditions for that victory and to hasten its advent is the task of our party.

# The Curve of Capitalist Development

(A Letter to the Editors in Place of the Promised Article.)

By LEON TROTSKY

**NOTE:** The article by Trotsky, reprinted below, originally appeared in Russian in Book 4 of *Vestnik Sotsialisticheskoi Akademii* April-July 1923. It has never before been translated into English.

In Marxist literature this letter is most closely comparable to Engels' famous letters on historical materialism. Here Trotsky takes the ideas expounded by the founders of Marxism; applies them to some basic problems of capitalist development; and thereby opens new paths and perspectives for the extension and use of the dialectical materialist method.

The article itself grew out of Trotsky's preoccupation with the specific political-economic problems presented to the revolutionary proletarian movement after 1921. This date marks the beginning of a period of relative stability within the USSR (the NEP) and in the relations between the young workers' state and the capitalist environment, following the post-war revolutionary upheavals. Simultaneously with the establishment of the unstable equilibrium between the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist world, that same world was shaken by a severe economic crisis. The conjuncture of these two contrasting events demanded a re-valuation of the possibilities of capitalist stabilization in connection with the prospects of proletarian revolution.

Trotsky presented his answer to these problems in a report delivered to the Third Congress of the Communist International on "The World Economic Crisis and the Tasks of the Communist International." In this report Trotsky attacked the reformist conception that capitalism could automatically reestablish itself on new foundations. "Faith in automatism of development," he wrote, "is the most characteristic trait of opportunism." He also derided the mechanical notion advanced by the then ultra-left wing of Bolshevism, that capitalism must continue upon its downward trend without interruption or reversal until its complete collapse. Against these one-sided appraisals, Trotsky presented the dialectical conception that the historical degradation of capitalism is characterized by sharp pulsations which conflict at critical points with the main descending curve of development.

In the Comintern discussions, one group held that further impoverishment of the masses would generate new revolutionary crises; another, that a new flush of prosperity was required to invigorate the proletariat. Trotsky asserted that both of these formulations were one-sided and left out of account the main-spring of revolution. "Neither impoverishment nor prosperity as such can lead to the revolution, but the shifts of prosperity and impoverishment, crises, mutability, absence of stability—these are the motive factors of revolution." It is the sharp turns in historical development which produce revolutions in social life—and the more abrupt the turn, the greater the revolutionary consequences.

In his report to the Third World Congress, Trotsky elucidated this idea with specific reference to the revolutions of 1848, 1905 and the period of 1920-1921. The present article is a theoretical expansion and deepening of these earlier observations. It sketches in generalized form the dynamic interrelationships between the productive foundations of capitalist society and the events occurring in its superstructure.

The problem Trotsky raised and the solution he indicated had not only great practical importance for revolutionary strategy in the class struggle but contained the widest significance for the development of Marxist thought. By 1922-1923 the epigones of Marxism, under Bukharin's direction, had already begun to

vulgarize historical materialism and to convert it from a tool of analysis into a new ikon. They kept repeating old formulas instead of investigating new realities and reshaping the instruments of thought handed on to them by Marx, Engels and Lenin. Instead of advancing Marxist theory, these vulgarizers paved the way for its subsequent perversion at the hands of the Stalinist professors.

In addition to its profound theoretical interest, Trotsky's observations on the motive factors of revolution have the most immediate bearing on the present situation within the U.S. The war boom is producing deep dislocations in American economy and extreme shifts in all the decisive spheres of social life. Such swift and abrupt transitions from impoverishment to prosperity and back again, from war to peace and back again, are precisely the kind of social movements which give rise to crises of revolutionary intensity. Whoever wishes to grasp the innermost significance of current events should study with utmost care the ideas herewith presented by Trotsky as they apply to the present developments in the United States and to the world situation. —The EDITORS.

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In his introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggle in France* Engels wrote:

"In judging events and groups of events in modern history one can never arrive at the *ultimate* economic causes. Even at the present time when highly specialized literature provides us with such rich stores of material, it is impossible even in England to follow from day to day either the trend of industry and trade on the world market, or all the changes which take place in methods of production—it is impossible to follow them in order to be able at any given moment to draw a general balance of these multiplex, interlacing and constantly changing factors. Moreover, the most important of these factors operate by and large in a masked form for a long period of time, until they finally manifest themselves suddenly and potently. No clear picture of the economic history of a given period can be obtained until this period itself has reached its completion. The picture is obtained only later on, *post factum*, after the material has already been collected and sifted. Statistics constitute here an indispensable auxiliary vehicle, but statistics always lag behind. In consequence, it is only too often necessary in the case of current, modern history to approach that factor which is of most decisive importance as if it were a constant; to view the economic situation, as it initially unfolds in the period under investigation as if it were constant and immutable throughout the entire period; and, on the other hand, of necessity to center attention only on such changes in the economic situation as arise from clear and indisputable events—and which therefore are themselves as clear and indisputable as the very events. The materialistic method is therefore only too often compelled to confine itself to reducing political conflicts to the clash between the interests of those classes in society and those factions within the classes which are already given at the outset of the investigation and which have already been created by economic development; and to regard the various political parties as a more or less adequate expression of their respective classes

and factions. It is self evident *how great a source of error is constituted by unavoidably ignoring the simultaneously occurring changes in the economic situation, this true basis of all the events under investigation.*" (Our emphasis).

These ideas which Engels formulated shortly before his death were not further developed by anyone after him. To my recollection they are even rarely quoted—much more rarely than they should be. Still more, their meaning seems to have escaped many Marxists. The explanation for this fact is once again to be found in the causes indicated by Engels which militate against any kind of finished economic interpretation of *current* history.

It is a very difficult task, impossible to solve in its full scope, to determine those subterranean impulses which economics transmits to the politics of today; and yet the explanation of political phenomena cannot be postponed because the struggle cannot wait. Hence flows the necessity of resorting in daily political activity to explanations which are so general that through long usage they become transformed into truisms.

As long as politics keeps flowing in one and the same forms, within one and the same banks, and at about one and the same speed, i.e., as long as the accumulation of economic quantity has not passed into a change of political quality, this type of clarifying abstraction ("the interests of the bourgeoisie," "imperialism," "fascism") still more or less serves their task: not to interpret a political fact in all its concreteness, but to reduce it to a familiar social type, which is, of course, intrinsically of inestimable importance.

But when a serious change occurs in the situation, all the more so a sharp turn, such general explanations reveal their complete inadequacy, and become wholly transformed into empty truisms. In such cases it is invariably necessary to probe analytically much more deeply in order to determine the qualitative aspect, and if possible also to measure quantitatively the impulses of economics upon politics. These "impulses" represent the dialectic form of the "tasks" which originate in the dynamic foundation and are submitted for solution in the sphere of the superstructure.

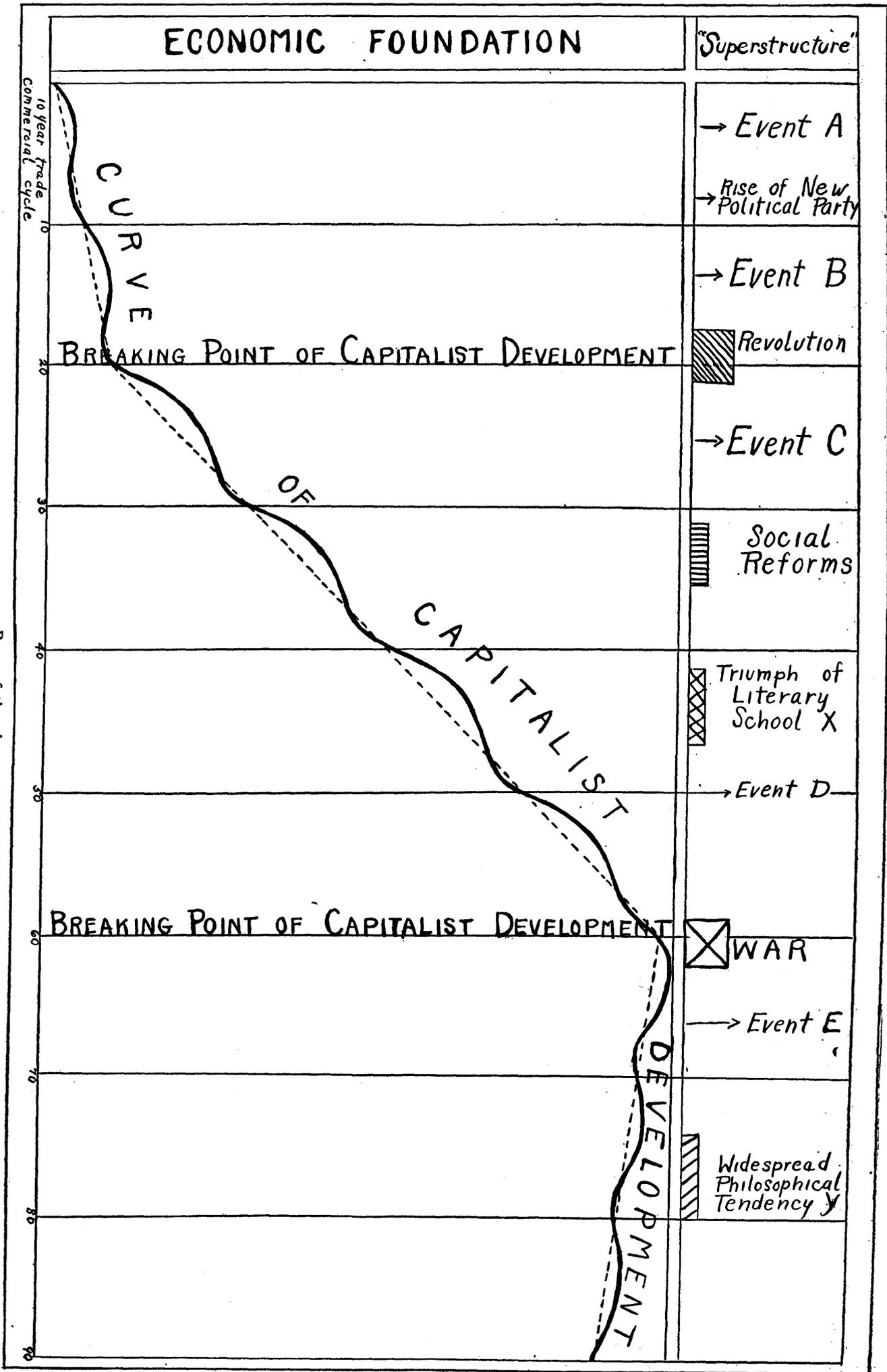
Oscillations of the economic conjuncture (boom-depression-crisis) already signify in and of themselves periodic impulses which give rise now to quantitative, now to qualitative changes, and to new formations in the field of politics. The revenues of possessing classes, the state budget, wages, unemployment, proportions of foreign trade, etc., are intimately bound up with the economic conjuncture, and, in their turn, exert the most direct influence on politics. This alone is enough to make one understand how important and fruitful it is to follow step by step the history of political parties, state institutions, etc. in relation to the cycles of capitalist development. By this we do not at all mean to say that these cycles explain *everything*: this is excluded if only for the reason that cycles themselves are not fundamental but derivative economic phenomena. They unfold on the basis of the development of productive forces through the medium of market relations. But cycles explain a *great deal*, forming as they do through automatic pulsation an indispensable dialectic spring in the mechanics of capitalist society. The breaking points of the trade-industrial conjuncture bring us into a closer proximity with the critical knots in the web of the development of political tendencies, legislation, and all forms of ideology.

But capitalism is not characterized solely by the periodic recurrence of cycles—otherwise what would occur would be a

complex repetition and not dynamic development. Trade-industrial cycles are of different character in different periods. The chief difference between them is determined by quantitative inter-relations between the crisis and the boom period within each given cycle. If the boom restores with a surplus the destruction or constriction during the preceding crisis, then capitalist development moves upward. If the crisis, which signalizes destruction, or, at all events, contraction of productive forces, surpasses in its intensity the corresponding boom, then we get as a result a decline in economy. Finally, if the crisis and boom approximate each other in force, then we get a temporary and stagnating equilibrium in economy. This is the schema in the rough. We observe in history that homogeneous cycles are grouped in a series. Entire epochs of capitalist development exist when a number of cycles is characterized by sharply delineated booms and weak, short-lived crises. As a result we have a sharply rising movement of the basic curve of capitalist development. There obtain epochs of stagnation when this curve, while passing through partial cyclical oscillations, remains on approximately the same level for decades. And finally, during certain historical periods the basic curve, while passing as always through cyclical oscillations, dips downward as a whole, signalizing the decline of productive forces.

It is already possible to postulate *a priori* that epochs of energetic capitalist development must possess features—in politics, in law, in philosophy, in poetry—sharply different from those in the epochs of stagnation or economic decline. Still more, a transition from one epoch of this kind to a different one must naturally produce the greatest convulsions in the relationships between classes and between states. At the Third World Congress of the Comintern we had to stress this point—in the struggle against the purely mechanistic conception of capitalist disintegration now in progress. If periodic replacements of "normal" booms by "normal" crises find their reflection in all spheres of social life, then a transition from an entire boom epoch to one of decline, or vice versa, engenders the greatest historical disturbances and it is not hard to show that in many cases revolutions and wars straddle the borderline between two different epochs of economic development, i.e., the junction of two different segments of the capitalist curve. To analyze all of modern history from this standpoint is truly one of the most gratifying tasks of dialectic materialism.

Following the Third World Congress of the Comintern, Professor Kondratiev approached this problem—as usual, painstakingly evading the formulation of the question adopted by the Congress itself—and attempted to set up alongside of the "minor cycle," covering a period of ten years, the concept of a "major cycle," embracing approximately fifty years. According to this symmetrically stylized construction, a major economic cycle consists of some five minor cycles, and furthermore, half of them have the character of boom, while the other half is that of crisis, with all the necessary transitional stages. The statistical determinations of major cycles compiled by Kondratiev should be subjected to careful and not over-credulous verification, both in respect to individual countries as well as the world market as a whole. It is already possible to refute in advance Professor Kondratiev's attempt to invest epochs labelled by him as major cycles with the self-same "rigidly lawful rhythm" that is observable in minor cycles; it is an obviously false generalization from a formal analogy. The periodical recurrence of minor cycles is conditioned by the internal dynamics of capitalist forces, and manifests itself always and everywhere once the market comes into existence.



ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

"Superstructure"

10 year trade cycle

CURVE

BREAKING POINT OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

OF

CAPITALIST

BREAKING POINT OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT

→ Event A

→ Rise of New Political Party

→ Event B

Revolution

→ Event C

Social Reforms

Triumph of Literary School X

→ Event D

WAR

→ Event E

Widespread Philosophical Tendency Y

Base of the chart

As regards the large segments of the capitalist curve of development (50 years) which Professor Kondratiev incautiously proposes to designate also as cycles, their character and duration is determined not by the internal interplay of capitalist forces but by those external conditions through whose channel capitalist development flows. The acquisition by capitalism of new countries and continents, the discovery of new natural resources, and, in the wake of these, such major facts of "superstructural" order as wars and revolutions determine the character and the replacement of ascending, stagnating or declining epochs of capitalist development.

Along what path then should investigation proceed?

To establish the curve of capitalist development in its non-periodic (basic) and periodic (secondary) phases and breaking points in respect to individual countries of interest to us and in respect to the entire world market—such is the first part of the task. Once we have the fixed curve (the method of fixing it is of course a special question in itself and by no means a simple one, but it pertains to the field of economic-statistical technique), we can break it down into periods, depending upon the angle of rise and decline in reference to the axis of abscissas (see the graph). In this way we obtain a pictorial scheme of economic development, i.e. the characterization of the "true basis of all the events under investigation" (Engels).

Depending upon the concreteness and detail of our investigation, we may require a number of such schemas: one relating to agriculture, another to heavy industry, and so on. With this schema as our starting point, we must next synchronize it with political events (in the widest sense of the term) and we can then seek not only for correspondence, or to put it more cautiously, inter-relationship between definitely delineated epochs of social life and the sharply expressed segments of the curve of capitalist development but also for those direct subterranean impulses which unleash events. Along this road it is naturally not at all difficult to fall into the most vulgar schematization; and, above all, to ignore the tenacious internal conditioning and succession of ideological processes; and to become oblivious of the fact that economics is decisive only in the *last analysis*. There has been no lack of caricature-conclusions drawn from the Marxist method! But to renounce on this account the above-indicated formulation of the question ("it smells of economism") is to demonstrate complete inability to understand the essence of Marxism which seeks for the causes of changes in social superstructure in the changes of the economic foundation, and not anywhere else.

At the risk of incurring the theoretical ire of opponents of "economism" (and partly with the intention of provoking their indignation) we present here a schematic chart which depicts arbitrarily a curve of capitalist development for a period of ninety years along the above-construed lines. The general direction of the basic curve is determined by the character of the partial conjunctural curves of which it is composed. In our schema three periods are sharply demarcated: 20 years of very gradual capitalist development (segment A-B); 40 years of energetic upswing (segment B-C); 30 years of protracted crisis and decline (segment C-D). If we introduce into this diagram the most important historical events for the corresponding period, then the pictorial juxtaposition of major political events with the variations of the curve is alone sufficient to provide the idea of the invaluable starting points for historico-materialist investigations. The parallelism of political events and economic changes is of course very relative. As a general rule, the "superstructure" registers and

reflects new formations in the economic sphere only after considerable delay. But this law must be laid bare through a concrete investigation of those complex inter-relationships of which we here present a pictorial hint.

In the report to the Third World Congress we illustrated our idea with certain historical examples drawn from the epoch of the revolution of 1848, the epoch of the first Russian revolution (1905), and the period through which we are now passing (1920-1921). We refer the reader to these examples (see the *New Course*). They do not supply anything finished but they do characterize adequately enough the extraordinary importance of the approach advanced by us—above all, for understanding the most critical leaps in history: wars and revolutions. If in this letter we utilize a purely arbitrary pictorial scheme, without attempting to take any actual period in history as a basis, we do so for the simple reason that any attempt of this sort would resemble far too much an incautious anticipation of those results flowing from a complex and painstaking investigation which has yet to be made.

At the present time it is of course still impossible to foresee to any precise degree just what sections of the field of history will be illuminated and just how much light will be cast by a materialist investigation which would proceed from a more concrete study of the capitalist curve and the inter-relationship between the latter and all the aspects of social life. Conquests which may be attained on this road can be determined only as the result of such an investigation itself, which must be more systematic, more orderly than those historic-materialist excursions hitherto undertaken. In any case, such an approach to modern history promises to enrich the theory of historical materialism with conquests far more precious than the extremely dubious speculative juggling, with the concepts and terms of the materialist method which has, under the pens of some of our Marxists, transplanted the methods of formalism into the domain of the materialist dialectic; which has led to reducing the task to rendering definitions and classifications more precise and to splitting empty abstractions into four equally empty parts; in short, has adulterated Marxism by means of the indecently elegant mannerisms of Kantian epigones. It is a silly thing indeed endlessly to sharpen and resharpen an instrument, to chip away Marxist steel when the task is to apply the instrument in working over the raw material!

In our opinion this theme could provide the subject matter for the most fruitful work of our Marxist seminars on historical materialism. Independent investigations undertaken in this sphere would undoubtedly shed new light or, at least, throw more light on isolated historical events and entire epochs. Finally, the very habit of thinking in terms of the foregoing categories would extremely facilitate political orientation in the present epoch, which is an epoch that reveals more openly than ever before the connection between capitalist economics that has attained the peak of saturation with capitalist politics that has become completely unbridled.

I promised long ago to develop this theme for the *Vestnik Sotsialisticheskoi Akademii*. Up to now I have been prevented by circumstances from keeping this promise. I am not sure that I shall be able to fulfill it in the near future. For this reason I confine myself in the meantime to this letter.

April 21, 1923.

# Dictatorship in the South

By ALBERT PARKER

Although the illusion that the Democratic Administration at Washington is their government may be accepted by many workers in the North today, a Negro would have to be very gullible to be taken in by it. The argument advanced by Northern democrats of the capitalized or uncapitalized variety that "After all, it is you, the people, who elect the government and therefore it is you who are responsible for the laws of this great democracy" cannot convince the millions of Negro sharecroppers and workers who are more or less openly denied the right to vote, both by law and by terrorism.

It took a long and bloody civil war, in which the bourgeois-Republican government had to militarize over 200,000 Negroes whom it had had no intention of freeing in the first place, before the Negro people were legally recognized as human beings with equal rights, even in respect to the ballot.

But, just as the right to vote was won by force and violence and the establishment of a Northern dictatorship over the South, so was it taken away. The Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist organizations beat up and murdered the Negro voters in all the areas of the South where they could get away with it. By force and by corruption at the polls, the landlords began to recover full political power in one state after another in the 12 years following the end of the Civil War.

Finally, in 1876, the Republican industrialists of the North concluded an agreement with the Democratic landlords of the South, at the expense of the Negroes and poor whites. In return for four years' more control of the White House, the Republicans removed the Northern troops from Southern territory and gave back complete control of the South to the land-holding ruling class that had conducted the war against the North.

The Fifteenth Amendment, however, remained on the books, and it was not possible in all places to mobilize sufficient forces to keep the Negroes from the ballot by violence alone. Ingenious lawyers were set to work by the ruling class to devise state legislation to disfranchise the Negro "legally." Constitutional conventions were called in most of the southern states to enact these new devices into law. Mississippi showed the way; the other states that followed "improved" on the Mississippi model, which accomplished its purpose without violating the written word of the Federal Constitution.

The principal devices for disfranchising the Negro adopted at that time, most of which have been carried over to the present day, are the following: the payment of poll or other taxes before registration can take place, literacy qualifications, property qualifications, the "grandfather clause."

## Virginia—A Mirror of "Democracy"

A typical example of the proceedings of these state conventions may be found in the Virginia convention of 1901, at which Carter Glass, "Unreconstructed Rebel" and Roosevelt's dear friend, made his first bid for fame.

The Negro had been almost completely disfranchised in Virginia, by that time. But the ruling class, fearing a future alliance at the polls between white and Negro sharecroppers and small farmers, called this convention to "protect and guarantee" white supremacy, that is to say, to legalize the disfranchisement of the Negro, and through it, of many whites as well.

Glass, one of the leading advocates of the \$1.50 poll tax, was loud in his promises to the delegates that the poor whites would not be affected by it. He spent most of his energy explaining the advantages of adopting his own "understanding clause" in addition to the poll tax. Under this, a Negro applicant who wants to vote and has already paid his poll tax, can be disqualified if he cannot "understand" some selected clauses of the constitution, and "explain them to the satisfaction of the white election official." In some states, as Roscoe Conkling Simmons of the *Chicago Defender* puts it, these questions may be "something like this: 'What is the difference between a pure democracy and governments described in the Federalist'."

In this way, any Negro may be kept from the ballot in a "legal" way, and indeed many a Negro of college education in the South has been found who couldn't explain these things to the "satisfaction" of the officials.

Glass took the floor to point with pride to "the uncontroverted fact that the article of suffrage which the convention will today adopt does not necessarily deprive a single white man of the ballot, but will inevitably oust from the existing electorate four-fifths of the Negro voters. That was the purpose of the convention; that will be its achievement."

When someone asked if the Negro was not being deprived of his vote by fraud and discrimination, Glass answered: "By fraud, no; by discrimination, yes. But it will be discrimination within the letter of the law, and not in violation of the law. Discrimination! Why that is precisely what we propose; that exactly is what this convention was elected for—to discriminate to the very extremity permissible under the limitations of the Federal Constitution with a view to the elimination of every Negro voter who can be gotten rid of, legally, without materially impairing the numerical strength of the white electorate. . . . As has been said, we have accomplished our purpose strictly within the limitations of the Federal Constitution by legislating against the characteristics of the black race, and not against the 'race, color or previous condition' of the people themselves. It is a fine discrimination, indeed, that we have practiced in the fabrication of this plan."

While the delegates may have agreed that this was a "fine" discrimination, they were not sure that the poor white farmers might not understand that they too could be barred in great numbers from the ballot and therefore vote against this constitution, so the convention agreed not to submit it to the voters. Like Mississippi's, the new Virginia constitution was just proclaimed in effect, and left at that.

That the fears of the small farmers and sharecroppers had been justified was shown at the very next election. Of a population of 1,854,184 in the 1900 presidential election, 264,095, or 14.2% had voted. In 1904, after the new constitution went into effect, the total vote was 129,111—or less than half the vote of 1900, which had already been much lower than the national average because of the terror employed against Negro voters.

It is interesting to note that Virginia is supposed to be one of the more advanced and liberal southern states, being one of the old border states. Nevertheless, although its population increased over 800,000 from 1900 to 1940, and its voting popu-

lation increased by more than 80,000 in the same period, it has never regained to this day the same percentage of voting population it had in 1900 prior to the proclamation of the new constitution. In the 1940 presidential election, only 12.9% of the people were permitted into the polls.

### Devices of Disfranchisement

In many states clauses were adopted which were supposed to guarantee to the poor or the unlettered whites that they would not be discriminated against by such things as literacy and "understanding" tests. Among these was the "grandfather clause," which was finally declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1914, when many other substitutes for it had already been found and put into practice. This clause gave the voting right to those who themselves or whose parents had had it prior to a certain date. The date set in each case was 1861 or earlier, before the slaves had been freed. It accorded permanent registration without tax or other qualifications, and was designed to eradicate the suspicion of the poor whites that they, too, would be disfranchised.

This clause, however, was never very widely used. In his book, *Race, Class and Party*, Paul Lewinson quotes the fears of an Alabama newspaper that there were "large numbers of Negroes, who perhaps would not be unable to establish legitimacy of birth, but who could nevertheless easily establish the identity of white fathers and grandfathers" and thus win a vote. But it is certain that the southern landlords were not sorry to see this law wiped off the books, for with it went the bother of troubling about a large section of the poor white vote.

Another measure designed to gain support of the illiterate whites was the property qualification which is still used in some states as an alternative to literacy tests. In Alabama, for example, 40 acres of land or \$300 worth of property, in Georgia, 40 acres of land or \$500 of property, entitle an individual to a vote. Possession of this property permits admitted illiterates the right to vote.

While many variants of the old devices are still in use, even though court rulings have sometimes made it necessary to streamline them, the two main legal devices of present day usage are the poll tax and the white primary laws.

The poll tax legislation was quite frankly intended, as were the other devices, to strike at the "characteristics" of the Negro people, both real and assumed, as a means of getting around the amendments to the federal constitution that prohibit discrimination because of race or color. And the Supreme Court did not find in it any violation of the 14th Amendment because it could find "nothing in the text of the provision that could possibly be said to expressly discriminate because of race or color." In other words, according to the court, the fact that the Negroes, because of their economic status, could not or did not pay the poll tax was not the fault of the statute, and therefore could not be held against the statute.

The three main "characteristics" of the Negro, on which the southern legislators based their device of disfranchisement, were his "poverty," his "laziness," and his habit of being "notoriously careless about keeping receipts of any kind." Actually, it was only the first that really characterized the average Negro in the South; the others were added as trimmings for "white supremacy."

Certainly, to the average Negro sharecropper, the sum of \$1.00 to \$3.00 a year is not a light consideration. Payment of such a poll tax is a heavy price for what is not yet the right to vote but only the right to register to vote, as will be shown later in discussing the white primary. Allan A. Michie and

Frank Ryhlick, in their book *Dixie Demagogues*, say of the Texas poll tax: "The \$1.75 poll tax seems small, but, to hundreds of thousands of impoverished whites, Mexicans and Negroes, it represents food for another week or a new pair of shoes for one of the children." Only a rare individual would deprive his family of \$1.75, when it means so much, for the privilege of paying a poll tax which by itself gives no guarantee of a vote.

In many poll-tax states, not only is payment of the poll tax for the current year required, but payment of all accumulated poll taxes for previous years as well! Moreover, in Georgia, for example, penalties are attached to late payment of the tax amounting to a 7% interest fee and a collection fee. It is easy to understand why, once a sharecropper falls behind in payment of his tax, it is almost impossible for him ever to catch up again. His disfranchisement becomes practically permanent.

In most states the legislators took advantage of the second "characteristic" of "laziness" by setting the date for payment of the poll tax a good many months before the elections or the primaries. Since the Negro was "lazy," they figured, he would never bother to pay his tax so long before elections.

In Texas, the tax must be paid on or before January 31. "That is winter, even in Texas," Michie and Ryhlick point out, "when conditions are hardest and the primaries are several months off. Even if a citizen gets excited over the election later in the year, he cannot enfranchise himself under any provision."

The third "characteristic," keeping receipts, may seem trivial, but it is not really so. Not only is payment of the poll tax made mandatory, but producing the receipt for it before registration or election officials. In the long period between payment of the poll tax and the elections, many people may lose their receipts. Election officials may then exclude Negroes from registration, while admitting to the polls their white political friends who hadn't paid the tax by the simple expedient of forgetting to ask for it.

The poll tax money is also craftily used to bribe the white voters into acquiescence. Of the \$1.75 collected in Texas, \$1.50 goes to the state and \$.25 to the county. \$1.00 of the state's share goes into the school fund, and the demagogues offer the masses of disfranchised workers this alternative: either keep up the poll tax or ruin the school system of the state and deprive your children of all opportunity to get an education.

### The "Democratic Primary"

While the poll tax denies millions of both Negroes and whites the right to vote, the "white primary," or "Democratic primary," as it is sometimes called, is a measure much more clearly aimed at the Negro alone.

This measure was invented to hold back the few Negroes who manage to get past the other barriers of poll tax, literacy, understanding, property, etc. Under present conditions in the South, it is more effective than the others, because while the overcoming of the other obstacles depends to a very small extent upon the position of the individual, the white primary applies to the Negro people as a whole and excludes them as such.

This device is based upon the idea that a political party has the right to determine who shall belong to it and who shall participate in its primary elections which select its candidates and determine its policies. Under it, the party's state or county committees may and do decide that no Negro of whatever political viewpoint is eligible for membership or participation in the primaries, at the same time that thousands of white

Republicans are freely admitted to vote in all its primary elections.

This situation prevails only because the South, like Germany, Italy and other totalitarian places, suffers under one-party rule. The Republican Party doesn't amount to two cents there, and the Democratic ticket alone wins the elections. To be able to vote in the regular elections under these conditions without having voted in the primaries is useless, as the real elections in the South take place in the Democratic primaries, where campaigning is heated and places fiercely contested for. It is well known that far more people vote in the Democratic primaries than in the regular elections for all parties. Most people don't bother to go to the polls for regular elections because the winning candidate has already been chosen and the issues settled in the primaries. Casting a vote for the Republican Party in the South is like casting it into the Atlantic, and minority parties can't even get on the ballot.

Under the white primary device, therefore, the Negro who has passed all other tests is given the right to vote only for those candidates and platforms which have been decided in a white man's primary, from which he has already been excluded.

It is understandable why most Negroes don't bother to go through all the other obstacles to voting. It is not surprising that they don't want to spend from \$1 to \$3 for the useless right to vote for candidates whom they had no part in choosing, or for candidates who are certain to be defeated. It is no wonder that *The Waco Messenger* in January of this year, while complaining bitterly about the indifference of the average Negro voter to the approaching deadline for payment of the poll tax, was able, in attempting to correct this attitude, only to point to "other elections," such as those for the school board and the city commission, where there are no primaries (and no very important questions are settled).

Just as the poll tax has been taken to the courts, so the white primary is being contested there too. Leo Alilunas, in his *Legal Restrictions on the Negro in Politics*, in *The Journal of Negro History*, April 1940, has correctly summed up the attitude of the courts to date:

"The expedient adopted by the Democratic party in the various states has been recognized by the judiciary, both state and federal, as being constitutional, and not in violation of the 14th and 15th Amendments. The judiciary has ruled that a party, being a voluntary organization, is competent to determine its personnel."

### The Stronghold of Reaction

Now what is the effect of these measures on political life in the South, and, through the South, on the Nation? First of all, it means that the masses of people, Negro and white, have no method of registering protests at the polls against anything or anyone. Secondly, it means that they play no more part in southern government than do the inhabitants of Alaska. Thirdly, it means that the political and state machinery of the South belong to the ruling class just as completely and openly as the land and factory machinery belong to them. Fourthly, it means that the South sends to Congress, year after year, the most reactionary political figures in the nation, who feel no pressure whatsoever from those whom they are supposed to represent, and who play a role in Washington legislation far out of proportion to the number of people who elected them.

An examination of voting percentages during the 1940 presidential elections shows clearly what kind of democracy exists in those southern states whose representatives are the staunchest defenders of the President's program for a "war for democracy."

State	Percentage of Population That Voted in 1940
South Carolina	5.2
Mississippi	8.
Georgia	10.
Arkansas	10.3
Alabama	10.4
Virginia	12.9
Louisiana	15.7
Texas	16.2
Tennessee	17.9
North Carolina	23.3
Florida	25.7
Kentucky	34.1
Oklahoma	35.3

As compared with these states, Illinois got a 53.4% vote. Other states in the northern, eastern and western sections of the country ranged down from that figure through the 50's and 40's. The national average was 35%. That is to say, only 2 of the 13 southern states came anywhere near the national average, which, it must be remembered, is lowered precisely by these southern states.

By restricting the right of franchise to the ruling class and its middle class retainers, the "representatives of the people" in the South are able to return to the same seat in Congress again and again. The turn-over from the South being much smaller than the other states, where greater electoral participation by the masses succeeds in sweeping unpopular officials out of office more quickly, southern politicians usually have greater seniority than others.

As a result, they have a stranglehold on important and strategic positions in all the leading committees of Congress, where they faithfully serve those whom they really represent, the big business and land interests. Not only are they able to use these positions to kill in committee measures of special interest to the South, such as anti-lynch legislation, but to unite with reactionary groups from other states to hold up national wage and hour legislation, W.P.A. and housing appropriations, etc.

This year, for example, as the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* put it, "We have this situation as a result of the self-perpetuating poll tax dynasties... 17 out of 33 chairmanships in the Senate and 18 out of 48 chairmanships in the House will be filled by men from 13 out of the 48 states. In addition, this minority group of states will furnish the Speaker of the House, the Senate Majority Leader and the leader of the Democratic caucus."

Men from little more than one-quarter of the states will be chairmen of more than half the Senate committees and more than one-third of the House Committees! The reader of history will be struck immediately by the similarity between the situation existing just before the Civil War, when the South by counting three-fifths of the slaves toward its population was able to wield an undue influence in both houses, and the present situation when the South is getting representation for all the millions of Negro and white farm hands and wage slaves who can't vote any more than could the Negro slaves of 80 years ago.

### Proposed Remedies

Besides taking the issue of the poll tax to the courts, attempts have been made to repeal it by legislation. The attempts have included a bill to prohibit the collection of the tax as a requirement for voting in elections for members of Congress, the Senate and the President of the United States (the Geyer Bill which would end the poll tax for federal elec-

tions, but not touch it in state elections), a bill "to enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments" that would base representation in Congress from the states on the basis of the total number of votes cast in the last general election, instead of on the population (the Marcantonio bill, which would give the Bourbons the choice of letting the masses vote or having their representation in Congress cut); and bills in the various state legislatures to abolish the poll tax altogether.

All these bills are worthy of support, although it is interesting to observe the extremely varied motives of their sponsors. Geyer, a California Democrat, wants to sweep the southern Democrats out of their prominent and often dominating position in the party and win undisputed control of it for his own wing, gain Negro support for the Democrats in the non-southern states, and perhaps avert explosions which may be brewing among the southern masses. It is unlikely that his proposal will be accepted by Roosevelt when he is today forced to lean so heavily for passage of his war bills on these same southern congressmen who are elected only because of the poll tax and similar measures.

On the other hand, a man like Senator Bilbo of Mississippi, also favors abolition of the poll tax in his state. He is one of the South's most rabid Negro-baiting demagogues, who has advocated sending all the Negroes back to Africa. He wants to restore the right of the poor white farmers to vote in order to provide the mass base for a continuation in office of fakers like himself who pretend to represent the interests of the southern white farmers against the attacks of Wall Street and Big Business.

While the passage of the Geyer bill or one like it is cer-

tainly necessary, it is an illusion to believe that mere adoption of such a measure will to any substantial degree change the situation, especially as regards the Negro.

For, over and above all these legislative and statutory restrictions, stands the open threat of violence and terrorism by the night-riding landlords and their vigilantes. It must be remembered they were able to secure passage of these anti-democratic measures only by terrorizing and intimidating the Negro and confusing the poor white masses, and that they have been able to maintain the present status only by the threat (and use) of the mob, the rope and the torch.

The Negro people will be able to win back their voting and civil rights only when they are prepared to fight and take them. Passage of a poll-tax bill will not be a substitute for such preparations, as can be seen by looking again at the 1940 voting percentages of Florida and North Carolina which abolished the poll tax in recent years.

Negroes got a measure of democracy in the South for the first time after the Civil War through the establishment of a bourgeois dictatorship that protected them for a while against southern reaction. By force and violence and agreement with the Republican capitalists of the North, the southern ruling class recaptured power and destroyed the Negro's democratic rights. Only by the struggle for establishment of a new dictatorship, this time of the exploited working class aided by the oppressed farmers and sharecroppers will a new period of real democracy be inaugurated in which the Negro will not simply regain his rights but be integrated as an equal in the brotherhood of all the toilers.

# The Permanent Revolution

By JACK WEBER

What distinguishes the great Marxists from others in the working class movement? It is above all their fundamental grasp of revolutionary theory. Engels emphasized this essential characteristic of leadership by stating that there were three forms of revolutionary struggle: political, economic and theoretic. But let no one imagine that when Marx and Engels refer to theory, they want workers to set to memory the dry bones of some abstract formulas. That is the view of Marxism that the revisionists and the philistines try to foist on us.

The founders of socialism meant that Marxism is a *living* science. If this science is to be put to social use then its practitioners must learn to apply correctly all the weapons in its arsenal. Look at any of the classics in Marxist literature and you will find that, without losing sight for one moment of the meaning of the whole situation under dissection, the writer follows every single detail of the movement and shows its inter-connections with all other social elements. It was this meticulous attention to detail that led Trotsky to give such precision to Marx's theory of permanent revolution. The Marxist is not satisfied till he has thought things through to the very end. It was Marx who taught this method and it is nowhere better illustrated than in his, and Engels', work on the Revolution of 1848.

The year 1848 marks the dividing line between two distinct stages in the hectic development of capitalism. In the first stage, before that year, the revolutions that took place in Europe were out-and-out bourgeois ones. But the revolution of 1848 marked something entirely new in history: the first appearance of the proletariat as an independent political force

in society. That momentous event was itself signaled by the appearance of the Communist Manifesto. It was no accident that Marx, spokesman for the *Communist League*, issued this message to the workers of the world on the very eve of the revolution. The Manifesto foresaw the revolution and summed up all the social currents of the time. Into its creation had gone all the immense research of Marx, particularly that concerning the relations of the classes in society in and after the French Revolution.

The Revolution of 1789 was national in scope and character, the bourgeoisie assuming the leadership of the oppressed artisans and tradesmen, and of the peasant-serfs. But Marx noted that it took three years for the revolution to gain momentum and for the left petty-bourgeois elements, the Jacobins, to gain control and to lead the movement forward. Finally it was a section of the Jacobins, the Montagnards, the left wing of the democrats, who led the semi-proletarian *sans-culottes*, that destroyed feudalism and opened the road for capitalism. The democratic forces in the city that had grown up out of the guilds were not yet differentiated but contained in embryo the two future classes, the capitalists and the proletarians. That is why the bourgeoisie led a united nation. The so-called extreme elements, like the Hebertists, while they may be looked upon as forerunners of the future, were nevertheless completely Utopian, since the forces of production upon which alone communism could be based, had still to be developed. The French Revolution therefore resulted in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie supported by the artisans and the peasants.

Marx studied the rhythm of the French Revolution with the utmost care in order to determine not only the general laws of revolution, but also the development of the coming revolution. He noted that the revolution seems to bring into power and then to exhaust various sections of the oppressed classes in turn. This meant the need to study the class structure of society and to analyze the political content of each class. Here Marx noted at once the difference between France and Germany. The Revolution of 1830 had corrected the reaction of 1815 in France; once more the big bourgeoisie had displaced from power the landed aristocracy. Hence in France it would now be a question of the petty bourgeoisie and the workers, for this latter class had become a real force in society with the growth of capitalism. But in Germany the social and political development of the big bourgeoisie was far behind that of both France and England. "Like master, like man." The workers were handicapped in their development by the same feudal and national atomism that affected the capitalists. In Germany it would be the upper strata of the bourgeoisie that would come to power first.

This section of the capitalist class, the Liberal bourgeoisie, occupied an anomalous position which robbed it of all initiative. When it actually came to power it could not hold its ground against the vanquished feudal elements without the help of the more advanced popular parties. But it was equally afraid of the revolutionary torrent from below that would be needed to sweep away the old trash, for the revolutionary wave would at the same time sweep it away as well. To confine this torrent the Liberal bourgeoisie could rely only on the feudal nobility that it desired to displace. Engels says: "The Liberal bourgeois ministry was only a halting place from which, according to the turn circumstances might take, the country would either have to go on to the more advanced stage of Unitarian Republicanism, or to relapse into the old clerico-feudal and bureaucratic regime."

The next class to come to power would be the petty bourgeoisie, in the analysis of Marx and Engels. This conclusion they based on the analogy with the Great French Revolution and also on the events of 1848 in Paris. The Democratic Party of the petty trading and shopkeeping class united the large majority of the working people. "The democratic petty bourgeoisie, which is far from desiring to revolutionize the whole of society for the proletariat, strives for a change in social conditions whereby the present society will be made as bearable and as comfortable as possible for itself." In political terms this meant the removal of as much taxation as possible and its shift to the shoulders of the landed and the big bourgeoisie, the easing of credits and the lowering of interest rates on loans. It meant the easing of the oppression of the petty bourgeoisie by the finance capitalists but, while bribing the workers by a slight easing of their lot, keeping them where they were.

### Marx's Views on Proletarian Policy

It was in the analysis of the strategy that the working class should adopt that the full genius of the founders of Marxism found scope. For here in concentrated form are found the elements of the united front, the independent working class party, the dual power, the soviet, the proletarian military policy, and the permanent revolution. The petty bourgeoisie were well organized all over Germany. Except in a few isolated communities the workers had not yet succeeded in organizing their own forces independently. The Communist League, under the leadership of Marx and Engels, tried to intervene to correct this situation. Its task was at the same time educational and organizational. In the first Address of its Central Committee to the workers it denounces the traitor-

ous role of the big bourgeoisie, but then proceeds to warn that the petty bourgeoisie will act in the same way when it takes power. To frighten the big bourgeoisie into making concessions, the democratic party called itself "socialist" and "red." All this meant was that when they faced the finance capitalists allied with the feudal elements, the petty bourgeoisie needed the support of the working masses. Once in power they would repeat the performance of the big capitalists.

What should be the attitude of the proletariat and the Communist League towards the petty bourgeoisie? Marx divided the question up into three periods: that in which the lower middle class still suffers suppression; its revolutionary struggle for power; after this struggle when it has assumed power. For Marx had no doubt that this would be a necessary stage of the revolution, as we shall discuss. "In the case where a struggle against a common enemy exists a special kind of alliance is unnecessary. As soon as it becomes necessary to fight such an enemy directly, the interests of both parties fall together for the moment; and this momentary connection will be established in the future as it has been in the past. It is understood that in the coming bloody conflicts, as in all the previous ones, it will be the workers principally who will achieve victory by their courage, decisiveness and self-sacrifice... And then, as soon as victory has been decided, they (the petty bourgeoisie) will endeavor to annex it for themselves. They will call upon the workers to keep the peace and return to their work in order to avoid (so-called) excesses; and then proceed to cut the workers off from the fruits of victory. It does not lie in the power of the workers to prevent the petty bourgeoisie from doing this; but it does lie in their power to make it as difficult as possible for the petty bourgeoisie to use their power against the armed proletariat, and to dictate such conditions to them, that the rule of the bourgeois democrats will beforehand carry within itself the germ of its own destruction, so that their displacement later by the rule of the proletariat will be made considerably easier."

What policies shall the workers pursue under the rule of the lower middle class? "While the democratic petty bourgeoisie wishes to bring the revolution to as swift a conclusion as possible... it is in our interest and it is our task to make the revolution permanent until all propertied classes are more or less dispossessed, the governmental power acquired by the proletariat, and the association of proletarians achieved not only in one country but in all important countries of the world... With us it cannot be a mere matter of a change in the form of private property, but of destroying it as an institution; not in hushing up class antagonisms, but of abolishing all classes; not in the improvement of present-day society, but in the foundation of a new society."

The proletariat, in order at the next stage to carry forward the revolution for these purposes, must set up their own dual power counterposed to the "legal" government. "They must simultaneously erect their own revolutionary workers' government hard by the new official government whether it be in the form of executive committees, community councils, workers' clubs, or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic government not only will lose its immediate restraint over the workers, but, on the contrary, must at once feel themselves watched over and threatened by an authority behind which stands the mass of the workers. In a word: from the first moment of the victory, and after it, the distrust of the workers must not be directed any more against the conquered reactionary party but against their previous ally, the petty bourgeois democrats who desire to exploit the common victory only for themselves." In view of the present building

of the Home Guards by the capitalists, it is interesting to note the Marxist military policy: "Where it is not possible, however, to carry thru this latter objective (namely, preventing the formation of reactionary Citizens' Guards directed against the workers) the workers must attempt to organize themselves independently as proletarian guards with their own chiefs and a general staff elected by themselves and to place themselves not under the orders of the existing state power, but under the revolutionary community-councils organized through the efforts of the workers."

Finally Marx stresses in this famous Address to the Workers, the international nature of the revolution: "Even if the German workers may not be able to attain power and carry through their class interests, then they have the certainty this time that the first act of this approaching revolutionary drama will be simultaneous with the direct victory of their own class in France and will be very much expedited by it. But they will accomplish the greatest part of their final victory for themselves through self-enlightenment as to their class interests, by taking their own independent party attitude as early as possible, and by not permitting themselves to be fooled as to the necessity for the independent organization of the party of the proletariat by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie. Their battle-cry must always be, "The Permanent Revolution!"

Marx and Engels proved to be over-optimistic concerning the Revolution of 1848. Their analysis was in broad outline perfectly correct. The revolution became aborted in its first stage. They had envisioned the coming to power of the lower middle class supported by the exploited peasants. The majority of these peasants were small freeholders, feudal tenants and agricultural laborers. These were too isolated to act independently, but they could be rallied to the support of the petty bourgeoisie of the towns. The resulting government Marx called the "democratic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie supported by the peasants." After the revolution had been definitively defeated, Marx went carefully over his analysis and compared it with the actual course of events. He concluded that the petty bourgeoisie could not establish a regime of its own. Once the bourgeoisie had taken power, the next revolution would be that of the proletariat. But the proletariat could not succeed unless it led the oppressed masses of the entire nation, including the peasants. In this sense he wrote in 1856 to Engels: "The whole matter in Germany will depend upon the possibility of supporting the proletarian revolution with a sort of second edition of the peasant war." This revolution would bring about the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasants.

### Lenin Applies Marx's Ideas to Russia

It was Lenin who developed this idea of Marx in relation to Russia. Like Marx Lenin understood the importance of concrete and meticulous analysis of the social forces at every moment. He says: "Marxism demands of us a most exact, an objectively verifiable analysis of the interrelations of classes, and of the concrete peculiarities of each historic moment." To both Lenin and Trotsky the abortive revolution of 1905 provided a powerful key to such an analysis. The Russia of 1905 had certain points of resemblance to and certain important differences from the Germany of 1848. We do not forget also that the Commune of 1871 had intervened historically. Feudal absolutism prevented the full development of the capitalist class in Russia. They made up for their small numbers by introducing the most advanced form of trustified enterprise from Europe. The proletariat was concentrated in a few big-scale plants. Czarism had been forced by the impact of the Crimean War to free the serfs and a

certain development of capitalist agriculture had resulted. This meant that the banks, the factory owners and the landlords were already so intertwined as to be inseparable.

The serfs had been freed, but they did not possess the land, which remained concentrated in a few hands. The seizure of the land by the French peasants had been the greatest force undermining feudal society and aiding the victory of the capitalists. But in Russia this same seizure would have been a blow at both feudalism and rising capitalism. Lenin therefore concluded that the capitalist class could not any longer perform the function it had carried out in the French Revolution. It could not set in motion the forces necessary to undermine feudalism completely and so attain to political power through the democratic revolution.

How then would this revolution come about in Russia? If the capitalists could not achieve their own revolution, who could? Lenin concluded that only the revolutionary proletariat, aided by the peasants, could accomplish the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In Russia the peasants had a party representing their interests, the Social Revolutionists. Marx had been of the opinion originally, as we saw, that the petty bourgeoisie would set up a regime of their own prior to the taking of power by the proletariat. Lenin established the fact that the proletariat would have to take the power next in Russia. But what would their relations be with the peasants? Lenin did not exclude the possibility that the new regime would first consist of a coalition of two parties, that of the proletariat and that of the peasants. He therefore adopted the formulation of Marx, the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasants. In the actual course of the Revolution of 1917 Lenin found that he had to modify this formulation in favor of that of Trotsky. The democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, in Lenin's terms, existed, if at all, in the unstable period of dual power which existed before the soviets, guided by the Bolsheviks, took power.

The interrelationship of classes represented by Lenin's earlier formula existed in the soviets while they were still under Menshevik control. The revolutionary force of the peasantry was there represented by the petty bourgeois leaders; side by side with them sat the working class representatives. But actually the workers represented more truly the revolutionary interests of the peasants, for they had adopted the complete program of the peasants and were urging them to seize the land. Whereas the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists had turned to support of the bourgeois provisional government which refused to carry out the demands of the peasants. Lenin called this a unique and unforeseen development. In April 1917 he found it necessary to attack those who were still adhering to his old formulation when the entire situation demanded something new. "He who *now* speaks of 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' only, is behind the times, is therefore in practice on the side of the petty bourgeoisie and against the proletarian class struggle; such a one should be placed in the archive of "Bolshevik" pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of 'Old Bolsheviks')." The class collaboration of the bourgeoisie and the peasant leaders caused Lenin to adopt the formulation: dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasants. This was the formulation which had earlier been reached by Trotsky after the Revolution of 1905.

### Trotsky Expands Lenin's Analysis

Trotsky, like Lenin, had concluded that the capitalists could not play a progressive revolutionary role in Russia. The working class would have to abolish feudalism and the Czar. In this task they would be aided by the peasants. Like Lenin, Trotsky correctly estimated the tremendous revolution-

ary reservoir residing in the peasantry. But Marx and Engels had stressed the inability of the scattered peasants to coalesce and form a revolutionary political force of their own. Trotsky too concluded that the peasants could not form a strong party capable of carrying through their aims. Only the working class could carry through the aims of the oppressed peasants, as of all the oppressed. If the future revolution was to succeed, it must be therefore in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasants. And in actuality that is how events developed; that was the essence of the October Revolution.

But Trotsky did not stop there. The working class would take the power and would then carry out the democratic revolution which the bourgeoisie was incapable of doing. But would the proletariat, after accomplishing this task, hand the power back to the capitalists? The difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism would have then reduced itself to a matter of tactics. The Mensheviks believed that the democratic revolution was the affair of the bourgeoisie. The workers and peasants should place themselves under the leadership of that class in order not only to overthrow Czarism, but to permit the bourgeoisie to set up its own democratic, parliamentary regime. In this regime the workers would play the part of the loyal opposition as in Western Europe. The Bolsheviks knew that the capitalists could not lead the revolution,—but what about after the revolution? Trotsky answered: no, the workers would never yield the power that it had taken during the revolution to its arch-enemy! It would use that power, once it carried through the democratic reforms, to begin to carry out its own tasks, socialist tasks. The democratic revolution would thus merge or be combined with the socialist revolution. This was the essence of the theory of permanent revolution. Lenin and Trotsky both understood that the socialist revolution could not be accomplished in a single country, above all in a backward country like Russia. Both appraised the Russian Revolution as the first step in the world socialist revolution. But Trotsky formulated in this precise fashion the Marxist theory of permanent revolution, whereby the proletariat in Russia would turn to socialist tasks and would simultaneously use the first proletarian conquest to spread the working class revolution to all other countries.

The theory of permanent revolution derives, as we have seen, from Marx's analysis of the Revolution of 1848. Trotsky from his study of the Marxist analysis in the light of all

the experience up to his time, concluded that not only in semi-feudal Russia was the bourgeoisie incapable of any further progressive policies, but that nowhere at all could capitalism or the capitalist class play any further progressive role. His analysis held not only for Europe, and for the advanced powers, but for the colonial countries as well. Colonial and semi-colonial countries are under the sway not of native capitalism but of foreign imperialism. The native capitalists are merely the agents, in one form or another, of foreign imperialism. Thus the bourgeoisie in colonial countries cannot under any circumstances in the age of imperialism play an independent part in politics. It can only gravitate from one imperialist master to another. When a Chiang Kai-shek is rejected by Japan, he can only turn to the United States. Trotsky concluded therefore that even in the most backward countries oppression could only be ended by the proletariat, weak as they might be, supported by the peasants and the oppressed masses.

The year 1848, we see, marks a turning point of world significance. We can say that once the proletariat had appeared on the scene as an independent force, making its own demands, the bourgeoisie immediately lost its progressive possibilities from a political point of view. This is reflected in all history since then. In all previous bourgeois revolutions, including 1848 when the bourgeoisie received a shock from the proletariat, one of the first slogans had been the demand for the arming of the people. But 1848 taught the bourgeoisie that the national militia included the working class which refused any longer to follow in the leading strings of capitalism. In 1905 the Russian bourgeoisie learned this lesson anew. Hence the capitalists want least of all to put arms in the hands of the workers. That is why they fear war. The most delicate moment for imperialist countries is the moment of peace, when it becomes the ticklish duty of the government to disarm the soldiers before turning them out. This is a task of major strategy.

Need we refer to the actions of Azana in the Spanish Revolution, of the French General Staff in its capitulation to Hitler? In 1914 Miliukov, as we know, said that if to defeat Germany and win a victory, it would be necessary to have a revolution, he was not interested in the victory! Nothing could sum up better the role and position of capitalism in our epoch. It is reactionary through and through. The Permanent Proletarian Revolution will sweep it away!

# The Crisis in Soviet Industry

By VLADIMIR IVLEV

Since 1938 Soviet economy has entered into a profound crisis. One of the clearest symptoms of this crisis is the complete absence of statistics of production since that date. The Soviet government abruptly ceased to make public the production of the various branches of industry. Since this situation could become disagreeable to the "friends" of the USSR, the 18th Party Conference, held February 15-21, gave out statistics which the Stalinist agencies reprint in millions of copies, but of course without so much as the most superficial analysis. A large part of the figures are given in rubles and do not permit, as we shall see, any serious year by year comparison because of the increasing inflation. The other figures are deceitfully combined in order to hide the reality in place of revealing it. Thus the reporters announce dozens of percentages without giving a single absolute figure; the forecasts

of the plan are mixed with the figures of actual production; the statistics apply according to the various years to quite different groups of the population, etc., etc. It was the task of the reporters to provide enough figures so that the "friends" would have "serious" arguments and to provide a selection of figures in such a way as to render impossible any exact picture of Soviet economy and of its development.

On the basis of the *official* figures, and without discussing their accuracy for the moment, we have undertaken to reconstitute the dynamics of the development of Soviet production for the last years. We have been able to obtain positive results for four important branches of production (steel, pig iron, coal, oil); some inconclusive indications for a fifth branch (rolled steel). But before explaining our method and its results it is necessary to review briefly the recent past.

## From the Second to the Third Five-Year Plan

The second Five-Year plan was completed at the end of 1937. If one attempts to measure its success by the growth of the fundamental branches of industry, without entering into the question of the quality of the goods produced, we can say that the projected figures of the plan were realized from 70 to 80 percent. The Stalinist leadership claimed a success of almost 100 percent, but they can do this only because they replaced the original figures of the plan with much more modest ones during the course of the realization of the plan.

The third Five-Year plan was adopted at the 18th Congress of the Stalinist party in March 1939 (not to be confused with the 18th Conference of February); this means that during more than 15 months there was no plan whatsoever. Stalin announced at this Congress that the third Five-Year plan would take the country from socialism into communism and the third plan was baptized as the "Stalin plan." However, the delay in announcing the plan was in itself a sign of the serious difficulties. Another symptom was the extremely low coefficient of growth in comparison with that of the second plan. Taken as a whole, the third plan forecast an average yearly increase only half of that of the period from 1932 to 1937. For certain branches the reduction was enormous. Thus the production of steel had increased from 1932 to 1937 by 193 percent. For the third Five-Year period the plan envisaged an increase of 58 percent; that is, one-third to one-fourth less. We shall see how these percentages have been realized!

## The Carrying Out of the Third Five-Year Plan

Because of the lack of general statistics, it is impossible to obtain a rounded out picture. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain a sketch of the development in a few, but very important, branches of industry from 1937 to the present time solely on the basis of the official figures announced at the 18th Conference.

### Steel

Last February the 18th Conference adopted as its goal for the production of steel in 1941, 22,400,000 metric tons. Voznesensky declared in his report that this figure represented an increase of 22 percent over the production of 1940, which permits us to calculate the latter as 18,360,000 tons (100/122 of the official figure for 1941). But the official figures of production for 1937 were 17,330,000 tons and for 1938, 18,000,000. The plan for 1939 envisaged 18,800,000 tons and no figure of actual production was published for that year. The official report of the 18th Conference thus demonstrates that production for 1940 was well behind the plan for 1939. It is sufficient to open one's eyes to the figures, something the servile "friends" of the bureaucracy are careful to avoid doing. As for the figure set as the goal of production for the end of the Five-Year plan in 1942, 27,500,000 tons, it is clearly at an inaccessible height. No one at the Conference, moreover, so much as breathed the figure adopted two years ago at the 18th Congress of the party when the goal was set under the genius-like leadership of Stalin.

The rates of growth speak a very dramatic language. The increase in the production of steel from 1937 to 1940 was 3.55 percent (if we utilize the *official* figure as the basis of calculation), or an average yearly increase of 1.18 percent during these three years. The Conference, however, decided

to set 22 percent as the annual increase for 1941. The delegates voted unanimously for such a fantastic decision solely because of the revolver at their temples.

The plan for the period from 1937 to 1942 set as the goal an average annual increase of 11 percent, very modest in comparison with the preceding five-year period. However from 1937 to 1940 the average yearly increase in the volume of production was 1.18 percent; that is, the plan of growth was carried out by only 10 percent according to the official figures themselves!

Let those who find our figures too somber show us others! Our calculations are confirmed, moreover, by the Soviet newspaper *Industriya* which declared on November 17, 1938, that the production of steel was far behind schedule and that it had fallen even below the 1938 level.

The steel industry was not singled out for special criticism at the last Conference of the party. Some branches of economy may be in better condition. Many others are worse. Steel, however, is an essential raw material in the economy. The production of steel at the present time thus represents an average barometer of the whole industry. The conclusion is inescapable: since 1938-39 the Soviet economy has entered a profound crisis. The reality is completely out of accord with the figures unanimously adopted at the inauguration of the "Stalin plan" of 1939.

### Pig Iron

For 1941 the 18th Conference set 18,000,000 tons as the goal for pig iron production, asserting that this would constitute an increase of 21 percent over the preceding year; that is, that the production of 1940 computed on the basis of the official figures amounted to 14,876,000 tons. The production of 1937 was 14,487,000 tons, that of 1938, 14,600,000; the 1939 goal was set at 15,600,000 tons. As in the case of steel, the production of pig iron in 1940 was well behind the plan set for 1939. The Five-Year plan envisaged an average annual increase of 10.23 percent. From 1937 to 1940 the increase was 2.70 percent, or an average increase of 0.90 percent per year, that is, an increase of scarcely one-twelfth the one set by the plan. Here also no correlation exists any longer between the plan and the reality.

In March, 1939, Stalin declared: "We may consider quite feasible an average annual increase in the output of pig iron of two or two and a half million tons, bearing in mind the present state of the technique of iron smelting." (*From Socialism to Communism*, Joseph Stalin. International Publishers, 1939.) The average yearly increase between 1937 and 1940 as derived from the official figure was in reality 130,000 tons, that is, one-fifteenth to one-eighteenth of the figure proclaimed by Stalin. Woe to the delegate who at the last Conference might have dared to recall the figure given out by the "master-planner" two years previously!

### Coal

The 18th Party Conference set the production of coal at 191,000,000 tons for 1941, and the reporter declared that this was an increase of 16 percent over 1940. The production in 1940, if we again compute from the official figure, was consequently 164,655,000 tons. In 1937 it had been 127,900,000 tons. During the first three years of the plan (from the end of 1937 to the end of 1940) the production thus increased yearly by an average of 9.58 percent. The plan forecast 18 percent. The actual gain according to the official figure was thus half the goal set in the plan. This figure, somewhat greater than for the production of steel and pig iron, is explained by the tremendous capital investments in the coal industry.

From 1937 to 1940 new mines were opened with a capacity output of 40 percent of the total production in 1937, whereas the capital investments in the other fundamental branches of industry were considerably smaller. But if tremendous expenditures in new mines have been able to increase the official production up to half of the planned increase, the conditions in the coal industry have not changed very much. On April 4, 1940, the People's Commissariat for the Coal Industry declared that one of the principal coal fields, the Don Basin, had swallowed up great sums of money for technical improvements, but that its production during the last three years increased scarcely 3 percent!

## Oil

The 18th Conference fixed 38,000,000 tons for the production of oil and derivative products in 1941. The planned increase for the year 1940-41 was set at 11 percent. That means that the 1940 output if we again accept the official figure was 34,234,000 tons. The production in 1937 was 30,500,000 tons. No figures are available between 1937 and 1940. So the actual average yearly increase between 1937 and 1940 was 4.08 percent, while the plan forecast a yearly increase of 15.41 percent, or almost quadruple. As for the planned production for 1942 adopted in 1939, 54,000,000 tons, that has been left hanging in the clouds. And there was complete silence about it at the last Conference.

## Rolled Steel

The production of rolled steel in 1937 was 13,000,000 tons. The 18th Conference fixed 15,800,000 tons as the goal for 1941. But here we run up against one of the stratagems used by the bureaucracy to hide the reality. The rate of growth for the year 1941 was announced at the Conference as 23 percent for "high-grade" rolled steel, while the output announced was for rolled steel *in general*. Hence it is impossible to make any conclusions about the actual production! Nevertheless, if we apply this rate of 23 percent to the general output of 1941, we obtain an actual official production of 12,846,000 tons for 1940. In 1937 the output was 13,000,000 tons. So the output would have decreased yearly from 1937 to 1941 by 0.39 percent instead of increasing 12.31 percent a year according to the plan. We must admit that the ruse of the bureaucracy leaves this assumption inconclusive. However, the very fact that the leadership laid down a smoke screen over this branch of industry is an infallible indication that the situation is far from brilliant.

Steel, pig iron, coal, oil, and rolled steel, these are all the branches of industry in which we can draw conclusions. The other figures given at the last 18th Conference have so little relationship one with another; the bureaucracy knows so well how to cover up the reality, that it is impossible to follow the development from year to year.

In his report at the 18th Conference, Voznesensky compared a few figures of the daily output at the end of 1940 with those at the end of 1937. He concluded from these figures the "possibility not only of fulfilling but of over-fulfilling the 1941 plan."

An examination of the figures shows that the rate of growth thus calculated is far behind those forecast in the Five-Year plan. In fact they are not much more than a third. Thus according to Voznesensky the daily output of oil at the end of 1937, between 84 and 86 thousand tons, reached 97 to 98 thousand tons at the end of 1940 which gives an average yearly rate of growth of 5.1 percent, while the plan forecast 15.41 percent. The rates thus calculated are however somewhat greater (except for coal) than those we have obtained by

the comparison of the total yearly outputs. How explain this? The key to the enigma is given us by the bureaucracy itself through the pen of Walter Duranty, who last February mentioned the "spurt" in the final quarter of 1940. The figures of daily output presented by Voznesensky are in reality those of a very short period, prepared for the use of the Conference.

## The Inflation

We shall not discuss here the question of the quality of production (which has become worse since 1937). Nor shall we discuss the deterioration of the machines which occurs in the "spurts" that take place at each change of director (and they are frequent) and at the end of each year (to attain the figures of the plan). On the basis of the official figures, prepared for the party Conference, we have tried to show the purely quantitative development of some fundamental branches of industry.

The 18th Conference was told that the output of industry had increased from 95.5 billion rubles in 1937 to 162 billion rubles in 1940; that is an increase of 44 percent or almost 15 percent a year. Not a single one of the fundamental branches of industry have made, by far, such an advance. The sole explanation is that during the last three years the ruble has melted away, prices have increased, the printing press has been working overtime. An analysis of the official budget will lead to the same conclusion. (See the article by John G. Wright in *The Militant*, March 8, 1941.)

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True to the teachings of "socialism in one country," Voznesensky opened his report on the economic tasks by declaring that the Soviet economic development is not affected by the "blows of crises and wars." However, his speech, those of the other reporters, and the very holding of the conference itself were nothing but denials of such an affirmation. Stalin's silence, more eloquent than his speeches, only underlined the gravity of the crisis that the Soviet union is now undergoing.

The conference did not concern itself over the causes of the crisis. Its task was to cover it up by denouncing the "individual insufficiencies." The present crisis is the crisis of the whole system of bureaucratic leadership. The nationalized economy is more and more strangled in the bureaucratic noose. Thus to resolve the fundamental problem of the economy, that of the productivity of labor, Stalin has found nothing in his arsenal but ever more brutal violence against the workers. The present war intensifies this fundamental policy, and in two ways: by extremely increasing the needs of Soviet defense and by making much more difficult the buying of tools abroad.

To the catastrophic consequences of his system, so aggravated in the face of the war, Stalin has only one answer: ever-increasing terror. Seven People's Commissars have been "warned" by the Conference, that is, they work now under the direct muzzle of the revolver. To complete the picture, it is necessary to add that they direct such commissariats as aviation, munitions, electric power, chemicals. The three last representatives of some importance remaining of the old Stalinist crew are on the way out: Litvinov has been "purged." Molotov and Kaganovitch received "family" warnings. Besides all this, there is a tremendous circulation of completely new faces who appear and disappear. The most extraordinary exemplar of that type is one Merkulov who shone for three weeks like a meteor at the head of the GPU, but was expelled from the Central Committee by the Conference and disappeared. Without doubt his fate has been sealed in the cellars of the Lubianka.

With its expulsions and warnings, the Conference represents Stalin's lash to pull the economy out of the mud-hole where it has bogged down. The method is not new, the results likewise will not be new. They will be those noted above, but

extremely exacerbated. To save the USSR, today economically, tomorrow militarily, the Soviet masses have only one road: to seize the power from the bureaucracy and to restore the democracy of the soviets.

## *The Enigma of Soviet Production*

"Foreign Affairs" for January 1941 contains an informative article by Freda Utley entitled "The Enigma of Soviet Production." This article is crammed with material on the impasse reached by the bureaucracy in Soviet economy.

Up to 1937 production in the U.S.S.R. increased in spite of all the blunders but "since 1937 production in the basic industries has either been stagnant or has declined." 1940 was the worst year since the famine of 1931-32. The Finnish War threw the transport system into utter chaos and set back the material conditions in Russia correspondingly.

The First Five-Year Plan completely failed to stick to the planned estimates in regard to labor and wages. The plan had called for a total investment of 86 billion rubles. Instead, it became 120 billions, inflation making up for mistakes and disproportions. The plan had called for an increase of 1.25 billions of rubles in note issues. But already in 1928 it was increased by 1.77 billions and in October 1932 it was greater by 4.6 billions. The plan had called for an increase of 100% in labor productivity (output per worker). The number of workers should have increased from 11.3 to 15.8 millions. But it actually went up to 22.8 millions. This means that 44% more workers than called for, produced less than the plan called for!

By the end of the First Five-Year Plan prices had reduced the value of the ruble to about 1/10 its old value in real wages. Rationing and the "closed distributors" tended to correct this somewhat. But these were abolished in 1935.

Despite the 10 billion rubles of investment in agricultural machinery, the grain crop in 1932 was still 26% below the pre-war level (69.6 million tons as against 94.1 in 1913). Industrial crops were worse off, being down 50%.

Livestock had been reduced by forced collectivization from 276 million head to 160 million. Only by 1937 did agriculture attain the pre-war level. At that time textiles lagged far behind the plan, production being

little more than in 1913, despite the increase in population.

The best conditions existed in 1934-36. But then appeared the full effects of the wasteful bureaucratic "driving" to achieve records. The huge investments from 1929 to 1937 were largely wasted through neglect and overworking of the machinery. Since then we have witnessed the so-called "tightening of labor discipline;" in reality, blaming the workers for the condition of the machines caused by bureaucratic direction. Quantitatively the basic industries remained about the same in 1939 as in 1938. Steel and coke production even slumped. Oil was down. There was such a terrible drop in the production of iron, coal and steel in the last quarter of 1938 that it is very likely the workers had gone on a sitdown strike. Production was actually cut in half. The cry against so-called "shirkers" may very well represent a cry against strikers!

To show the conditions of the masses, Freda Utley (who came out of Russia in 1938 — she was a textile specialist) mentions that the output of shoes even by the plan will be only 1½ pair per person per year in 1942. And these don't last more than one month. There is a tremendous shortage of clothing; people are in rags. The cost of staple foods is 15 times higher in 1937 than in 1914 whereas wages are only five times higher. When prices were increased for all foods except bread from 35% to 100% in 1940, bread-lines formed once again.

Collective farms receive from 1.1 to 1.5 rubles per pood of rye or about 9 kopecks per kilogram. Now the "official" price of bread (it is actually higher) is 1 ruble or 100 kopecks a kilogram in the state stores. This enormous bread tax and the 100% turnover tax on all manufactured goods creates peasant discontent and a chronic food shortage, which in turn causes a reduced productivity of labor. In 1935 Stalin made concessions to the peasants; they were permitted to own a little land, a garden, livestock, etc. This caused a rapid increase in cows, sheep, pigs, poultry and an

intensive cultivation of vegetables. The food situation in the towns was considerably alleviated, but the collective farmers "virtually withdrew from the kolkhozes and were spending all their time working on their own land." Hence in 1939, Stalin again withdrew these concessions and purged many kolkhoz managers who had allowed the peasants to take over a big part of the collective farm lands for private cultivation in return for a fixed rent in kind.

The peasants are unwilling to work on the collective farms because of the terrible mismanagement and the small return for their labor. At every opportunity they relapse into private cultivation. Thus by 1939 the private lot had lost its subsidiary character and in many cases had become the main source of income for the collective farmer. Stalin declared the private lots "illegal" once more in that year and compelled the peasants to sell their renewed livestock back to the collectives at one-tenth their market value. Since then there has again appeared an acute shortage of meat, butter, poultry, etc.

Now the bureaucracy has to turn either to Germany or the U.S. for the machinery needed to replace the tools of production so rapidly worn out. "It is doubtful," concludes the author, "whether at this stage the Soviet Government could materially improve the conditions of the Russian workers and peasants except by such radical economic and political changes as would deprive Stalin and his bureaucracy of their power and material privileges. The rot in the social system has already gone too far... Above all the liquidation of the trained personnel over the past ten years is a loss which cannot be replaced... This method of (repressive) government can be successful only where there is no threat from abroad. A dictator who lacks popular support dare not risk a war in which weapons would be placed in the hands of the subjects who might be more anxious to use them against him than against the foreign enemy."

J. W.

## *The Soviet "War Potential"*

"Free Europe," a fortnightly review of (so-called) international opinion, contains three articles on "Soviet War Potential" by Anatole Baikoff. (Issues of Dec. 13th, 1940 and following). He takes up the three factors in war potential: the military, the industrial and the morale.

The peacetime strength of the Red Army is 2.5 million with 7 million trained re-

serves and 25 million total available manpower. But numbers alone mean little. Huge armies inadequately equipped, badly trained and led, are mere cannon-fodder. The Finnish War showed an insufficient soldier training. But the weakest point was the shortage of officers and their technical inefficiency. At the beginning of 1937 (official Soviet data) there were 46,500 officers

of all ranks. 4,500 of these had served in the old imperial army; 26,000 were trained in Soviet military schools; 16,000 were promoted from the ranks after a short perfunctory training. Only 15% of the colonels and generals had passed through military academies. These figures show an insufficiency of officers even for a peace-time army.

According to information of the French General Staff, the purge begun in May 1937 affected no less than 30,000 officers who were either shot, imprisoned or otherwise removed from the army. The higher ranks suffered the most. Here are those liquidated: 3 marshals out of 5; 13 army commanders out of 19; 65 corps commanders out of 85; 110 divisional commanders out of 180; 202 brigade commanders out of 406. Time has been too short to repair the damage of this massacre in the last two years. A major war would require 300 divisions and there are too few officers available. Very few are now able to work out strategic plans or tactics or to conduct operations. In the Finnish War the High Command directed operations most incompetently. Only the good fighting qualities of the ranks and their dogged tenacity averted a major disaster. Tactical successes were achieved only after securing the services of German experts. The Red Army could undertake large-scale operations against a first-class military power if the plan of operations were drawn up by foreign experts, but would the Allies spare the time and would the Kremlin deem it advisable?

The number of military machines at the disposal of the army are sufficient. On June

1, 1940 there were 30,000 airplanes including 18,000 first line bombers and fighters; 20,000 tanks of all sizes; several thousand armored cars; a sufficient number of field and heavy guns; a large fleet of trucks and lorries. But the troops are not familiar with the working of their equipment and not trained to handle them efficiently. They show rough and careless handling. Clothing and footwear are of very poor quality. Discipline suffered greatly from dual command. The political commissars interfered with purely military matters and undermined the authority of the commanding officers. The GPU is feared and hated by officers and men. Many were murdered by their own subordinates during the campaign. At the beginning of August 1940 these commissars were abolished. But the higher ranks were not affected by this reform. Stalin does not trust his officers and they are spied on now as before. Thus the action and initiative of the commanding officers is very limited. The Red Army is by no means a first class army.

Transport is the big Russian problem. The coefficient of traffic density was 1.13 in 1913. In 1938 it was 3.90 as against 1.08 in the U. S.; .83 in England; 1.17 in Germany. Even during peacetime the railroads are

considerably overloaded. They could not stand a war-strain and their breakdown would bring an industrial halt. There is a shortage of engines, trucks, carriages, rails. There are no good motor roads and road transport is insignificant. There are only 17.5 million horses in 1938 as against 35.8 in 1916. Russia lacks copper, zinc, tin, aluminum, lead and rubber. The weakest link is agriculture which hardly meets the low level of peace needs.

The factor of morale is worst of all. The workers and peasants are no better than serfs. The cost of living is going up and wages down. Youth are now deprived of education. According to the Soviet press itself, the new decrees cut short the studies of some 600,000 students. Pupils in secondary schools have to pay 200 rubles per year, in universities and technical schools 400 rubles. This rule was applied even to pupils and students in their last year. In some provincial universities and technical colleges 80% were obliged to quit and seek employment. Boys of 14 to 17 were conscripted for labor. After one year's training they are obliged to work for four years anywhere they are sent. In short, Russia is a volcano ready for revolt.

J. W.

## Fighting Against the Stream

NOTE: The following is a rough uncorrected transcript of a discussion held in April 1939, between Trotsky and an English Fourth Internationalist, who had raised a number of questions concerning the development of the Fourth International in France, Spain, Great Britain and the United States. In his reply, Trotsky sketched the main reasons for the isolation and slow progress of the Fourth International in the first stages of its development and pointed out how a new turn in the world situation, like the present war, would inevitably lead to a radical change in the tempo of development, social composition and mass connections of the Fourth International.

TROTSKY: Yes, the question is why we are not progressing in correspondence with the value of our conceptions which are not so meaningless as some friends believe. We are not progressing politically. Yes, it is a fact which is an expression of a general decay of the workers' movements in the last fifteen years. It is the more general cause. When the revolutionary movement in general is declining, when one defeat follows another, when Fascism is spreading over the world, when the official "Marxism" is the most powerful organization of deception of the workers, and so on, it is an inevitable situation that the revolutionary elements must work against the general historic current, even if our ideas, our explanations, are as exact and wise as one can demand.

But the masses are not educated by prognostic theoretical conception, but by the general experiences of their lives. It is the most general explanation—the whole situation is against us. There must be a turn in the class realization, in the sentiments, in the feelings of the masses; a turn which will give us the possibility of a large political success.

I remember some discussions in 1927 in Moscow after Chiang Kai-shek stilled the Chinese workers. We predicted

this ten days before and Stalin opposed us with the argument that Borodin was vigilant, that Chiang Kai-shek would not have the possibility to betray us, etc. I believe that it was eight or ten days later that the tragedy occurred and our comrades expressed optimism because our analysis was so clear that everyone would see it and we would be sure to win the party. I answered that the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses. The military victory of Chiang Kai-shek will inevitably provoke a depression and this is not conducive to the growth of a revolutionary fraction.

Since 1927 we have had a long series of defeats. We are similar to a group who attempt to climb a mountain and who must suffer again and again a downfall of stone, snow, etc. In Asia and Europe is created a new desperate mood of the masses. They heard something analogous to what we say ten or fifteen years ago from the Communist Party and they are pessimistic. That is the general mood of the workers. It is the most general reason. We cannot withdraw from the general historic current—from the general constellation of the forces. The current is against us, that is clear. I remember the period between 1908 and 1913 in Russia. There was also a reaction. In 1905 we had the workers with us—in 1908 and even in 1907 began the great reaction.

Everybody invented slogans and methods to win the masses and nobody won them—they were desperate. In this time the only thing we could do was to educate the cadres and they were melting away. There was a series of splits to the right or to the left or to syndicalism and so on. Lenin remained with a small group, a sect, in Paris, but with confidence that

there would be new possibilities of arising. It came in 1913. We had a new tide, but then came the war to interrupt this development. During the war there was a silence as of death among the workers. The Zimmerwald conference was a conference of very confused elements in its majority. In the deep recesses of the masses, in the trenches and so on there was a new mood, but it was so deep and terrorized that we could not reach it and give it an expression. That is why the movement seemed to itself to be very poor and even this element that met in Zimmerwald, in its majority, moved to the right in the next year, in the next month. I will not liberate them from their personal responsibility, but still the general explanation is that the movement had to swim against the current.

Our situation now is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organization in any other time, because we have the terrible betrayal of the Communist International which arose from the betrayal of the Second International. The degeneration of the Third International developed so quickly and so unexpectedly that the same generation which heard its formation now hears us, and they say, "But we have already heard this once!"

Then there is the defeat of the Left Opposition in Russia. The Fourth International is connected genetically to the Left Opposition; the masses call us Trotskyists. "Trotsky wishes to conquer the power, but why did he lose power?" It is an elementary question. We must begin to explain this by the dialectic of history, by the conflict of classes, that even a revolution produces a reaction.

Max Eastman wrote that Trotsky places too much value on doctrine and if he had more common sense he would not have lost power. Nothing in the world is so convincing as success and nothing so repelling as defeat for the large masses.

You have also the degeneration of the Third International on the one side and the terrible defeat of the Left Opposition with the extermination of the whole group. These facts are a thousand times more convincing for the working class than our poor paper with even the tremendous circulation of 5000 like the *Socialist Appeal*.

### Against the Stream

We are in a small boat in a tremendous current. There are five or ten boats and one goes down and we stay it was due to bad helmsmanship. But that was not the reason—it was because the current was too strong. It is the most general explanation and we should never forget this explanation in order not to become pessimistic—we, the vanguard of the vanguard. There are courageous elements who do not like to swim with the current—it is their character. Then there are intelligent elements of bad character who were never disciplined, who always looked for a more radical or more independent tendency and found our tendency, but all of them are more or less outsiders from the general current of the workers' movement. Their value inevitably has its negative side. He who swims against the current is not connected with the masses. Also, the social composition of every revolutionary movement in the beginning is not of workers. It is the intellectuals, semi-intellectuals or workers connected with the intellectuals who are dissatisfied with the existing organizations. You find in every country a lot of foreigners who are not so easily involved in the labor movement of the country. A Czech in America or in Mexico would more easily become a member of the Fourth than in Czechoslovakia. The same for a Frenchman in the U.S. The national atmosphere has a tremendous power over individuals.

The Jews in many countries represent the semi-foreigners, not totally assimilated, and they adhere to any new critical, revolutionary or semi-revolutionary tendency in politics, in art, literature and so on. A new radical tendency directed against the general current of history in this period crystallizes around the elements more or less separated from the national life of any country and for them it is more difficult to penetrate into the masses. We are all very critical toward the social composition of our organization and we must change, but we must understand that this social composition did not fall from heaven, but was determined by the objective situation and by our historic mission in this period.

It does not signify that we must be satisfied with the situation. Insofar as it concerns France it is a long tradition of the French movement connected with the social composition of the country. Especially in the past the petty bourgeois mentality—individualism on the one side, and on the other an *elan*, a tremendous capacity for improvising.

If you compare in the classic time of the Second International you will find that the French Socialist Party and the German Social Democratic Party had the same number of representatives in parliament. But if you compare the organizations, you will find they are incomparable. The French could only collect 25,000 francs with the greatest difficulty but in Germany to send half a million was nothing. The Germans had in the trade unions some millions of workers and the French had some millions who did not pay their dues. Engels once wrote a letter in which he characterized the French organization and finished with "And as always, the dues do not arrive."

Our organization suffers from the same illness, the traditional French sickness. This incapacity to organization and at the same time lack of conditions for improvisation. Even so far as we now had a tide in France, it was connected with the Popular Front. In this situation the defeat of the People's Front was the proof of the correctness of our conceptions just as was the extermination of the Chinese workers. But the defeat was a defeat and it is directed against revolutionary tendencies until a new tide on a higher level will appear in the new time. We must wait and prepare—a new element, a new factor, in this constellation.

We have comrades who came to us, as Naville and others, 15 or 16 or more years ago when they were young boys. Now they are mature people and their whole conscious life they have had only blows, defeats and terrible defeats on an international scale and they are more or less acquainted with this situation. They appreciate very highly the correctness of their conceptions and they can analyze, but they never had the capacity to penetrate, to work with the masses and they have not acquired it. There is a tremendous necessity to look at what the masses are doing. We have such people in France. I know much less about the British situation, but I believe that we have such people there also.

Why have we lost people? After terrible international defeats we had in France a tide on a very primitive and a very low political level under the leadership of the People's Front. The People's Front—I think this whole period—is a kind of caricature of our February Revolution. It is shameful that in a country like France, which 150 years ago passed through the greatest bourgeois revolution in the world, that the workers' movement should pass through a caricature of the Russian Revolution.

JOHNSON: You would not throw the whole responsibility on the Communist Party?

TROTSKY: It is a tremendous factor in producing the mentality of the masses.

The active factor was the degeneration of the Communist Party.

### **From Isolation to Reintegration With the Masses**

In 1914 the Bolsheviks were absolutely dominating the workers' movement. It was on the threshold of the war. The most exact statistics show that the Bolsheviks represented not less than three-fourths of the proletarian vanguard. But beginning with the February Revolution, the most backward people, peasants, soldiers, even the former Bolshevik workers, were attracted toward this Popular Front current and the Bolshevik Party became isolated and very weak. The general current was on a very low level, but powerful, and moved toward the October Revolution. It is a question of tempo. In France, after all the defeats, the People's Front attracted elements that sympathized with us theoretically, but were involved with the movement of the masses and we became for some time more isolated than before. You can combine all these elements. I can even affirm that many (but not all) of our leading comrades, especially in old sections, by a new turn of situation would be rejected by the revolutionary mass movement and new leaders, fresh leadership will arise in the revolutionary current.

In France the regeneration began with the entry into the Socialist Party. The Policy of the Socialist Party was not clear, but it won many new members. These new members were accustomed to a large milieu. After the split they became a little discouraged. They were not so steeled. Then they lost their not-so-steeled interest and were regained by the current of the People's Front. It is regrettable, but it is explainable.

In Spain the same reasons played the same role with the supplementary factor of the deplorable conduct of the Nin group. He was in Spain as representative of the Russian Left Opposition and during the first year we did not try to mobilize, to organize our independent elements. We hoped that we would win Nin for the correct conception and so on. Publicly the Left Opposition gave him its support. In private correspondence we tried to win him and push him forward, but without success. We lost time. Was it correct? It is difficult to say. If in Spain we had an experienced comrade our situation would be incomparably more favorable, but we did not have one. We put all our hopes on Nin and his policy consisted of personal maneuvers in order to avoid responsibility. He played with the revolution. He was sincere, but his whole mentality was that of a Menshevik. It was a tremendous handicap, and to fight against this handicap only with correct formulas falsified by our own representatives in the first period, the Nins, made it very difficult.

Do not forget that we lost the first revolution in 1905. Before our first revolution we had the tradition of high courage, self-sacrifice, etc. Then we were pushed back to a position of a miserable minority of thirty, or forty men. Then came the war.

JOHNSON: How many were there in the Bolshevik Party?

TROTSKY: In 1910 in the whole country there were a few dozen people. Some were in Siberia. But they were not organized. The people whom Lenin could reach by correspondence or by an agent numbered about 30 or 40 at most. However, the tradition and the ideas among the more ad-

vanced workers was a tremendous capital which was used later during the revolution, but practically, at this time we were absolutely isolated.

Yes, history has its own laws which are very powerful—more powerful than our theoretical conceptions of history. Now you have in Europe a catastrophe—the decline of Europe, the extermination of countries. It has a tremendous influence on the workers when they observe these movements of the diplomacy, of the armies and so on, and on the other side a small group with a small paper which makes explanations. But it is a question of his being mobilized tomorrow and of his children being killed. There is a terrible disproportion between the task and the means.

If the war begins now, and it seems that it will begin, then in the first month we will lose two-thirds of what we now have in France. They will be dispersed. They are young and will be mobilized. Subjectively many will remain true to our movement. Those who will not be arrested and who will remain—there may be three or five—I do not know how many, but they will be absolutely isolated.

Only after some months will the criticism and the disgust begin to show on a large scale and everywhere our isolated comrades, in a hospital, in a trench, a woman in a village, will find a changed atmosphere and will say a courageous word. And the same comrade who was unknown in some section of Paris will become a leader of a regiment, of a division, and will feel himself to be a powerful revolutionary leader. This change is in the character of our period.

I do not wish to say that we must reconcile ourselves with the impotence of our French organization. I believe that with the help of the American comrades we can win the PSOP and make a great leap forward. The situation is ripening and it says to us, "You must utilize this opportunity." And if our comrades turn their backs the situation will change. It is absolutely necessary that your American comrades go to Europe again and that they do not simply give advice, but together with the International Secretariat decide that our section should enter the PSOP. It has some thousands. From the point of view of a revolution it is not a big difference, but from the point of view of working it is a tremendous difference. With fresh elements we can make a tremendous leap forward.

Now in the United States we have a new character of work and I believe we can be very optimistic without illusions and exaggerations. In the United States we have a larger credit of time. The situation is not so immediate, so acute. That is important.

Then I agree with Comrade Stanley who writes that we can now have very important successes in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. We have a very important movement in Indo-China. I agree absolutely with Comrade Johnson that we can have a very important Negro movement, because these people have not passed through the history of the last two decades so intimately. As a mass they did not know about the Russian Revolution and the Third International. They can begin the history as from the beginning. It is absolutely necessary for us to have fresh blood. That is why we have more success among the youth in so far as we are capable of approaching them. In so far as we have been capable of approaching them, we have had good results. They are very attentive to a clear and honest revolutionary program.

*April 1939*

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